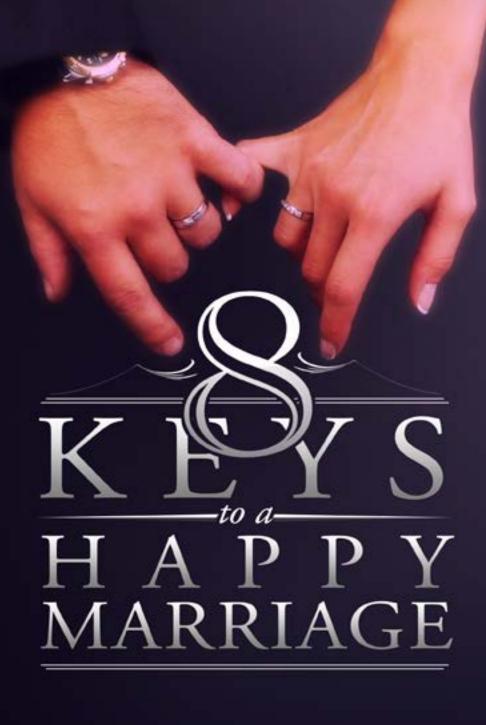


A perfect choice for couples who wish that marriage licenses came with instruction books...



BY DR. TONY FIORE

A perfect choice for couples who wish that marriage licenses came with instruction books.

Copyright © 2007-2013 by Dr Tony Fiore and The Anger Coach All rights reserved. This document may not be redistributed without permission. Book and cover design by Jason Badham

Table of Contents

Introduction
About Dr. Fiore
Tool #1 : Deal Better With Stress 8-12 Tool #1 : Resources 12
Tool #2 : Develop More Empathy
Tool #3 : Respond Instead of React 17-20 Tool #3 : Resources 20
Tool #4 : Change That Self-Talk About Your Marriage and Your Partner21-24Tool #4 : Resources24
Tool #5 : Learn to Communicate Assertively 25-30 Tool #5 : Resources 30
Tool #6 : Adjust Those Expectations About Your Partner and Marriage31-34Tool #6 : Resources
Tool #7 : Forgiveness
Tool #8 : Retreat and Think Things Over39-42Tool #8 : Resources42
Appendix I : Additional Resources to Improve Your Marriage
Appendix II : Chapter Resource Addresses for the Eight Keys
Contact Information
Testimonials

Introduction

Discover the 8 keys to happy marriage!

Hello. My name is **Dr. Tony Fiore**, a licensed psychologist and marital therapist. For over 25 years, I've helped hundreds of couples revive relationships or marriages torn apart by the effects of anger, poor communication, faulty expectations, and the inability to deal with the stresses and strains of everyday relationship life.

I created **marriageclassonline.com** to help couples in an unhappy relationship. The program is not marriage counseling, but **marriage** *education* that can help you strengthen, or even save it-without costly marriage counseling.

As an introduction to marriageclassonline.com, The Eight Keys to a Happy Marriage Brief Guide gives you a start in learning how to be a successful couple-whether you're dating, cohabiting, newly married, or long-term married.



Solution, not dissolution

Many of my couples are not as happy in their relationship as they used to be, but aren't ready to give up on their relationship or marriage. Yet, they don't know what steps to take to rekindle it, especially if they're with a partner whom they view as "impossible" or unwilling to change.

Other couples know their relationship is on the rocks, but can't convince their partners to go to a marriage therapist, Or - in other cases - they can't afford it or don't have time for it. Yet they crave useful and practical marriage information and skills that will help.

This Guide and my new **marriageclassonline** program were created for these couples. The Eight Keys to a Happy Marriage guide is NOT a "silver bullet," offering instant bliss, guaranteed to save every marriage.

But, the online program and this guide are short, straightforward and easy-to-read. Both are written in useful, simple and everyday language which allows you to immediately start changing things for the better in your relationship or marriage-sometimes, even, if your partner won't cooperate at first.

How can just one partner take action?

Don't both partners need to work on the relationship in order to change things? My short answer: **not necessarily!** In my experience, many relationships can be slowly improved if only one partner initiates the change process. And, this can be done without the changing partner "giving in," sacrificing what's important to them, or yielding entirely to the wishes or control of the other.

The reason one person can start the ball rolling and put their relationship on a better course is because you and your partner are constantly influencing and reacting to each other, even if you re not aware of it. Problems are created not only by what you do or what they do, but also by each of your reactions to the other.

Learn to change these reactions and you have a tool to influence the behavior of your partner!

Jim and Carol

Jim and Carol had been married for 13 years and were on the verge of divorce, despite the fact that they had a great Southern California lifestyle and three lovely children.

Carol refused to enter marriage counseling because she saw Jim as the problem labeling him as emotionally unavailable, "passive-aggressive," and generally obtuse. She demanded he go to a therapist to "get fixed" or the marriage was over, while emailing his therapist a long list of complaints she had against him.

How did Jim typically react to his wife's barrage of unending criticisms? With passivity, emotional withdrawal, avoidance, and periodic episodes of drinking too much. These behaviors of course made things worse to the point that he had to move out. She was on the verge of filing divorce. Jim was distraught and feeling helpless.

This story had a happy ending. Jim did indeed learn to respond differently to his wife. More specifically, he learned the tool of assertive communication (Key # 5) which taught him to deal more directly with his wife's complaints about him instead of avoiding the issues by stonewalling and emotional withdrawal.

Did this one step cause a seismic change in the relationship? In a word, "no," but it did get the ball rolling! Like a snowball rolling down a hill, positive things started to build starting with Jim's wife started criticizing less. She felt now that at least he cared enough to communicate with her. This, in turn, led to his displaying more loving behavior toward her to which she responded.

What's ahead?

Each of the chapters that follow uses case examples to illustrate the lessons or keys discussed in the chapter.

Chances are, you may recognize your relationship in the examples in each chapter. This recognition could be the turning point in addressing your relationship issues!

The eight keys to marital happiness are:

- ► Key #1: Learn how to deal with stress more effectively, both outside (spillover stress) and inside the relationship itself.
- ▶ **Key #2:** Develop More Empathy toward your partner and other family members. This means learning to see things from their point of view more often and also being more aware of how you are coming across to family members (how they see you vs. how you see yourself). This key teaches you how to improve listening skills as well as communication skills with your partner.
- ▶ Key #3: Respond instead of React to relationship issues that trigger negative emotions or continual conflict in you or you partner time after time. **Do something different** is the mantra for this key, instead of repeating things that don't work, resulting in spiraling arguments, hurt feelings or emotional distance from each other.

- ▶ Key #4: Change your self-talk. It's not so much what your partner does that causes upset in you; it is what you tell yourself about what they do that causes the real problem. Have doubts about that concept? If so, ask yourself, would all partners in successful marriages react in the same way to whatever it is that upsets you about your spouse? If the answer is "no," perhaps it is time to look differently at upsetting behavior by your partner by changing your self-talk.
- ▶ Key #5: Communicate Assertively. Many marriages collapse due to destructive communication patterns. Successful couples, on the other hand, know how to communicate in a healthy and effective manner. Specific skills to do this include learning a "soft-startup," avoiding a judgmental attitude when arguing, standing up for yourself without putting yourself down, and learning to respond well to your partner's complaints.
- ▶ **Key #6:** Adjust Your Expectations of Your partner and The Relationship. Much relationship conflict is rooted in faulty expectations of either your partner or the relationship itself. Discontent often results when what we get is different from what we expected. A common faulty expectation is the extent to which marital problems or issues can be changed or "fixed." Research shows that up to 69% of issues are "perpetual". This means *unchangeable*. Rather than continuing to fight about them, this key teaches you to find a way to live around them-and be happier.
- ▶ **Key #7:** Forgive but don't Forget! Some negative things partners do may be "deal breakers" for a marriage, but most are not-or don't have to be, if forgiveness and tolerance are practiced. Holding grudges or "getting even" for marital mistakes or bad behavior is a formula for disaster in most relationships. Held resentments cause emotional distance, even if not expressed or verbalized.
- ▶ Key #8: Retreat and Think Things Over. Partners can say things in the heat of the moment that erode or destroy the good will you have been accumulating for a long time. One instant, and you are back to square one. Better to calm down and think about it before you say it or do it. To help you calm down, we give you some new "self-talks" that work to de-escalate and emotionally balance you so that you can deal with the issue without destroying your relationship in the process.

To help you learn more about each marital key, I have provided resources and links at the end of each chapter for you to explore the topic in further detail.

As a second step for those who need additional help, I would encourage enrollment in my marriageclassonline course. You may also want to consider local marriage counseling. If so, you can find suggestions on how to find a qualified therapist as well as other helpful resources by clicking here.

Best wishes as you act upon your intention to preserve and strengthen your marriage! -Dr. Tony Fiore

About Dr. Tony Fiore

Hello. I would like to introduce myself. I am a California licensed psychologist, trained marriage therapist, coach, anger management expert, and author. I have worked with hundreds of couples and individuals in my clinical practice, I regularly consult with companies to resolve people-conflicts, and I have taught over 1000 anger management classes in southern California based on a new model of anger management and self-development created by myself and a partner. This eventually led to the creation of a leading certification program for anger management used to train other professionals across the world who in turn teach our system to thousands of their clients.

After twenty years of being a generalized clinical psychologist at mental health clinics and private practices, I saw that my professional training up to that point did not prepare me to really help couples as much as I would have liked. What I needed, I felt, was to acquire more specific skills in marriage and relationship therapy. I began by completing a specialized training program in



sex therapy at UCLA, to help couples with sexual dysfunction of one kind or another. For several years thereafter, I did indeed help many couples with their sexual issues, but soon discovered that sexual therapy turned into marital therapy because even after the sexual issues were improved, other issues often remained.

Often one of those issues was anger-either the explosive, abusive kind, or the more **insidious and hidden kind** that is expressed by emotional detachment or other forms of negative communication such as defensiveness, being overly critical, or being contemptuous toward a partner. To learn anger management skills, I received training and certification from a national leader in that field after which I began conducting anger management classes for both individuals and couples. Learning from our clients, with a partner, we created our own model of anger management based on eight tools (skills) needed for anger control as well as improved marital communication.

At about the same time, I was accepted and received advanced training in marital therapy from the famed Gottman Institute in Seattle, Washington. The research from their "love labs" form the foundation for many of the tools taught in anger management for couples. It also serves as the cornerstone for the eight keys to successful marriages contained in our program. I subscribe to the philosophy that *theories in themselves do not help couples; acquiring new marital skills, marital education and knowledge does.*

I continue to keep abreast of latest research, findings and applications of the Gottman findings in the area of marriage as I teach, coach, and treat couples. I also actively contribute to both the fields of anger management and marital therapy through numerous publications, seminars, internet blogs and social networking internet sites.

On a personal note, I have been married, divorced, and then remarried, so I have seen both sides of the coin. Although painful, I learned a lot from the demise of my first marriage, knowledge I applied to my second marriage (now 21 years and counting) as well as to my professional work with couples and my marriage education programs.



Key #1 : Deal Better with Stress

Improve your marriage by learning how to handle stress better. This often involves taking care of your self physically and mentally, but it also involves developing practical skills like life organization, as well as time and money management. Agreement on who does what in the relationship is often a stress reducer. Finally, working out control and power issues can relieve a major source of stress in many contemporary marriages.



Key #1: Deal Better With Stress

Stress and marital troubles go hand and hand. The higher one's stress level, the easier it is to allow poor relationship habits to get out of control. It is a challenge for most of us to manage our stress levels in a complex world with many demands and expectations. Learning stress management techniques gives us a powerful tool to better deal with both personal stressors (which may spill over into the relationship) as well as stress that may originate from issues within the relationship itself.

Stress in life is normal. And any married person knows that periods of stress in a relationship or marriage are to be expected as partners navigate the turbulent waters of life together. Some couples handle stressors very well and actually grow closer in crisis or adversity, bonding together as a unit to ward off or deal successfully with the threat. These resilient couples are the fortunate ones. Many other partners, such as Gary and Beth, have not learned the secrets of handling stress effectively resulting in extreme personal unhappiness, marital conflict and much emotional distance in their relationship.



Do you know how to handle stressors better?

Case Example:

Gary and Beth are a middle-aged couple married only three years, this being the second marriage for Gary who has a 15 year old daughter from his first marriage and an ex-wife who lives off the spousal and child support Gary sends her monthly. Beth is constantly angry and stressed in the relationship because she disagrees with Gary's very passive approach to parenting his child and his resistance to deal more assertively with his ex-wife over any number of issues. Gary deals with his stress by staying away from home as much as possible and then withdrawing and clamming-up when he is at home. Beth deals with hers by finding fault with almost everything about Gary, criticizing constantly, eating compulsively, and trying to over-control almost every aspect of their relationship.

Handling personal or marital stress better is a skill which fortunately can be developed and enhanced with dedication and practice over time. It involves finding ways to think differently about the stressor, improving communication with your partner, calming yourself down so you can think more rationally, and getting your needs met more of the time by finding ways to be happier and more fulfilled in your personal life.

Three Tips to Deal Better with Stress in Your Relationship:

Stress Tip #1: Shift your focus

What we focus on in our marriage expands. Focus on what is important and forget the rest. As one author said, "don't sweat the small stuff....and it is all small stuff." Ask yourself how important really is the thing that is stressing you in the grand scheme of things?

Keeping perspective and shifting focus is not easy to do because when stressed we get "caught up in the moment" and tend see things with a laser beam instead of a wide spotlight. This is why the thoughtless critical comment made by your partner has the potential to ruin your day. Or, why the thought of being 3 minutes Life is a train of moods like a string of beads; and as we pass though them they prove to be many colored lenses, which paint the world their own hue, and each shows us only what lies in its own focus. ??

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher and writer

late to a hair appointment causes a middle-aged woman to become an aggressive tyrant on the freeway.

People who are able to shift their focus have clear priorities in life-they know what is important and what is not, especially in their marriage or relationship. Being able to see the bigger picture, they are able to mentally shift so that "small stuff" does not stress them.

They focus on what is right and working, not on what is wrong or not working right now.

They focus on their mate's positives, not on his or her negatives.

Stress Tip #2: Stress guard your life

There is no way to completely stress-guard your life, as stress is a normal part of life, growth and evolution, but scientists have discovered that developing an attitude of reducing stress as much as possible (and then actually doing the appropriate things) can put you in a health envelope, increase longevity, and promote peace in your life.

Exercise. We all know that exercise is good for us; its effect on stress and your health is considerable. Walking, running and other aerobic activities for twenty minutes three times per week has been shown to reduce stress.

Diet. A healthy diet helps to stress-guard us in many ways, no matter

The best six doctors anywhere. And no one can deny it Are sunshine, water, rest and air Exercise and diet. These six will gladly you attend If only you are willing Your mind they'll ease Your will they'll mend And charge you not a shilling.

-nursery rhyme

what our age. Sugar intake should particularly be watched as blood sugar levels can greatly affect mood and coping ability.

Sleep. Not getting enough sleep-or having your sleep interrupted at the wrong times during your sleep cyclescan cause you to be very irritable the next day.

Relaxation and Meditation. Much research shows that relaxation or meditation can greatly reduce our stress and make us feel better. Simple deep breathing when tense has a great benefit to you in reducing stress and coping with things better. Try it!

Stress Tip # 3: Don't be a control addict

Much stress is experienced in people who try to control what they cannot, especially in their marriages. Of course, controlling people often don't see themselves that way-rather, they see themselves as "taking charge because someone has to," "helping," or "I'm doing it for your own good."

Control addicts often justify their behavior by seeing it as "just trying to protect you," "save you," or "stop you from embarrassing yourself." Internally, the control addict is telling themselves that they know more than their partner, that they are right and their partner is wrong, or that there is no way they can let their partner do something that is "obviously" a mistake. Grant me the courage to change the things I can... the serenity to accept what I can't, and the wisdom to know the difference ??

-Adapted from "the Serenity Prayer" commonly used in Alcoholics Anonymous Fellowships



As with so many other human behaviors, how "controlling" you are is partially determined on the receiving end of things. Stress and anger in relationships are caused not so much by your behavior, as by how it is being perceived or experienced by your partner. If your partner appreciates and desires your "control," then your so-called "controlling" behavior is not a problem with that person.

It does become a problem, however, when your partner feels controlled by you when they don't want it (even if they need it), or perhaps you do it too much or too often. Then they may start to push back, resulting in conflict, resistance or defiance toward you, stress, and anger. Sometimes, things deteriorate to the point that the relationship feels like a father-daughter or mother-son relationship rather than an equal, adult intimate relationship.

Rather than trying to control others, it is usually a much better idea to give them choices (with some leeway) and consequences for their behavior. That way, they can choose to do-or not do-what you want (and experience-or not experience-the consequences).

Example:

Problem: Teenager always late coming home after school with a 4:00 deadline. **Parental Solution:** "Please be home between 3:45 and 4:00. If not, you will lose the privilege of..."

.....

Example:

Problem: Wife drinks too much at parties. **Husband solution:** "If you drink too much again, I will leave the party alone and return home alone."

Example:

Problem: Husband promises to fix steps on back porch for the last year, but never does. Wife nags, but nothing changes. **Wife solution:** Either try to fix steps herself or hire a tradesman to do it.

Additional Resources to Help You Deal With Stress

Click on the title below and you will be taken to the resource. If you **print** your ebook, please go to Appendix II for the address of these links.

Dealing with Life Stress: Should we use a Scale or a Broom? Is Humor a Remedy for Anger? Tips for Dealing With Financial Pressures Holiday Stress Leads to Anger Cell Phone Use Increases Stress Anger At Home is Contagious



Key #2 : Develop More Empathy

Add a dose of empathy to your relationship and see what a difference it can make when your partner feels understood by you. Using empathy to resolve a conflict changes the whole atmosphere-even if you don't agree with your partner. Just communicating that you can see where they are coming from often greatly reduces anger on both sides. Also, being more aware of how they may be seeing you will increase your effectiveness and allow them to see you in a different light.

Key#2: Develop More Empathy

Have you ever been in an argument with your partner and felt that they didn't understand you? Worse, they didn't know that you felt they didn't understand you; instead they just kept on arguing their point causing both of you to become more agitated. Although you may have explained it many times, they seemed incapable of seeing things from your point of view-and worse, maybe they didn't even know they were supposed to. Clearly, they lacked a trait called "empathy" which is essential to having a good relationship.

Some of us are very good at knowing how we feel and expressing it, while others struggle to do so. It is crucial to express emotion in order to relate to those around us. Our ability to know how we are feeling as well as our ability to accurately sense the feelings and world view of those around us help us make positive connections with our partner and others. This characteristic is often called "empathy."



To empathize with your partner is to see with his/her eyes, to hear with her/

his ears, and to feel with your partner's heart. But, empathy is even more that that-it is also being aware of how you are coming across to your partner in both "normal" times and especially during conflicts. It is the ability to step back and see yourself as they see you.

Lack of empathy by you leads to poor communication fueled by an inability to understand your partner and why he or she may navigate life differently than you. On the other side of the coin, lack of empathy from your partner can make you feel as if your partner does not understand you, is not listening to you, and is not trying to see things from your point of view.

How would increased empathy have helped?

As is so commonly the case, both Anthony and Lisa saw themselves as in the right and the other as wrong. Each attacked the other without trying to understand how things looked from the viewpoint of the other. If they had, Anthony would have seen that Lisa had a strong need to protect her daughter from what she saw as an emotionally abusive man who had no right to impose his version of parenting her daughter so strictly in the first place.

Likewise, a more empathetic Lisa would have seen that Anthony was doing what he thought was right to impose more needed structure and self-discipline in Sandra to make her a better and more responsible person. Instead of getting defensive, Lisa might be more open to looking at her parenting skills to see if Anthony had some positive contributions to make in regard to her daughter.

Not that empathy alone would have solved all their parenting issues, but it would have served as platform for discussion and increased understanding of each other's point of view. Feeling more understood, each would have become less defensive and felt less need to "push back" when attacked by the other.

Case Example:

As an example of lack of empathy by both partners is the case of Anthony and Lisa who had been living together for three years in his inherited house. Most conflicts revolved around parenting Lisa's 14 year old daughter, Sandra. To say that they had different parenting styles is a triumph of understatement.

Think Adolph Hitler for his parenting style and Mary Poppins for hers.

As an example, if the girl would leave her shoes in the leaving room, Anthony would yell, scream, berate, and throw the shoes up the stairs toward the daughter's bedroom while emphasizing the need for responsibility, maturity, and being more considerate of other people living in the house.

Lisa, on the other hand, would be understanding, gentle, tolerant, and forgiving toward Sandra as to how long it might take for the shoes to make it up to the bedroom. Anthony saw himself as being a responsible parent and saw Lisa as weak. Lisa saw Anthony as a tyrant who had no business being so tough on HER daughter.

Two Skills to Increase Empathy in Your Marriage are:

Skill #1: Be more aware of body language

Scientists tell us that a high percentage of communication is done by our bodies-not just our words. Empathic people are very aware of both their own body language and the body language of others. Pay special attention to the following body language issues that communicate tons of information to others:

Facial expressions convey emotions that are universal-that is, people around the world have the same expressions as you do and also can read your facial emotions accurately without even knowing you. And you can do the same-read emotions and feelings on the faces of people from other cultures, with no words needed.

Touch is a very basic way to connect to other human beings which is a natural form of communicating that everyone understands at some level. Touch can convey love or hostility, warmth or distance, resentment or forgiveness.

Voice Tone refers to the manner in which a verbal statement is presented such as its rhythm, breathiness, hoarseness, or loudness. Voice tone also carries subtle social information such as how submissive you are or how superior you feel to the other person.



What do your facial expressions convey?

Stance and physical appearance communicate to us and others much about emotional states. "Getting in your face," for instance, usually communicates aggression. Standing very close to you, on the other hand, may be a message of affection and how they feel toward us. Parents standing with legs-apart stance with clenched hands on hips may be a scolding communication of displeasure with their children.

Skill #2: Be a more patient listener

Often we snap at our partner or become downright hostile toward them because we simply lack patience to tolerate their way of communicating. They of course have a right to communicate any way they want to; your challenge is to develop the skills of patience and tolerance when listening to them.

The reasons for "listening frustration" can be quite varied. A common frustration is when a "get to the point" person interacts with a "let's explore all aspects of the issue" person. You ask for the time; they give you the history of clocks since they were invented. You ask them why they were late for class and they start the story with events that occurred two weeks previously.



Is your communication style empathetic?

Another common frustration occurs when a "fast and quick" thinker tries to communicate with a "slow but maybe deep" person. You might just flat out see

yourself as smarter than the other as you discover you are always several steps ahead of them in thinking; you ask yourself "how they can be so darn slow?"

To develop more empathy, remind yourself that the world consists of people with many difference ways of thinking in terms of the content of what they think, and the process they use to form thoughts and opinions. Remember too that you can be quite an expert in certain life skills, but a real dolt in other areas due to limitations in native abilities as well as limited life experiences in those areas. Many partners who dominate certain aspects of the marriage don't look nearly as impressive outside of their narrow areas of expertise.

Additional Resources to Help Develop Empathy

Click on the title below and you will be taken to the resource. If you print your ebook, please go to Appendix II for the address of these links.

See our short video How Important is Emotional Intelligence? Is Empathy declining? Anger in your relationship? Guys: Learn to Listen instead of Fixing it. Six Tips For Parents to Handle Angry Children Avatar: A lesson in Empathy

Key #3 : Respond Instead of React

Autobiography In Five Short Chapters by Portia Nelson

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk I fall in. I am lost ... I am helpless. It isn't my fault. It takes me forever to find a way out.

ll I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I am in the same place but, it isn't my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.

III I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it is there. I still fall in ... it's a habit. my eyes are open I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

IV I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.

> V I walk down another street.

Key#3: Respond Instead Of React

Many times couples develop behavioral patterns with each other such that it is almost automatic how one reacts when the other does something upsetting. Developing the trait of responding instead of just reacting like you always do is predictive of successful relationship and turning things around.

Think about it. If you keep doing what you always do, is it any surprise that you keep getting the same outcome?

It is important to understand that marital conflict results not just from what was done by one of you, but also by each other's response to what was done-how each of you deals with it. Learning to respond differently is made easier by understanding and accepting that people change as they go through different developmental stages in their lives. Not only do individuals in a marriage change-so does the marriage relationship itself.



Remember that you have a choice in your responses

Case Example:

Thirty-Five year old Jose was very rigid and inflexible in his thinking about how is 25 year old wife "should" be and how she "should" act. They started dating when she was just a 15 year old girl and needed an older man to rescue her from a dysfunctional and abusive family of origin. At first, she admired Jose and felt safe around him because he told her how to act, everything to do, how to dress, how to talk, how to be. She needed him to guide her as she grew up. He liked being needed by her.

This arrangement worked well for about ten years-until she grew up. Now she is 25 years old and no longer needs Jose to be her "everything." She now has the skills to make decisions on her own, to forge her own life, and to have a strong individual identity. Unfortunately, these new skills and her independence infuriated Jose who needed her to need him. He ultimately divorced her, saying "I want her to be the girl she was when I met her at age fifteen. I don't want her the way she is now."

Three simple things you can do differently in your relationship:

1. Ask yourself: When was the last time you complimented your partner or received a heartfelt compliment from them? Research shows that adding more "positive" (literally) to your relationship is a way of responding differently that dramatically decreases the chance of divorce. In comparing "successful" with "unsuccessful" relationships, researchers have found that successful couples say and do positive things fives times more often than they say or do negative things. For unsuccessful couples, the ratio is 1:1 or less; that is, there is almost nothing positive said or done to counterbalance the negative.

2. Show love to your partner in a way that they need to be shown love. Because "showed" love and "felt" love are not necessarily the same, we sometimes have to show love in a different way-in a way that is meaningful to your partner, even if that way seems silly or irrational to you, or is not the same way you would feel loved by them. For instance, some people primarily feel loved if their partner does things for them, e.g. help them with home chores willingly. Other people feel loved primarily by being told they are loved, or by receiving gifts from their partner, or by physical expression of love.



Of course, most people feel loved in multiple ways, but research shows many of us have a main preference. Doing things differently involves figuring out what your partner's primary "love channel" is and then focusing on showing your love through that channel. Most of us wrongly assume that if we feel loved in a certain way, then our partner probably does too, so we do for them what we would like to have them do for us.

Instead, do things differently by simply asking them how they feel most loved and then start doing it that way! For instance, I have had numerous wives tell me in marriage therapy that they have lost passion for their partner simply because they are dead tired at the end of the day. They further reveal that if their husbands would just dry the dishes or give the kids a bath, they would feel very loved and much less exhausted.

On the other hand, many husbands tell me that they feel unimportant in

their marriage because their wives prioritize everything else above them. They say, "my wife takes care of the kids, the house, the kid's classroom, the pets, the neighbors, her parents, her church, and then me if anything is left. I never feel like I am number 1 in her thinking."

Making your partner feel important and high-priority is a love channel that can be accessed with increased awareness and commitment. Unfortunately, many couples allow life to interfere with their relationship until they become like an iceberg that develops a crack and slowly splits into two, each part drifting from the other imperceptibly until it is too late to put back together.



3. Try a "softer startup" when bringing up a problem in your relationship

with your partner. Research shows that the outcome of many arguments can be predicted in the first two minutes of discussion. That means that the outcome would be the same if you argue for the two minutes or you continue the arguments for the next two days. How you approach the issue and how you approach your partner on the issue can make a huge difference. Try bringing up the issue in a different way, or at a different time, or with a different attitude or even a different tone.

Some couples use the "sandwich" approach with their partner if they have a complaint or an issue. Start with a compliment or a positive (top layer of bread); deliver the complaint (meat of the sandwich); then add another positive or compliment (bottom layer of bread). For instance, "Thank you for calling me saying you'd be home late for dinner. Do you think next time you could call a little earlier so I could make something else for the children? It is so nice to have you home with us on a Friday night."

A softer startup may also involve allowing your partner to "decompress" when they get home, instead of verbally assaulting them with all the problems of the day when they first walk in the door. Giving your partner fifteen or twenty minutes to transition can make a big difference in the home atmosphere for the rest of the evening.

Responding differently-even in small ways-can have an amazing result over time. Just like a snowball rolling down a hill, it builds momentum and often leads to your partner wanting to also respond differently to you which, of course, may motivate you to change even more and.....well, you get the idea!

Additional Resources to Help You Learn to Respond Instead of React

Click on the title below and you will be taken to the resource. If you print your ebook, please go to Appendix II for the address of these links.

Video explanation Can't change your partner? Try looking in the mirror! How to tank your relationship-Lesson 1 How to tank your relationship-Lesson 2 Why don't some marital problems change?

Key #4 : Change That Self-Talk About Your Partner and Your Marriage

Marital Self-Talk is a term psychologists use to describe that conversation with yourself (in your head) about something your partner did, something that is bothering you, or something about your partner such as habits they have, personality or character traits they show, or things that irritate you about them. To have a happier marriage, successful couples learn to change their negative self-talk about their partners or their marriage and instead tell themselves other things about their partners or their partner's behavior that are equally true but less upsetting.

Key#4: Change That Self Talk About Your Partner and Your Marriage

Just because your partner says or does something you don't like doesn't mean that you need to automatically get upset over it. How upset you become over it has a lot more to do with what you tell yourself about it (your attitude toward it) than with what was actually done. This is because thoughts influence our feelings and emotions.

How we think about our partner and what they did is called "self-talk" which can greatly influence how we feel and how we deal with our partner and their upsetting behavior.

Think about the last time you were upset with your partner. Then think about what you were telling yourself about what they did or said. Here are some examples that clients have shared with us:

I think I may know what you are thinking right now-"yes, of course I am thinking those things about my partner because they are true."

Not so fast! Fact is, they may be true-or partially true-but they also may not be.

Self-Talk Example #1:

They shouldn't do that because I don't like it. A normal person wouldn't do that! He should change his/ her behavior because it is wrong/bad/evil/silly/embarrassing.

Self-Talk Example #2:

If he really loved me he would have heard how upset I was

Self-Talk Example #3:

The house is a mess because she is lazy.

Self-Talk Example #4:

If he weren't such a wimp, he would stand up to his ex-wife so she doesn't get so much spousal support every month.

Self-Talk Example #5:

He is going to do it my way-the better way. He could change if she really tried.

Anger, conflict and emotional distance are generated by these-and many other self-talks-that may be based on what some therapists call "twisted" thinking that comes from our childhood or previous experiences-twisted thinking that might NOT be valid now.

Let's now visit some actual cases to see how changing these automatic and twisted self-talks to different self-talks can change how you feel about things:

Self Talk #1: Sam and Betty were married 20 years. Betty would "go out " once a month with her co-worker friends but Sam thought this was degrading to her because "married women don't do that". (Betty wasn't doing anything she shouldn't when she was "with my friends")

To reduce marital conflict, Sam learned to change his self-talk to:

"I really don't approve, but Betty has a right, within limits, to do what she wants even if I don't agree with it."

Self-Talk #2: Aneka was a very expressive woman who was easily offended if she felt her husband (an electrical engineer) "wasn't listening" to her. Fact is, he was listening, but on a different levelhe listened for facts and information-not emotional undertones or deeper meanings to what Aneka was trying to communicate. To reduce her anger, she learned to change her self-talk to:

"He simply does not get what I am saying sometimes, but that doesn't mean he doesn't love me. He shows me he loves me in many other ways."

Self-Talk #3: Thirty-six year old Ray was a self-made successful business man with his own company. His wife Stacy was a stay at home mom to their three young children. He did not see her as a good housekeeper, however, and became infuriated when the house was a mess every night when he returned home.

He saw her as having a character flaw of laziness. However, she was also diagnosed with a painful illness which caused fatigued.

In therapy, we taught Ray to change his self-talk to:

"She is not lazy; she is sick and is doing the best she can."

This resulted in a dramatic decrease of anger and more loving feelings toward his wife.

Self-Talk #4: Sandra was nearly always enraged at her 35 year old husband Sam, a hard working Federal Express driver who worked 12 hours a day to make sure that ends met at the end of the month. Their second marriage each, Sandra felt that Sam was bullied by his ex-wife into paying far more spousal and child support than was necessary because "he is a wimp and won't stand up for himself." Sam, of course had a different perspective on things and felt that, on balance, things were pretty much as they should be with his ex family. In order to reduce



her anger, in therapy Sandra was taught to use the following self-talks:

"I just have to accept that I cannot control everything in my life;"

"Sam is a good man who wants to take care of his children;"

"I knew his situation when I married him, so why upset myself now over it?"

Self-Talk #5: Forty-six year old Maxine was married for ten years to George, a successful computer engineer who unfortunately had OCD (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder) which was slowly driving her bananas. He had to check the locks on the doors at least 10 times at night before going to bed; he kept an extremely strict Kosher home while she was more moderate religiously; everything had to be ordered and routine in the house with no surprises or spontaneity; and if she went out with a girlfriend, he called her at least times on her cell phone to "make sure you are alright." She finally left him, as she could take no more. She had been telling herself that he could change if he really wanted to, and that much of his behavior was motivated by his wanting to make life miserable for her.

She would only come back if he agreed to see a psychiatrist to get medication for his OCD. George agreed. In fact, he saw three psychiatrists, who all said he did not need medication.

Maxine did come back and the marriage ultimately succeeded, but only after she changed her self-talk to the following:

George cannot change this behavior easily; I must learn to accept it or the marriage will not work

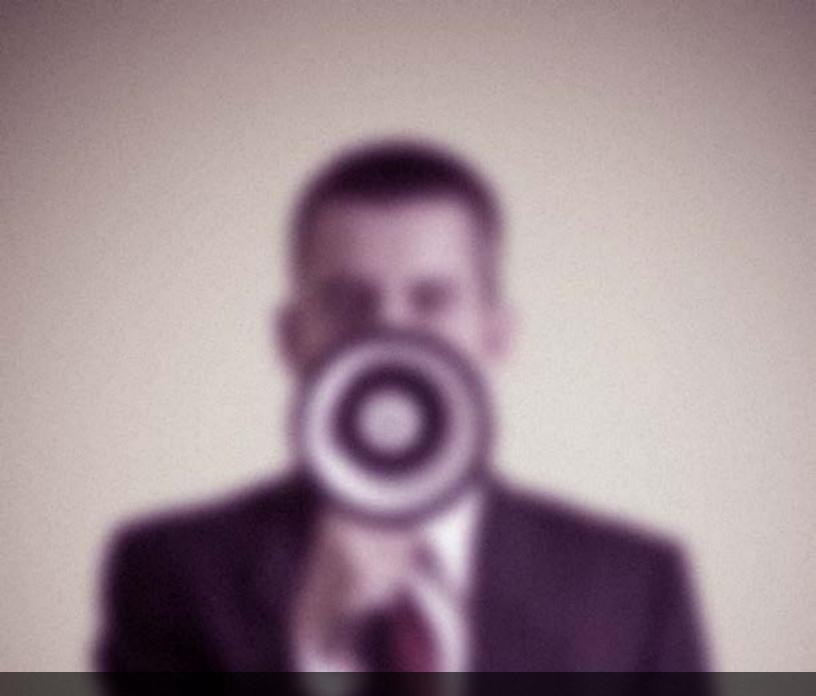
I can learn to live with it because I know that he really loves me and he is not doing these things to upset me.

Some behaviors are not changeable; I need to remember how much misery George's obsessions and compulsions are causing HIM.

Additional Resources to Help You Change Your Self-Talk

Click on the title below and you will be taken to the resource. If you **print** your ebook, please go to Appendix II for the address of these links.

YouTube Video Control Your Anger-Self-Talk In Action How Self-Talk Changes Moods Being Happy Is More Important Than Being Right I need to develop more understanding and tolerance toward some other people I am partly responsible for how other people treat me Nobody is perfect. I must remember that even competent people make mistakes Things don't always have to go my way



Key #5 : Learn to Communicate Assertively

Almost all couples who enter marriage therapy start the session with the observation that they have difficulty communicating with each other. By contrast, couples in successful relationships have learned how to effectively communicate and understand each other both with words and with body language. Learning better communication skills is not that difficult, but it does take work and patience. A good place to start is with a set of skills called "assertive communication." Improved assertiveness skills often makes a huge difference in outcome of any disagreement, argument or conflict you may have with your loved one.

Key#5: Learn to Communicate Assertively

Good communication skills are an essential ingredient to a good relationship because poor communication causes untold emotional hurt, misunderstandings, and conflict.

Assertive communication-as distinct from aggressive communication-is a set of skills to honestly and effectively communicate how you feel and how you are responding to things-without getting angry, hostile, insulting, or ugly about it.

Assertive communication also means standing up for yourself when necessary rather than "stuffing" feelings or handling them with destructive patterns such as emotional shutdown or passiveaggression.



Do you know the difference between being combative and being assertive in your communication?

Your tongue can be a weapon or an effective tool of communication.

Rather than using angry or aggressive communication, a more effective way to get what you need, want or deserve is to use "assertive communication." Assertive communication involves changing both how you listen to other people as well as how you communicate with both verbal messages and body language.

Ten Steps to communicate assertively:

Step 1: Start the conversation with "I feel" statements about the issue.

Sounds simple, but many people haven't yet learned this communication basic. Start with "I feel....." and then add whatever you are feeling-not what you are thinking or what you want the other person to do or not do. That is to say, be careful that the "I" statement is not really a disguised "you" statement. Avoid using the words "that" or "like" in your statements. These words confuse communication and are often loaded with judgments or negativity. For instance, avoid saying "I feel that you...." or "I feel like you...." because these really attack the listener.

The phrase "I feel" should always be followed by an emotion word such as one of the following:

Anxious, angry, betrayed, bored, cautious, depressed, disgusted, disrespected, distrustful, embarrassed, frustrated, guilty, happy, hopeful, lonely, nasty, nervous, neglected, overwhelmed, sad, satisfied, shy, silly, smitten, surprised, thrilled.

Let's see how this may work.

Instead of saying "You don't care about me!" say "I feel neglected....."

Instead of "You hit on my girlfriend/boyfriend," say "I feel disrespected....."

Instead of saying "You are an inconsiderate jerk," say "I feel betrayed....."

Making "I feel" statements can have a dramatic effect on the outcome of your interactions with another person because it communicates to the other what is bothering you without the other person feeling attacked, blamed, judged or criticized. This tends to make him or her feel less defensive and argumentative.

For instance, couples may argue all night following the statement "You don't care about me!" but how can someone argue with the statement "I feel neglected?" After all, you feel what you feel-no reasonable person can dispute your feelings because only you know what you are feeling.

Because you are not demanding anything of the other person when you make "I feel" statements, he or she now has a choice of how they elect to deal with your feelings and concerns. You are simply pointing out how you are responding to what they are doing, so they know and then can choose where to go from there.

Ideally, the feeling statement "I feel neglected" will launch a discussion between the two people to further explore the issue and generate possible solutions. Other outcomes are possible such as shock or surprise by your partner when he or she hears this, because it is possible he or she had no idea you were feeling that way.

Step 2: Make a clear, specific statement of what is bothering you about the behavior of someone else.

Most people are not mind-readers but sometimes we expect them to be. Our experience has been that even family members who have lived together for many years may still not understand each other or why there is upset over certain issues. Of course, some people are more empathetic, sensitive and perceptive than others. If you are with someone who "doesn't have a clue"-or you are the type of person who doesn't communicate clearly-it may behoove you to assertively make it clear what it is that is bothering you.

Continuing the above examples.....

I feel neglected when you ignore me.

I feel disrespected when you flirt with other girls/women.

I feel betrayed when you criticize me.

Step 3: Communicate with your body language and behaviors as well as your words.

The effective communicator communicates not only with words, but with body language and specific behaviors as well. This means that your deeds, gestures, eye contact, posture, demeanor, and voice tone all match the message being spoken by your words.

Inconsistency will dilute your message and make you less effective in communicating.

The assertive communicator comes across as friendly but firm. He or she is seen as sincere and genuine-someone to be listened to and taken seriously.



Are people comfortable around you?



Step 4: Do not yell, scream, threaten or demand. Communicate with respect toward the other person and let him/her know that you understand their point of view.

In a conflict situation, understanding the other person's point of viewand letting him/her know that you understand it-is a useful technique for communicating assertively and settling disputes. It lets your partner know that even though you understand their point of view, your own point of view also has merit. Your partner is much more likely to listen to you if they know that you have heard them.

Step 5: Make clear statement what it is you request/need from the other person and what your limits are.

Have you noticed that with some people it is clear to you what they stand for, where you stand with them, how far you can "push" them on an issue, and what you can and cannot say or do to them? With other people you aren't so sure.

Now, let's turn that around. How do you think your partner sees you? If you are an assertive person, you don't let him or her push you around or take advantage of you, yet you are not abrasive or unpleasant.

In psychologist talk, this means you establish clear "boundaries" or limits as to how you expect be treated by your partner, what you will tolerate and not tolerate, and what the consequences are to him or her if they cross your "boundaries." You should do this firmly, but in a polite and respectful manner, or else it could escalate conflict.

Step 6: Use verbal responses that don't escalate conflict.

Words are very powerful. Two people can express identical ideas or concepts, but one will be much better received than the other simply because of the words used. One trick is to acknowledge the feelings or viewpoints of the other person before making the point you wish to make. This often immediately takes the anger out of the other person and makes him or her more receptive to what you have to say. Here are some examples of how to do that:

Say..... "I see" "Thank you for letting me know how you feel."

"I hear you."

"I can see this upsets you." "I'm very sorry you were hurt. That was not my intent." "I never thought of things that way." " I might be wrong here"

Step 7: Sharpen your listening skills

Assertive people have developed their listening skills. Hearing is done with our ears while listening is done with our heart. Listening is an active process. You, as a good listener must take an active role in the communication process.

Following are some tips to help you become a better listener:

- ▶ Try to listen without judgment to your partner and their views.
- Focus on what your partner is saying instead of letting your mind wander
- > Pause and think before answering or responding
- ▶ Restate what your partner is saying in order to clarify
- Have good eye contact
- Focus on the underlying meaning of what your partner is saying as well as the words that are being said.
- ▶ Be sensitive to he unspoken feelings in your partner's message.

Step 8: Learn to Compromise

Compromise is a way to assertively handle conflicts you might have with another person. It is an approach in which gains and losses are shared. In a compromise, no one is 100% satisfied, but no one is 100% disappointed either. You give up something in order to gain something else.

Step 9: Learn to Collaborate

Probably the highest from of assertiveness is to suggest a collaborative approach to a conflict or problem. This means that you sit down with your partner and try to find a "win-win" solution that will work for both of you. You start by finding common ground or common goals and then be as creative as you can to discover solutions to your conflict or dilemma.

Step 10: Give and receive praise

Praise is an important part of assertive communication, both in terms of being able to give praise and take praise. Praise involves seeing the positives, what is right and what you can honor and appreciate about how your partner sees things. This is the opposite of what angry people often do-only seeing what is wrong or negative about the other, and then commenting on the negatives.



Additional Resources to Help You Communicate Assertively

Click on the title below and you will be taken to the resource. If you **print** your ebook, please go to Appendix II for the address of these links.

Anger Coach Video "Peace at any Price" is often the wrong strategy Single because of anger? How to tank your relationship-Lesson 2 Can you change an insecure, jealous spouse?



Key #6 : Adjust Those Expectations About Your Partner and Marriage

"...And when I was 12 years old, my daddy took me to the circus The greatest show on earth There were clowns and elephants and dancing bears And a beautiful lady in pink tights flew high above our heads And as I sat there watching I had the feeling that something was missing I don't know what, but when it was all over I said to myself, "Is that all there is to a circus?" -Lyrics from famous Peggy Lee song

Key#6: Expect too much from marriage or from your partner?

In her song, 12 year old Peggy Lee becomes sad with disappointment and disillusionment but many people have other reactions too. Some become frustrated and then angry when their expectations are not met.

If things don't meet our expectations, sometimes the problem is not in the "thing" but in our expectations of the person, event, or situation. For proof of this concept, consider the experience of the hundreds of other people watching Peggy Lee's circus; were they all disappointed? Of coursed not because for some the performance exceeded what was expected. For others, what occurred was pretty much in line with what was expected to occur.

Is it possible that expectations play a big role in marital happiness? The answer is an unqualified "Yes." This is illustrated most clearly by a client who had recently married a divorced man who really hadn't changed at all from how he was with his first wife and how he was now. The client related that she thought his ex-wife (of twenty years) was a fool because "she threw away what I have been looking for all my life."

The key in adjusting our expectations is to find a way to be realistic, yet not set our standards so low that we sacrifice achievement or excellence in ourselves or others.

This is difficult to do when you live in a society where winning is everything and nobody remembers who comes in second place. But following are six tips that will help you balance and adjust your expectations in your life and marriage for increased happiness-and much less anger.

Six Tips to Balance Expectations

Tip #1: Adjust your expectations differently for different people and situations.

What is an expectation? If you are not sure what will happen, expectation is what is considered the most likely to happen. But, an expectation may or may not be realistic. What actually happens may give rise to the emotion of disappointment, and then often sadness or anger.

Also, try to remember that your partner may not be capable-or not willing to change.. Truly accepting that sometimes people are the way they are and are going to remain that way is an important mental skill that will help you adjust those expectations that lead to marital unhappiness.

Tip #2: Align expectations with your partner and family members.

Can you imagine a family being on vacation with everybody having a miserable time because expectations weren't discussed ahead of time? Dad's "mental picture" of the trip was fishing and playing golf; Mom wanted to dine out in fine restaurants; Billy was mentally seeing himself skateboarding most of the time and Maria wanted to visit friends. Only problem was none of this was discussed or planned; each member of the family expected the others to know what the vacation would be like. Mentally preparing yourself before a thing happens and aligning your expectations with others can greatly decrease arguing, conflict and disappointment.

Tip #3: Stop "shoulding" in your self-talk

People of all ages in our anger management classes and marriage therapy programs confess they get upset when their partners do not do things as they "should." To have a better marriage, you may need to try and think the word "should" less often because this is a formula for frustration and upset. When you think "should" you are passing judgment on your partner which may or may not be correct. Try to be more open minded and realize that (within limits) there are many ways to do things, and many ways to make relationships or marriages work.

Just because your partner does things differently or thinks differently than you do, try not to automatically assume that you are "right" and they are "wrong."



Tip #4: Try to see disappointing things or people from a different perspective

Often we can adjust our expectations by trying to see our partners or the disturbing things they do from a different perspective or viewpoint.

Following are some common examples from our clients who have increased happiness and decreased marital conflict by seeing things from a different perspective:

Jim first saw his wife as lazy, but later saw that she was overly stressed and started to find ways to decrease her workload

Mary first saw her husband as overly controlling, but later saw him as anxious and insecure. This mental shift greatly reduced her anger toward him.

Barry was sexually frustrated and was convinced that his beautiful wife could have more sex drive if she just tried harder. A sex therapist convinced him that his wife's lower sex drive was not a choice that she made-it was just a biological fact like not being hungry for food. Barry then did not take the problem so personally and they found a way to compromise on the issue.

Tip #5: Believe that limitations are "built-in" most relationships

Did you ever notice that people in relationship often fight about the same thing over and over again? One reason for this is that it is normal for dating or married couples to have a number of these issues-called perpetual issues- (about ten on average) that are not solvable in the sense that they will go away or that one or the other will change. Inability to accept this fact creates a lot of tension and fighting because that is what happens when you try to solve an unsolvable problem.

Better to find a way to live with each other around these perpetual issues than to be constantly disappointed and angry at each other-or to decide to move on because one or both of you can't live with the issue.

Tip #6: Find other ways to get frustrated needs met

Did you know that anger and marital discontent is often the result of not getting certain emotional needs met that you have?

These might include security, self-esteem, love, and recognition, predictability and orderliness to your life, attachment to others, and need for self-expression and contribution. Do we all have these needs? Yes, but in a particular individual, some needs are much stronger than others and some needs may be stronger than others at different times or circumstances of our lives. Needs change as we progress through our personal life cycle and through our marriage life cycle.

In marriage, the question is: "To what extent should we expect our partners to satisfy our core emotional needs?"

This is obviously a complex question with no simple answer. But, my experience has been that much martial unhappiness is caused by partners expecting their mates to satisfy needs that may be better satisfied outside of the marriage, perhaps with same-gender friends. Some examples:

If wife is upset because her husband "doesn't share his day with me," she maybe can find a woman friend with whom she can chat constantly.

If husband wants to sail a boat, but his wife gets seasick in the bathtub, he can find a male friend to sail with instead of putting pressure on his wife to join him.

If your self-esteem needs are not being met, find a personal way to feel better about yourself through selfimprovement programs, finding new life challenges, or commitment to some activity that is important to you. All these behaviors usually work much better than constantly blaming your partner for your personal life unhappiness.

Additional Resources to Help You Adjust Your Expectations

Click on the title below and you will be taken to the resource. If you **print** your ebook, please go to Appendix II for the address of these links.

Managing Expectations: a Powerful Happiness Tool Can You Change? Perhaps. Maybe. Probably Not. Anger Sometimes Due to our Expectations Share Expectations to Decrease Conflict and Anger Couples Reduce Anger by Sharing Tasks Learn to Suffer Fools



Key #7 : Forgiveness

Imagine a world where marriage partners all believed in a revenge get-even philosophy toward their partners. They do it to me-I'm going to do it back to them. An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth. Tit for Tat. Quid Pro Quo.

In such a world, what would eventually happen? First, partners wouldn't be able to see each other any longer because they would be blind. Then they would be toothless. After a while, they wouldn't remember why they were doing this to each other or who started it. All partners would see themselves as victims of the other who only need to defend themselves to survive.

Does this somehow sound familiar? Is it the kind of marriage you want? If not, you may have to work on forgiveness skills and let go of those grievances that almost all couples have. The following strategies will help you do just that-for a happier and less stressful marriage.

Key#7: Learn to let go of grievances toward your partner

Anger and other negative emotions in relationships are often the result of grievances we hold toward our partners for something they did, usually because of our perception and feeling of having been wronged by them in some way. But, you can let go of resentments when you realize that just because your partner says or does something you don't like doesn't mean that it is necessarily wrong-just different.

Forgiveness (or at least acceptance) often follows when you can develop the skill of increased tolerance for differences between you and your partner in opinions, values, and legitimate different ways of navigating life.

Even if your partner truly hurt you or did something that was clearly wrong or inappropriate, it is possible to learn to forgive and continue on with your marriage or relationship without seeking revenge, "getting even," or holding years of resentment, as some partners do.

Should you forgive? That is a complicated decision we all need to make individually and privately. But, the point is that forgiveness is a decision. If the timing is right for you, and you want to forgive or let go of resentments but you don't know how, the following five strategies will be of help to you:

Case Example:

45 year old Natasha was married for 20 years to James, a local school teacher. They sought marriage counseling because of her constant and high-level anger toward him. His offense? On their wedding day, he hadn't bought her the ring she wanted because he couldn't afford it. Now twenty years later, she still reminded him of this fact, even though on their ten year anniversary he had bought her the ring she wanted.

Five Strategies for Forgiveness

Forgiveness Strategy #1: Remember that forgiving doesn't mean that you will forget the offense.

In fact, often you should NOT forget what was done to you, because you may need to protect yourself in the future. When you forgive, you can remember what was done to you but you no longer feel angry or upset when you do remember the offense. The pain simply is no longer there.

Case Example:

Married for ten years, Jose started a relationship with a female who was a customer at the banking institution where his wife worked. The affair ended.. Maria took him back and forgave him, but Jose expected her to also "forget" that it had ever occurred (as evidenced by her never mentioning it again). We had to explain to Jose that the human mind does not work that way. Forgiveness is one thing. Forgetting is another. In fact, we explained to him that forgiveness is remembering without the pain.

Forgiveness Strategy #2: Remember that if you forgive your partner you are NOT necessarily saying that what they did to you was Okay or acceptable.

Many times, married people want to forgive their partners, but their ego or pride stand in the way, especially if reinforced by family or friends. Other times, couples truly believe that all emotional hurts should be dealt with by retaliation of some sort or "getting even" with their partner: their philosophy is "tit for tat"

This kind of thinking is immature at best and very destructive to a relationship at worse. People who have been successfully married a long time tell us that an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" philosophy just leads to conflict, resentment, and discontent. Forgiving our partners for misdeeds, errors, and human failings is part of successful marriage (within reasonable limits), even when it feels like things are lopsided or one partner or the other feels like they are doing all the "giving."

The Toilet Seat Case:

Thirty year old Tom was in one of our anger management classes. When asked why he was attending, he replied: "I yelled at my wife because she yelled at me for never putting the toilet seat down after use." One class member looked at him and asked; "what, you spent this money for anger management class: why don't you just put the toilet seat down?" Tom replied: "because last week I asked my wife for sex and she turned me down. So, why should I now do what she wants?

Forgiveness Strategy # 3: Forgiving your partner doesn't mean you will automatically trust them again on the issue that caused the distrust.

Forgiveness is distinct from trust. Just because you forgive doesn't necessarily mean you will now automatically trust them again. It does mean that you are saying you will give the another chance, and then perhaps rebuild trust if their changed behavior warrants it.

Forgiveness Strategy # 4: Make a decision to forgive, but wait until you are ready.

Forgiveness is a very personal decision-and you have to be ready for it. It sometime takes months or years to decide you are going to try and release feelings associated with a marital grievance. But if and when you decide you are ready, you can start the process by simply committing to doing it! This involves changing your thoughts and perspective toward what happened, deciding to be a forgiving person instead of a vengeful one, and putting the offense in perspective and balance, rather than just focusing on the offense itself.

Case Example:

Jim was married to a prescription drug addict who spent huge amounts of money on weight reduction medication (stimulants) and then lied about it to her husband. He still loved her and forgave her when he discovered what she was up to. But, he filed for legal separation (while still living with her) so he would no longer be responsible for her debts. After several years of changed behavior on her part, Jim lifted the separation and they lived together as a normal married couple.

Forgiveness Strategy #5: If you need forgiveness from others, learn how to say "I'm sorry" so it is accepted.

Did you know that there is a science and an art to learning how to properly say "I'm sorry?" Just saying "I'm sorry" usually doesn't get it. Instead, an effective apology should contain the following elements:

- ► A detailed account of the situation so that both you and the other person are talking about the same thing.
- Acknowledgement by you of the hurt, pain, or damage done.
- Taking personal responsibility for what you did-didn't do-rather than trying to shift blame or make excuses for what happened.
- Express regret to the other person for what you did.
- ► Specifically ask for their forgiveness.
- ▶ Make a heartfelt promise that you won't do it again.

Offer some form of restitution if possible. Restitution can be financial, emotional or social. Just offering an apology without at least trying to find a way to "make it right" come across as shallow and hollow. Talk in itself may or may not be seen as sincere; action usually communicates much more intent and proof of feelings.

Additional Resources to Help You Forgive

Click on the title below and you will be taken to the resource. If you **print** your ebook, please go to Appendix II for the address of these links.

AngerCoach Video Forgiveness is a core Tool of Anger Management Financial Infidelity: Are you dishonest about money? Anger and Intimacy-Part 2-Betrayal Is Forgiveness Manly?



Key #8 : Retreat and Think Things Over

The skill of putting some time between an anger trigger and your blowing up is a skill that can make the difference between a major, hurtful, long argument or solving the marital issue in a way that does little damage. Without that important gap in time, you and/or your partner can feel "flooded" with emotion which can literally highjack your brain. This does two things: (1) it activates the emotional part of your brain which wants you to attack and win, no matter what the cost and (2) it deactivates the thinking part of your brain so that you lose perspective and solid reasoning. To avoid this, let yourself cool down before responding to the anger trigger and see if you don't get a better result with much less marital conflict.

Key #8: Retreat and Thinks Things Over

In the heat of anger, partners often say and do things that they later regret deeply. At some point, they may try to "undo" it, but unfortunately it is sometimes too late because the damage has been done. It is difficult to "unring" a bell.

Case Example:

Thirty one year old Michael was engaged to Stacy, a bright, talented woman whom often gets upset with him because he often is late for almost everything. Usually, it is because of work demands which he claims he cannot control. In a typical scenario, she berates him for being late. He apologizes, saying that it can't be helped. Then she repeats the criticism three or four more times during the evening at which point Michael explodes and attacks going from calm to Defcon-4 in a few milliseconds. He calls her names, loudly points out her character defects in vulgar language, proclaims how his life was better without her, and generally is in an uncontrolled verbal rant. When he calms down, he feels terrible. But the damage is done. The evening is ruined and she refuses to talk to him for several days, as she recovers from his verbal assault.

Explosive people like Michael may also attempt to "undo" it by rationally pointing out the many "good" things they have done or accomplished; that rarely works either, because our brain seems to be hard-wired to remember negative events more than positive ones. Rants, rages and tirades stick in people's minds for a long time and often diminish memories of flowers bought, kind things done, favors rendered, or sacrifices made.

Retreating and thinking things over could have saved Michael and many other "hot-headed" people from the consequences of their impulsive actions. Temporarily removing yourself from the situation allows your body to return to normal, provides a cooling down time and allows your brain to return to its normal state in which you can reason and think more clearly.

Make yourself take some time between feeling mad and dealing with that mad. It won't be easy because you are conditioned to explode when provoked in certain ways. But, with practice it gets easier. Before exploding, back off, try to be alone, and have a good talk with...well, yourself. Simply do nothing. Cool down by reminding yourself of the following five things...

Five Things to Remember when Cooling Down:

Reminder #1: I am responsible for handling my anger and other negative feelings.

Yes, your partner may be unreasonable in their criticisms of you or in their behavior. And, yes, what they are saying may not be fair. Yet, you should remind yourself that sometimes your partner will, in fact, be wrong,

unreasonable, or unfair. There will always be legitimate reasons for your angry feelings. Therefore, the only reasonable solution is to acknowledge that you-and you alone-are responsible for handling those feelings, despite the provocation.

Reminder #2: Maybe I should look at my part in the conflict

As we saw in the sad case of Michael above, anger escalation is often a dance; you make a move. They counter; you up the ante with another move, they respond, and so on.

Few conflicts start in a vacuum. Taking an honest look at your possible contribution to the conflict is an amazingly strong tool to better deal with it, because you can control you much more effectively than you can control the other person and what they do.

In Michael's case, the conflict actually started with his being late and not calling Stacy ahead of time. When confronted, he did not commit to not doing it again, or try to validate her frustration in any way. Instead, he said in effect, that she would have to learn to deal with it. This escalated things in Stacy's mind, so she continued to criticize him which led to his explosion.



Can you see your contribution in a conflict?

Reminder # 3: Maybe I expect too much from others

Often we become angry because people or situations do not meet our expectations or do not satisfy our needs. Employees are seen as unmotivated; wives do not keep the house clean enough; husbands are not strict enough parents; the old man in front of us on the freeway isn't going fast enough; our children do not get good enough grades in school.

There is a natural tendency to see these and other problems as the fault of the other; try instead to remind yourself that maybe the problem is closer to home-in your unrealistic or faulty expectations. If that is the case, work on readjusting them and feel yourself instantly starting to cool down.

In our example, Michael expected that Stacy should be tolerant and understanding of his lateness, especially if work related because he had a business that required instant communication with customers. Not servicing his customer could cost him a lot of money. Should he expect understanding on Stacy's part? Not necessarily. Some partners are more tolerant than others. The important skill to reduce conflict is to discuss and align expectations. i.e. agree ahead of time how to deal with situations that will cause Michael to be late.

Reminder # 4: It is damaging for others to see me like this

Imagine what you must look like to your partner, to your children, to your co-workers, or to your neighbors when you are angry and out of control. Children especially are extremely negatively impacted if raised in high-conflict homes. Coworkers lose respect for you. Spouses and partners report feeling less love, closeness and attachment toward persons with angry outbursts. Worse of all, most angry people don't like themselves very much after they lose control.

Reminder # 5: I may feel better after I explode, but I may have emotionally injured those around me.



26 year old Jack was a student in our anger management class. He

shared that as a boy he recalled his angry father ranting and raving to the extent that his mother had to rush around the house and close the windows so the neighbors wouldn't hear his tirades. Afterwards, he felt great due to his emotional release but his family was still traumatized. Yet, because he felt good he expected his family to also feel the same way and proceed as if nothing had occurred. He completely lacked sensitivity or concern as to how his behavior was affecting those who loved him. Taking into account how your behavior will affect others and your relationship with them will go a long way toward helping you NOT to rant, explode, or otherwise lose emotional control.

Additional Resources to Help You Retreat and Think Things Over

Click on the title below and you will be taken to the resource. If you print your ebook, please go to Appendix II for the address of these links.

The Anger Coach Show Podcast. Retreat and Think Things Over Raise Your Mood Before Dealing with Anger Trigger Don't Let Others Ring Your Bell Anger Management Often Involve Conflict Resolution Is Anger Sometimes a Good Thing?

Appendix I : Additional Resources to Improve Your Marriage

Books Anger Management for The Twenty First Century: Adult book http://angerproducts.com/anger-management-for-the-21st-century/ Anger Management for The Twenty-First Century: Adolescent Book http://angerproducts.com/anger-management-for-the-21st-century-adolescent/ Anger Management for The Twenty First Century: e-book (Adult) http://angerproducts.com/anger-management-for-the-21st-century-ebook/ Anger Management for The Twenty-First Century: Adult Spanish Version http://angerproducts.com/anger-management-for-the-21st-century-spanish/ Blog Categories With Many Articles Related to Marriage/Relationship Anger The Myths of Marriage http://www.angercoach.com/myths-of-marriage/ **Conflict Resolution** http://www.angercoach.com/conflict-resolution/ **Expectations** http://www.angercoach.com/expectations/ Family stress and how to deal with it http://www.angercoach.com/family-stress/ **Holiday Stress** http://www.angercoach.com/holidays/ Podcasts and You Tube Videos The Anger Coach Show Episodes http://www.angercoach.com/the-angercoach-show/ The Anger Coach Channel on YouTube http://www.youtube.com/theangercoach **Online Anger Management Programs** 10-hour online anger management class http://www.angercoachonline.com/10-Hour-Session-Class.aspx 16-hour online anger management class http://www.angercoachonline.com/16-Hour-Session-Class.aspx

Local Anger Classes for Couples

Weekly classes in Orange or Long Beach, California

http://www.angercoach.com/local-anger-management-classes/

Fast-Track Weekend Seminars for Couples

http://www.angercoach.com/local-anger-management-class-enrollment/

Appendix I : Additional Resources to Improve Your Marriage

National Database of Anger Classes

Find a certified anger management professional in your community

http://angercertification.com/Certified-Provider-List.aspx

Information on Dr. Fiore

Background on the development of Marriage Class Online

http://www.marriageclassonline.com/About-Dr-Fiore.aspx

Dr. Fiore's official website

http://www.drfiore.com

Marriage and Relationship Resources Core Differences in Ways of Maintaining Emotional Stability

http://www.thecouplesclinic.com/pdf/F-Core_Differences_in_Ways_of_Maintaining_Emotional_ Stability-Legimimately_Different_Ways_of_Navigating_Life.pdf

This article, by Dr. Brent Atkinson, discusses five common differences in coping styles (or ways of maintaining emotional stability) that most often underlie relationship gridlocks, and identifies how partners who have these differences resolve them successfully.

Resources to Find a Marriage Therapist in Your Community The Therapist Locator - Licensed marriage and family therapists http://www.therapistlocator.net/ Psychology Today Therapist Finder http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms/ Counseling and Therapy with Values - Theravive

http://www.theravive.com/

Appendix II : Chapter Resource Addresses for the Eight Keys

Resource URL's for Tool #1 - Dealing with Stress:

Dealing with Life Stress: Should we use a Scale or a Broom?

http://www.angercoach.com/dealing-with-life-stress-should-we-use-a-scale-or-a-broom/ Is Humor a Remedy for Anger?

http://www.angercoach.com/angercoach-show-episode-10-is-humor-a-remedy-for-anger/

Tips for Dealing With Financial Pressures

http://www.angercoach.com/tips-for-coping-with-financial-pressures/

Holiday Stress Leads to Anger

http://www.angercoach.com/holiday-stress-leads-to-anger/

Cell Phone Use Increases Stress

http://www.angercoach.com/cell-phone-use-increases-stress/

Anger At Home is Contagious

http://www.angercoach.com/anger-at-home-is-contagious/

Resource URL's for Tool #2 - Develop More Empathy:

See our short video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rH96g2TG0Sc&feature=youtu.be

How Important is Emotional Intelligence?

http://www.angercoach.com/how-important-is-emotional-intelligence-eq/

Is Empathy declining?

http://www.angercoach.com/is-empathy-declining/

Anger in your relationship? Guys: Learn to Listen instead of Fixing it.

http://www.angercoach.com/anger-in-your-relationship-guys-before-trying-to-fix-just-listen/

Six Tips For Parents With Handle Angry Children

http://www.angercoach.com/six-tips-for-parents-to-handle-child-anger/

Avatar: A lesson in Empathy

http://www.angercoach.com/avatar-a-lesson-in-empathy/

Resource URL's for Tool #3 - Respond Instead of React:

Video explanation

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HltfH9ai3v8&feature=youtu.be

Can't change your partner? Try looking in the mirror!

http://www.angercoach.com/cant-change-your-partner-try-looking-in-the-mirror/ How to tank your relationship-Lesson 1

http://www.angercoach.com/how-to-tank-your-relationship-lesson-1/

How to tank your relationship-Lesson 2

http://www.angercoach.com/how-to-tank-your-relationship-lesson-2/

Why don't some marital problems change?

http://www.angercoach.com/why-dont-some-marital-problems-change/

Appendix II : Chapter Resource Addresses for the Eight Keys

Resource URL's for Tool #4 - Change Your Self-Talk:

YouTube Video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mv8xde1Kor4&feature=youtu.be

Control Your Anger-Self-Talk In Action

http://www.angercoach.com/control-your-anger-self-talk-in-action/

How Self-Talk Changes Moods

http://www.angercoach.com/how-self-talk-changes-moods/

Being Happy Is More Important Than Being Right

http://www.angercoach.com/in-close-relationships-most-of-the-time-being-loved-being-respected-or-being-personally-happy-is-more-important-than-being-right-anger-self-talk-7/

I need to develop more understanding and tolerance toward some other people

http://www.angercoach.com/i-need-to-develop-more-patience-and-tolerance-toward-some-people-or-situations-anger-self-talk-7/

I am partly responsible for how other people treat me

http://www.angercoach.com/i-am-partly-responsible-for-how-people-treat-me-anger-self-talk-5/ Nobody is perfect. I must remember that even competent people make mistakes

http://www.angercoach.com/nobody-is-perfect-i-must-remember-that-even-good-intentioned-and-competent-pople-make-mistakes-anger-self-talk-4/

Things don't always have to go my way

http://www.angercoach.com/things-dont-always-have-to-go-my-way-self-talk-part-2/

Resource URL's for Tool #5 - Communicate Assertively:

Anger Coach Video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjFuyZydvhg&feature=youtu.be

"Peace at any Price" is often the wrong strategy

http://www.angercoach.com/peace-at-any-price-is-often-the-wrong-strategy/

Single because of anger?

http://www.angercoach.com/peace-at-any-price-is-often-the-wrong-strategy/

How to tank you relationship-Lesson 2

http://www.angercoach.com/how-to-tank-your-relationship-lesson-2/

Can you change an insecure, jealous spouse?

http://www.angercoach.com/can-you-change-an-insecure-jealous-spouse/

Resource URL's for Tool #6 - Adjust Your Expectations:

Managing Expectations: a Powerful Happiness Tool

http://www.angercoach.com/managing-expectations-a-powerful-happiness-tool/

Can You Change? Perhaps. Maybe. Probably Not

http://www.angercoach.com/can-you-change-maybe-maybe-not-probably/

Appendix II : Chapter Resource Addresses for the Eight Keys

Anger Sometimes Due to our Expectations

http://www.angercoach.com/anger-sometimes-due-to-our-expectations/

Share Expectations to Decrease Conflict and Anger

http://www.angercoach.com/share-expectations-to-decrease-conflict-and-anger/

Resource URL's for Tool #6 - Adjust Your Expectations (continued):

Couples Reduce Anger by Sharing Tasks

http://www.angercoach.com/couples-reduce-anger-by-sharing-tasks/

Learn to Suffer Fools

http://www.angercoach.com/quick-anger-tip-28-learn-to-suffer-fools/

Resource URL's for Tool #7 - Forgiveness:

AngerCoach Video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPWfQ8FDhHE&feature=youtu.be

Forgiveness is a core Tool of Anger Management

http://www.angercoach.com/forgiveness-core-tool-of-anger-management/

Financial Infidelity: Are you dishonest about money?

http://www.angercoach.com/financial-infidelity-are-you-dishonest-about-money/

Anger and Intimacy-Part 2-Betrayal

http://www.angercoach.com/anger-and-intimacy-part-2-betrayal/

Is Forgiveness Manly?

http://www.angercoach.com/is-forgiveness-manly/

Resource URL's for Tool #8 - Retreat and Think Things Over:

The Anger Coach Show Podcast. Retreat and Think Things Over

http://www.angercoach.com/the-angercoach-show-episode-3retreat-and-think-things-over/

Raise Your Mood Before Dealing with Anger Trigger

http://www.angercoach.com/quick-anger-tip-19-raise-your-mood-before-dealing-with-an-anger-trigger/

Don't Let Others Ring Your Bell

http://www.angercoach.com/quick-anger-tip-18-dont-let-others-ring-your-bell/ Anger Management Often Involve Conflict Resolution

http://www.angercoach.com/anger-management-often-involves-conflict-resolution/

Is Anger Sometimes a Good Thing?

http://www.angercoach.com/is-anger-sometimes-a-good-thing/

Contact Information

Dr Tony Fiore 200 Newport Center Drive Suite 300 Newport Beach California 92660

1945 Palo Verde Avenue, Suite 202 Long Beach, California 90815

Tel: 714 / 745 1393 Email: drtony@angercoach.com Website: www.drfiore.com I just wanted to write and tell you what an excellent tool your MCO course is. I've successfully taken the whole course and was surprised at how many topics it covered. I've never taken marriage counseling before and was always afraid to myself, but the MCO course is so easy. I was able to take the different sections at the best times for me-in the early morning-and I got so much out of it! The skill builders are very useful. Some of them I was able to practice at home that same day. The course is not invasive like I had worried counseling would be, but I was able to learn a lot. I still have some work to do but it's nice to finally have the tools I need to make that change happen for my family. Thank you for making such a great tool so readily available.

-Robert B, California

Dear Dr Tony, I wanted to thank you for your Marriage Class Online program. While I was originally concerned about taking the program on my own, it didn't take long to realize the value of the tools you teach. The 8-tools system is so practical and you offer such a simple approach to employing them that it is very easy to feel progress rather quickly. Even though my partner did not take the program with me, it feels good to be making some of the changes I've needed to make for so long. The program helped me identify areas that I hadn't known were such an issue before (or could be), but now I feel like I'm able to finally take charge of my own behavior. Your program has helped me improve the way I communicate not only to my partner, but also to my friends, family and pretty much everyone around me! It still amazes me how focusing on just that one area of life can make such a big difference. Thank you!

-Cameron R, California



Copyright © 2007-2014 by Dr Tony Fiore and The Anger Coach All rights reserved. This document may not be redistributed without permission. Book and cover design by Jason Badham