

THE MOST COMMON REASONS FOR DIVORCE: DISSECTED!

MEND THE MARRIAGE: ADVANCED COURSE

BONUS BOOK #3

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Know The Signs Of Depression & Seek Help If Needed

Divorce, separation, and relationship conflict can lead to sadness, depression, and a wide range of other difficult emotions. This is to be expected and is normal for most people.

However, in rare circumstances, or with individuals who suffer from medical or psychological conditions, divorce and other marital conflict can lead to clinical depression. **If, at any time, you believe that the depression symptoms you are experiencing are not normal – or if you have thoughts of suicide or self-harm – seek professional help immediately.**

Regardless of where you live, there are mental health resources and assistance available to you. Contact your doctor or phone your local health care provider to find the help you need in your local area.

[Click here to see a list of symptoms associated with depression.](#) If you encounter any of these symptoms, seek help from a certified mental health practitioner.

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The Most Common Reasons for Divorce ... Dissected!

Ask a good self-defense teacher how to stay safe and they'll tell you something simple – "The most sensitive part of your body is the hairs on the back of your neck." By that, they mean that you have natural instincts to avoid danger. Those instincts will keep you safe if you trust them.



So, if you're walking home from the train station late one night, and you wonder, "Should I take the short cut through the dark, creepy alley, which will save me 10 minutes?" – you already know the answer. It's common sense. And if you get a creepy vibe about a place or a person, you should trust it.

Every kid knows that, and will be naturally frightened of a spooky place. But as we grow up, we stop listening to that instinctive, inner voice. We no longer pay

attention to the hairs standing up on the back of our neck. It isn't just laziness, really – it's the noise and chaos of adult life. We all have so much going on that we lose track of our simple instinct for safety. So we take that dangerous short cut and we get mugged, or worse.

We all have natural instincts like this to protect our marriage, too. Combined with the simple common sense our parents taught us as children, our natural instincts are more than enough to create a happy, healthy, enduring marriage. Many of the ingredients of a good marriage are simple things that little kids on the playground already know how to do – be kind and play fair.

But something happens when people grow up, get jobs, when their lives become chaotic and too busy. They stop listening to the advice from their hearts and the warnings of their natural instincts. And the results can be disastrous to the most important relationship and to the most special person in their lives.

Here are some of the most common problems that result from forgetting common sense and natural courtesy, and which are the primary reasons for divorce.

Fear

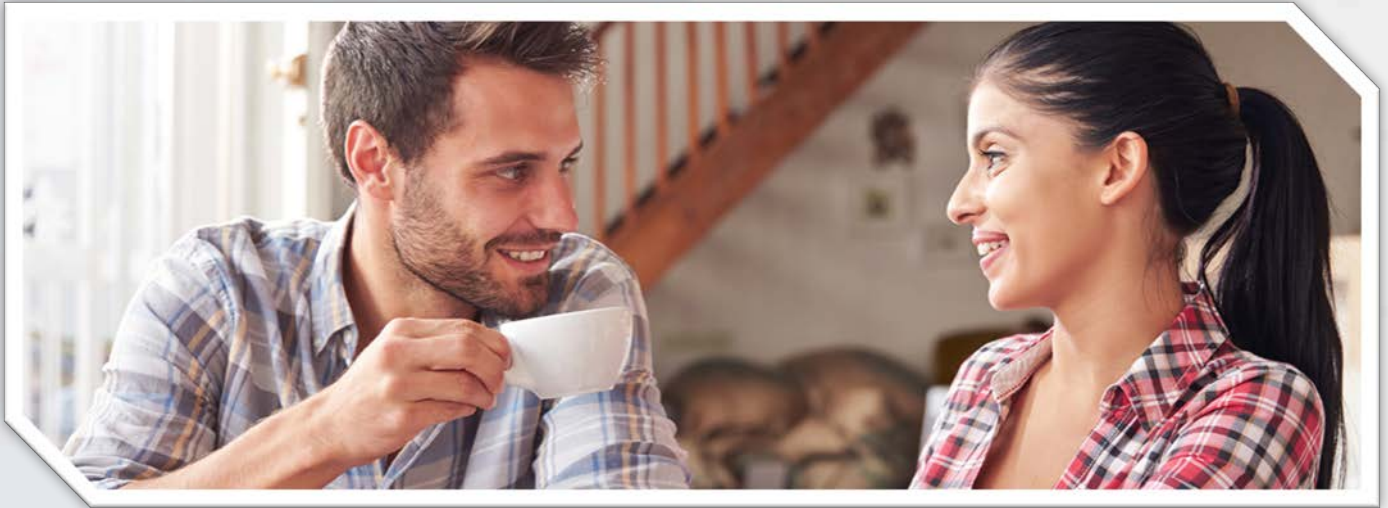
Fear paralyzes us and keeps us from moving forward and achieving our goals in many areas of our lives. Other than infidelity, fear is probably the number one marriage breaker, and infidelity often has its roots in fear, either fear of not being “good enough” for the marriage we have, or fear that our marriage won’t give us what we really need.

We’re afraid of so many things – getting sick, going to the dentist, losing our job, starting a new job, not finding a job, getting old, not being good enough. We fear having children, not having children, and we’re afraid of failure and losing our marriage. On the bigger stage, there are plenty of other fears plaguing us – from terrorism to war to global warming.

With so many things to be afraid of, it’s a wonder we have time for anything else at all.

Let's consider an example of how fear can cause serious problems in a marriage. One spouse worries that the other is thinking about having an affair. They worry that they've become less sexually attractive to their partner after some years of familiarity in their relationship. They worry that they're getting older and less beautiful, that their spouse wants to seek a younger, fresher partner to replace them.

This normal human fear, which could be eliminated by a frank, honest, grown up conversation with their spouse (but such a conversation is terrifying to many people – another example of fear working against marriage), is instead left to fester and grow more and more powerful. As the worried spouse becomes more and more afraid, they start seeing “evidence” that isn't real. Perhaps their partner stays late at work a couple of times – this must mean they're cheating. Maybe the couple have a few angry outbursts that end in tears – this must be due to infidelity.



Fear makes the worried spouse withdraw from the relationship, bit by bit. They behave a bit like a person who's found a bump on their skin and starts worrying it may be cancer. Instead of going to a doctor and getting it checked out, they avoid doctors and live in increasing fear. Pretty soon, instead of telling themselves it *might* be cancer, they're telling themselves it *must* be cancer.

Similarly, this person progresses from thinking "My spouse's behavior *might* be due to infidelity" to full-blown panic: "They *must* be cheating – it's the only explanation." Once the terror has reached this stage, every tiny action their partner makes is interpreted as new "evidence" of the affair.



Afraid of infidelity, this person gradually becomes cold towards their spouse. Fear makes them withdraw, bit by bit. Little by little, they cut off the natural friendship and intimacy that connects them to their husband or wife.

As time passes, the couple communicates less. This scared spouse stops touching their partner as often, since they're afraid they are no longer good enough, no longer attractive enough, no longer loved. And the couple gradually (or suddenly) stops having sex, since this tension has grown between them.

At this point, we don't even know if the frightened spouse is correct. Perhaps their husband or wife wasn't having an affair at all. Maybe they were worried about a new boss coming to their company, someone who will do things differently. Perhaps they fear losing their job, which is why they stayed late to do extra work a few times. Maybe they're feeling old and having some kind of midlife crisis. The point is that the

fear was irrational – they’re *not* having an affair. But now, fear has made it seem like they are. And that fear has gnawed away at the heart of their marriage, like a worm eating at an apple. A lot of destruction has been done, damage that will be hard to repair.

Because of the tension and atmosphere of mistrust that has grown up between this couple, it is now, ironically, *more likely* that one of them will be unfaithful as they go looking for the connection that has vanished from their own relationship.

Talking about this fear early on, in a safe, non-threatening way, would’ve eliminated the problem. If you’re worried about something, even something serious and scary, like infidelity, the best solution is to talk about it with your spouse. You two have signed on for better or for worse, and you’ve pledged to honor and trust each other. Depend on that trust, and draw on that strength. You will be surprised to find that most of your irrational fears are just that – irrational.

Communication is the key to overcoming fear.

Resentment

Resentment is one of the biggest killers of marriages. Like fear, resentments can grow from tiny, minor grumbles into major disasters that destroy marriages. The key, as with fear, is to address the problem early on.



What is resentment? It happens when one partner feels like a victim, as though they've suffered and made a sacrifice for their partner. Usually they feel somewhat resentful that their partner hasn't noticed and properly acknowledged the sacrifice they've made. So they're feeling unappreciated. Nursing that resentment, they let it grow bigger, and they add more perceived grievances to it, so it grows like a ball of snow rolling downhill.

Resentment can grow from everyday things, like the division of labor in the married household. If one spouse feels they do more work than the other, that can grow into an unhealthy grudge. Bigger choices that couples make also can develop into resentments, such as favoring one partner's career over the other's, or moving to a city that one spouse likes better than the other.

Two people living together are always going to have their differences, and they're constantly going to have to make choices. Those choices – “Shall we go out this Saturday night, or stay home and watch TV?” – can breed resentments. One time isn't a big deal, but if it seems to one spouse that they stay home every Saturday night and watch TV, that resentment can grow. Eventually, the bitterness builds up and explodes in a very unhelpful, unhealthy way – an angry outburst. “We *never* go out on Saturday night anymore, because you *always* want to stay home!”

Far better it is to express your feelings, even negative ones, to your spouse when they are still small. Developing a habit of regular, healthy and honest communication

with your partner is the best way to prevent these sorts of little grudges from growing into huge, marriage-threatening problems.

As a couple, you are obligated to talk to each other and negotiate so that both partners feel their views are heard and respected. To avoid the trap of nagging, be careful not to express a resentment too many times before you try a different approach. A good rule of thumb is that you can say anything you want to your spouse, once, if you're prepared to drop it after that.

If something's bugging you, bring it up with your spouse. You may not end up getting exactly what you want, but you will at least know that your spouse respects and honors you, that they are willing to listen to what you have to say. Conversely, make sure you listen respectfully to your partner's requests and do your best to fulfill them when possible.

An even more positive way to head off resentments is to carefully cultivate the habit of thanking and acknowledging your partner's contributions to your marriage.

Thank them regularly for what they do, even if it's some boring chore they've done ten thousand times. Letting them know you notice how hard they work is a fantastic way to kill resentment before it starts.

Another positive way to slay resentment is by telling your spouse that you love them. Do this often, and not just in a perfunctory way with a peck on the cheek as you rush out the door to work. Take a moment to look them in the eye, touch them on the arm or hand, hug them, kiss them, and tell them you love them. It's easy to do, and it's important. After all, you *do* love them, so remember to tell them!

Anger

Anger is a normal human emotion. If a person never feels anger, never loses their temper, then there's probably something wrong with them. There are many normal, healthy ways to express and overcome anger. But there are also plenty of unhealthy, damaging ways to express it, and those are very bad for your marriage.



Anger often results from a resentment that has grown over time, say after your spouse has had to pick up your dirty socks or clean the toilet ten thousand times. Communicating clearly about your feelings is the easiest way to head off those sorts of problems, as described above.

Other kinds of anger erupt from our natural temperaments or from the multitudinous frustrations of modern life – sitting in traffic, work stress, money issues,

fear of all sorts of things. We all know some people are more prone to anger than others – they’re naturally “hot headed” or they have a “quick temper.”

The big problem with anger is how we express it. A brutal, screaming outburst, awful and abusive, may actually make you feel better. After all, you’ve let out some potent rage that’s been cooped up inside you for a long time, and it sure feels good to get that off your chest. But that “healthy” expression of emotions is not at all healthy for your poor spouse, who feels they’ve been wrongfully assaulted. Bruised and battered, they may respond with a vicious comeback, and soon the two of you aren’t communicating at all, just shouting at each other. Neither one of you even hears what the other says.

As with fear and resentment, anger is most easily tamed by better communication. Talking about how you feel helps both you and your partner. Other great ways to deal with anger include exercise and meditation. Going to the gym or taking a long walk, run or bike ride can really change your perspective on any problem.

Some people find it helpful to write down what they're angry about, over and over, on paper, and then destroy it.

If you have serious problems with anger, don't hesitate to look for outside help.

Mend the Marriage has a long section of suggestions for healthy ways to handle anger.

There are also many community resources, such as anger management or stress relief classes, available. A doctor or therapist can point you in the right direction.

Infidelity

Cheating is a major marriage killer, for sure. Often, infidelity arises from some of the other problems outlined above, as one partner feels unappreciated or resentful over a long period of time, or as unacknowledged fear drives a wedge between a loving couple.

It's best to face infidelity up front, and stop it before it happens. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to bring the subject up, even as a young married



couple still very much in love. Being afraid to even talk about the possibility of infidelity gives it much more power over your relationship. Acknowledge to each other that cheating does happen in marriages,

and that it could theoretically happen in yours. Talk about what sorts of situations could lead to infidelity, and talk about ways to prevent it.

If you're secretly worried that your partner is cheating, don't hold in that fear. Talk to them about it. Intimacy means sharing yourself – the good parts and bad parts – with your partner. If you're afraid or jealous or suspicious, burying those feelings is the wrong thing to do. Don't feed your

fear by spying and snooping around. Eliminate your fear by having a frank, honest discussion with your spouse. Stick to your own feelings, not their actions. Say something like, "I love you and our marriage is extremely important to me, but I'm afraid that you may be tempted to have an affair." Keep the focus on your own feelings, rather than accusing your partner of something that may or may not be true, and which will likely result in a loud, angry fight rather than a loving, constructive conversation.

You yourself may feel attracted to other people during your marriage. Being attracted to people who are friendly, funny and good looking is a normal human instinct. Don't deny your feelings and lie to yourself. Be honest with yourself. If you are lonely or feeling neglected or unappreciated by your spouse, the best thing to do, the grown up thing to do, is to talk about it with them.

If you feel tempted to cheat, take immediate action. Call a sympathetic friend and tell them how you feel. Just having a conversation with another person can help snap you out of a dangerous situation. If you can't reach anyone, even leaving a friend a voice message telling them about your troubles can help you "talk through" the situation. Other options include making a quick "consequences list" – write down the negative results of having an affair, like possible loss of your marriage, having to move out of your home, financial costs of divorce, the crippling guilt you will feel, and anything else you can think of.

When infidelity has already occurred, the best way to protect your marriage is to come clean about it if you are the guilty party. Be sure you end the affair immediately and permanently. Cut off all contact with the other person. If your spouse has cheated on you, then you may feel great

anger, jealousy and depression. Allow yourself to feel those things. Later, when you have cooled down, have a frank and clear discussion with your spouse about the situation. Don't blame yourself for your spouse's bad choices. Decide for yourself, privately, what you will do in the event of further infidelity. But you don't necessarily have to share that with your spouse, as it can seem like an ultimatum and do more harm than good.

Though these different dangers to marriage may seem quite unconnected, they can all be addressed by better communication between you and your spouse. A good place to focus your efforts on improving your marriage is to work on honest, healthy communication.

Sincerely,

Brad Browning

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