

HOW TO SAVE YOUR MARRIAGE

OR Why Marriage Counseling Isn't The Only Solution

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There was a time when you would have given your life for your spouse. But no more. Now you are wondering whether it is even possible to save your marriage. This report looks at why marriages fail and what you can do to save yours if that is your desired course of action.

The theme of this report is that you can do everything “right” according to the experts and still fail. Or, you can do things unconventionally and actually save your marriage.

That’s because many of the “experts” have no training, research or experience in actually helping marriages to succeed. In fact, many of the so-called marriage counselors’ schooling is actually detrimental to saving marriage.

You should know that if you handle the marriage crisis badly, you significantly increase your chances of ending up divorced.



Divorce Statistics

That's why there will be 1 million divorces in the United States this year.

Some people like to point out that the divorce rate is actually declining, however slightly. But this is actually a misnomer. The divorce rate per 10,000 people has gone from 42 per 10,000 people to 36 per 10,000 people in this decade. However – and this is important – the number of married people in this time period have declined significantly. Today, 8.1 percent of households consist of unmarried heterosexual couples.

Sweden has the highest percentage of new marriages that end in divorce at almost 55 percent. In the U.S., the chance of a marriage ending in divorce is 45.8 percent. For comparison, in India, that figure stands at just 1.1 percent.

Second and third marriages are more likely to end in divorce than first marriages. The theory is that people who haven't succeed once are more likely to make mistakes again. In any case, the divorce rate in America for first marriages is 41 percent. That jumps to 60 percent for second marriages and 73 percent for third marriages.

The age at which people get married also impacts the likelihood of success. One third of women who get married before they are 24 will end up divorced. However, only 5 percent of women who get married for the first time after age 35 will get divorced. However, the number of women who get married for the first time after 35 is quite small.



Why Marriages Fail

Top 10 Reasons Why Marriages Fail

#10 – Not Doing the Little Things – Movies show marriages as grand loves. But, in the real world, marriages are made up of the little things – taking out the trash, picking up the kids from school. If there are frustrations over the little things, it can erode the whole marriage.

9 – Sweating the small stuff – As a counterpoint, if you stress out over unimportant things, you are dooming your marriage to the dumpster.

8 – Spending too much time apart – If friends, work, or hobbies take too much time away from your marriage, the bonds can begin to erode.

7 – Criticizing and nagging – These two things can eat away at the soul of a marriage.

6 – Not consulting the other person about purchases – The family budget must cover the family needs. If one person makes purchases that significantly impact the overall budget without consulting the other person, there is going to be hurt and anger.

5 – Letting yourself go – You spent a considerable amount of effort pursuing and attracting your spouse. That effort shouldn't have ended on your wedding day or soon thereafter. If you are no longer working to make yourself attractive to your spouse, you must assume that he or she will look elsewhere.

4 – Playing the victim – Is it always his fault? Did she make you do it? If you feel like you are the victim in the relationship, it probably won't last much longer.

3 – Not fighting fair – You are entitled to your legitimate feelings, but when disagreements occur, you must keep your arguments real and relevant. Avoid character assassination. Remain task oriented rather than accusatory. And, allow your partner to retreat with dignity.

2 – Spilling secrets – There are things in your marriage that should only be between the two of you. When you tell your friends or family members about things that shouldn't be shared, you erode the bonds of the marriage. This is a matter of trust.

1 – No sex – When the sex has gone out of the marriage, the relationship is in trouble. Unless you can rekindle the flame, you are probably headed to divorce court.

You can be both “right” and “miserable”

Too often we think that it’s important to be right. But, it is possible to be both right and miserable.

Susan’s husband Jim had an affair with a colleague after she miscarried. Now, admittedly, this was a crummy thing to do.

Susan was devastated by the loss of the baby and had real concerns that she would never be able to have a child. As a result of her physical and emotional condition, she withdrew sexually.

Jim, too, was affected by the miscarriage. He felt that he had to comfort Susan and couldn’t turn to her for support. Instead, he found a sexually attractive woman at work who did not need him emotionally for anything.

Susan is obviously “right” to be outraged that Jim would cheat on her at this low part of her life. But, being the martyr doesn’t help her be happy.

Jim has apologized and said that he would do anything to make the situation right.

Now Susan has to decide whether to forgive him and heal their marriage. As long as she clings to the idea that she is the “wronged” party, she will be miserable. If she can give up that idea, she has a chance at making her marriage work. The ball is actually in her court.

Susan will never forget the miscarriage or the affair that happened after it. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting. Forgiveness means letting go of the intense emotions associated with the event.

This is very important, read this several times: forgiveness is not a feeling. It is a decision.

Whatever the rift that has come between you and your spouse, if you want to make the marriage work, you have to let go of all of the hurt. Make peace. Make up. Make love.



The 'Walk Away Wife' Syndrome

Any divorce lawyer will tell you that he gets a certain amount of male clients who come in stunned that they have been served with divorce papers. “Everything was just perfect,” they will say, “and then she decided to divorce me.” These men are genuinely stunned at what has happened to them. In fact, they believe that their marriage has only gotten better in recent times.

The reason that divorce lawyers see this all of the time is because there is a pattern to the behavior. Some therapists have called it the “Walk Away Wife Syndrome.”

In the early stages of most relationships, the wife is the emotional caretaker. It falls to her to initiate conversations about “where this relationship is going” and “how can we improve intimacy.” The man is bored with these subjects and relegates them to the female arena.

So, the woman will initiate conversations (sometimes these look and feel like fights) and the husband is not responsive. The wife complains about the husband’s lack of responsiveness, at which point he retreats. This makes the woman bring up the conversation anew.

As you can imagine, there are a lot of fights during this period.

At some point, the woman gives up. She stops her role as emotional caretaker. She starts looking for a way out of the marriage. If she has children, she will be especially cautious about finding a way to financially support them.

The ironic thing is that during this period, the fights will subside. The wife has given up, so there is no reason to engage the husband any longer. The husband sees this lull in fighting as meaning that things are improving.

Once the wife has figured out how to proceed with her life emotionally and financially, she serves her husband with divorce papers. This is when the guy walks into a divorce lawyer’s office and says “everything was going just perfectly...”

The point here is that when you stop fighting, things haven’t necessarily improved. In fact, this could be the most dangerous point of a relationship. Men who are too clueless to know that their wife has withdrawn from the relationship are often surprised when it ends.

How to Deal With the 'Walk Away Wife' Syndrome If You Are a Man

If you are a man who has been surprised by a divorce when you thought everything was going fine, you have to find a way to reengage your wife.

First of all, you have to acknowledge that her needs were not being met, even if yours were.

Secondly, you need to realize that she has the right to walk away. Almost every state in the U.S. has some form of “no fault” divorce, though it can be called by other names. That means that you can’t control her behavior. You can only change your own.

Once you have addressed the fact that she had needs you weren’t meeting and that she has the personal power to walk away, you can formulate a plan of action.

Think back to the fights you used to have. What was she complaining about? Are there things you can do to meet the needs that she was constantly bringing up?

At this point, it is possible to bring her back to the marriage, but she has to see real engagement by you. And, you can’t delay. Sure, you are surprised and hurt, but if you see this as a wake up call rather than an attack, you may be able to save your marriage.

Later in this report, I will suggest that marriage counseling is not all it is cracked up to be. But, I do recommend that if you have a Walk Away Wife on your hands, you might want to suggest counseling. This is not to say that the counseling itself will be particularly helpful, but your openness to change will be well received.

At that point, you need to start listening to what her needs are and meeting them. That means paying attention to her. It also means pursuing her with romantic abandon again. You may have to make modifications to your career and other aspects of your life to win her back. And, once you have won her back, you need to know that if you don’t continue to meet her needs, she can walk away again.

If you are a man in this situation, consider it a wake up call.



If You are a 'Walk Away Wife'

If you have decided to divorce your husband, you have probably put a lot of thought into the decision. You have invested emotional energy in the separation. You probably decided that there was no hope a long time ago and have started building a separate life.

If your husband starts to treat the divorce as a wake up call to save the marriage, you have another decision to make. Namely, are you willing to try again?



Think about why you married your husband in the first place. Is there any residue of that left? Are there things you will miss about the relationship if you leave? If he changes some aspects of his behavior, would it make you want to stay.

Or, have you changed so much from the bride you were on your wedding day that moving forward without him seems to be the only course of action?

If he does take the divorce papers as a wake up call, what are the things he needs to say and do to make things right? Is he capable of long term change?

He may suggest marriage counseling. This is indicative that he is willing to put effort into the marriage which is a very good thing. But you should be aware that marriage counseling probably won't save the marriage. It simply isn't effective in most cases. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't go along with it. It just means that you have to have a second course of action.

You need to state what you need in order to stay in the marriage and have a specific action-oriented agenda. It is probably more effective to say "you need to be home every night by 6:30 and take me out on a date once a week" than to say, "let's spend an hour in counseling every week."

Let him know that if you get back into the marriage, he's on probation. You reserve the right to walk again if he goes back to his old ways.

Will he be able to keep up the good behavior? Only time will tell. But if he does see the divorce papers as a wake up call, you have a good reason to give the marriage one more shot.

Marriage Counseling – The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly

When a marriage is in trouble, friends will almost immediately suggest that you get marriage counseling. I've hinted earlier that this might not be such a good idea.

The history of marriage counseling is quite informative about why it is as ineffective as it is. In fact, only 20 percent of people who enter marriage counseling say it had a positive effect on their marriage.

Most counselors are trained therapists with a master's or doctorate in psychology. But it wasn't always like this.

In fact, up until the 1960s, psychologists considered it unethical to treat a married couple together. They thought that the fiduciary relationship between a therapist and a patient could only extend to one person.

Since therapists did not do marriage counseling, who did? Marriage counseling was largely the role of professional clergy with educators and gynecologists picking up some of the slack.

Until the late 1960s, the model for marriage counseling, whether in a pastoral sense or in therapy, was saving the marriage at almost any cost. To this end, many issues were either not addressed or pushed under the carpet. Women were largely held to be responsible for the problems in the relationship. Domestic violence was tolerated.

But, in the 1960s, two trends converged that have continued to affect the marriage therapy model today. The first was that therapists began to change their ethical code to allow couple's therapy. The second was that therapy itself shifted to an individualist mode.

In the 1960s, a new breed of therapist developed. Until that time, psychologists and psychiatrists largely practiced the Freudian based analytical model of long term talk based therapy. This meant that only the very wealthy could afford therapy.

But when Cognitive Behavioral therapy started, patients could be treated in a much shorter period of time.

And, instead of requiring the years put into a doctorate degree, therapists could instead receive a Master's if all they wanted to practice was marriage and family therapy.

In fact, this new breed of therapists were called "Marriage, Family, and Child Therapists" or "Marriage and Family Counselors" depending on the state. Initially, they were supposed to treat couples and families.

However, over time, the model is shifted. A “Marriage and Family Counselor’s” practice consists of 95% individual and group mental illness therapy. They are trained to be individual therapists and get very little instruction in couple’s counseling despite their formal title.

Couple this with the trend toward the individual, mental health approach to therapy. Often, the marriage counselor’s first recommendation is that the parties get individual counseling and come back for marriage counseling only when their dysfunctions have been addressed by other therapists.

Additionally, these therapists, as a whole, do not believe that most marriages are automatically worth saving. They are more geared to maximizing the happiness of one patient rather than saving the family unit.

So, if you are committed to saving your marriage if at all possible, who do you go to for marriage counseling?

If you have friends who have had trouble in their marriage and have found a therapist who was truly helpful, ask for a referral.

If you don’t know anyone who has successfully tried marriage counseling and you want to give it a shot, don’t be afraid to interview several therapists to find a good fit. Ask them how frequently they do marriage (as opposed to individual or group) counseling, what their stand toward marriage is, and what their specific approach to saving marriage is.

You may be able to find a therapist who specializes in saving marriage rather than mental health therapy. Some of the professionals who specialize in this area do retreats, seminars, and “boot camps” that provide insight into your marriage as well.

Pastoral counseling is also worth considering if you are religious. Many clergy are committed to the idea of the sanctity of marriage and work from the premise that unless there are terrible things happening in the relationship (such as domestic violence, alcoholism, or serial adultery), the marriage can be saved.

How to Survive an Affair

Earlier in this report, I introduced you to Jim and Susan. Jim had an affair after Susan had a miscarriage. Is there any hope for a relationship when one party has had an affair?

Actually, there is, particularly if there was only one other man or woman and the offending party is committed to change. Relationships that feature serial adultery have a harder time surviving.

The initial reaction to a spouse having an affair is shock and blame. It is such a violation of the marital vows that one cannot help but being hurt and angry.

But, it is important to move beyond the initial reaction. This is true whether you are going to end the marriage or whether you are going to work on improving it.

You should know that things can improve. In fact, the affair may have been the symptom of much more fundamental problems in the relationship. This is not to say that the affair was a good thing by any means, but you can turn the hurt and pain into making a stronger marriage. A mended bone is stronger at the broken place.

If you are the person who was cheated on, you are going to want details. Part of this is a morbid curiosity. Another part is because you need to know “why.”

Sometimes the “why” isn’t always clear. If your spouse is something of an emotional cripple, he or she may not be able to articulate why they went astray.

Instead, you need to focus on what is lacking in your marriage and how you want to move forward.

You need to take responsibility for the negative things you have contributed to the relationship. This does not, however, mean that the affair was your fault. Nobody can force someone else into an affair. The person who cheated must take full responsibility for the violation of the relationship. They could have said no. They could have presented you with the need for you to change. Instead, they snuck out behind your back.

If the relationship is to be rebuilt, the offending spouse must have true regret and remorse. He or she has to completely cut the person with whom they had the affair out of their life. If this means making painful choices such as changing jobs or moving, this must be a prerequisite for going forward.

But, once the straying spouse has come to terms with the consequences of the affair, both spouses have to rebuild the marriage. One of the fundamental things that must be done is to rebuild the friendship that you share.

The key to healing is forgiveness. You have to stop blaming your spouse for having the affair and move on. You have to see tomorrow as a clean slate.

How to Know When To Leave a Marriage

Not all marriages can be saved. Specifically, if any of the three “A”s have occurred, you would probably be wise to leave the relationship. These are:

- Abuse – Any physical violence and severe emotional abuse are grounds for divorce at all times.
- Alcoholism – If your spouse is a chronic alcoholic, you are not going to be able to get the love and support you need. If he or she won’t get treatment, you have no obligation to stay.
- Adultery (chronic) – You can recover from one affair. But, if your spouse is a player, you have every right to leave.

But, there are times when the problems in the marriage are not clear cut. You may believe that you would be better off single or with someone else but aren’t sure that you are right to end the marriage.

Consider whether you have a true partnership in your marriage. For instance, have you been required to put aside the goals you have set for yourself? Are you isolated from your friends and family? Are you limited in what you can do for entertainment because of the demands of your spouse?

Have you had to change your belief system? Do you have to constantly nag to get what you want and need? Do you make excuses for your spouse’s behavior? Do you feel that you have to walk on eggshells?

If you worry constantly over the problems in your relationship, you may be considering divorce.

These are real issues. And many partners are unwilling to address them.

If you are considering divorce but would rather have a change in behavior from your spouse, you can:

- Do an intervention – Tell your spouse that you are going to leave unless. Be prepared to really leave if he or she won’t change.
- Seek outside help – While I am leery of most individual-oriented therapists, I do know that outside help can save marriages. Suggest attending a marriage retreat or some other function where you can discuss your problems. They may have a different suggestion from the one you proposed, but if they are unwilling to work on the marriage at all, you must be prepared to leave.

- Leave – This is what happens in walk away marriages, but you can also leave if you are not 100 percent committed to divorce. Physically separating yourself from your spouse puts them on notice that things have to change or the relationship is history.
- Stay – If you are not prepared to walk away from the marriage, you have no power. As long as your partner doesn't have to change and things will stay as they are, inertia will take over. You can't force your partner to do anything including meet your needs. You have power over only your own behavior. If you are not willing to change your situation, you should be prepared to accept it.

Conclusion

There is hope for a dying marriage. But, the solution is not the commonly given one (six sessions of couple's counseling with a Marriage and Family Therapist). Instead, one person has to show the other one that change is necessary for the survival of the relationship.

At that point, both parties have to be willing to address the underlying issue that they are both responsible for problems in the relationship. Both parties have to be willing to change. Marital strife and dissatisfaction is NEVER the result of one spouse's behavior alone.

If you are going to work things out, you need to realize that connection, not communication, is at the heart of saving the marriage. You can improve your communication skills and just end up a better fighter!

Instead, you need to rekindle what is good about your relationship. Most people ended up at the alter because they wanted to build a life with the other person. You need to get back to the person you were on your wedding day.

That means that you must spend time together. You should plan on having some time every day that is just for the two of you. This could be having a 20 minute breakfast before the kids get up, taking a walk after dinner every day, or just putting aside the last 20 minutes before you go to sleep to reconnect.

Then, you have to put the romance into your life on a frequent basis. Schedule a "date night" every week. Try to woo your spouse all over again. Think dinner and dancing not dinner and a movie – the former will give you a chance to get in touch with your feelings while the latter has you sitting in silence.

When you "go out" on your "date," get ready for it like you lived in separate houses. You can even go as far as getting dressed in separate rooms. And, you should make an effort when you dress, just like you did when you were dating.

Do the little "dating" things as well. Men should consider bringing their wives flowers from time to time, holding her car door, and act with general courtesy.

These date nights don't have to be expensive, but they do have to allow the two of you to reconnect.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't bring up the subject of sex. There is a reason why sex is tied in so closely with marriage in every society. You need to be having regular,

frequent, satisfactory sex. If this element is missing from your relationship, make every effort to remedy the problem forthwith.

At its root, no marriage is perfect because no person is perfect. But marriage can be a good and satisfying institution for both spouses and for the children of the relationship. This requires work and love.

Further Resources

Online Downloads [Copy and paste the short urls to visit web site]

[Save My Marriage Today by Amy Waterman](http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/8)

<http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/8>

[Save Your Marriage... Starting Today by Lee Baucom, Ph.D.](http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/9)

<http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/9>

[Unlock The Secrets to Saving Your Marriage by Dr. Katie Zaltman, Ph.D.](http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/10)

<http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/10>

[Break Free From the Affair by Dr. Bob Huizenga](http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/11)

<http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/11>

Online Websites [Copy and paste the short urls to visit web site]

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<http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/13>

[NaturalAndLastingAttraction.com](http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/14)

<http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/14>

[Have The Relationship You Want](http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/15)

<http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/15>

[GetHimAndKeepHim.com](http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/16)

<http://www.aLoveLink.com/ff/16>