Managing A Marital Crisis
by
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I love you, I'm just not in love with you.

It's not you, it's me.

I'm not sure what I want.

A marital crisis occurs when a partner’s commitment becomes uncertain. This e-book will guide you through responding to this overwhelming situation.
Marital Problems

- Committed to improving the relationship
- Arguing and tension
- Attack and defending
- Anger
- Divorce threatened

Marital Crisis

- Ambivalent commitment
- Coldness and tension
- Physical and sexual distance
- Fear and insecurity
- Divorce considered

If you found yourself lost in the forest, you would not want to follow any path that you felt was correct. You would want to use a compass or GPS device to lead you in the direction toward home.

It is important to understand the path you want to take during a marital crisis. Your instincts cannot be trusted to choose the best path. In fact, reacting out of fear or anger can worsen the crisis and drive your partner further from the marriage.
1. **Shock**—the inability to comprehend that your partner’s commitment is uncertain and your marriage could end.

2. **Trying To Make The Crisis Go Away**—using love, sex, threats, guilt and anything else to quickly end the crisis.

3. **Searching For An Enemy To Defeat**—searching for a single issue that when resolved will end the crisis.

4. **Frustration Turns To Anger**—your vulnerable feelings are converted to anger, which feels stronger as you attack your partner.

5. **Acceptance**—understanding your partner’s ambivalence and the need to encourage good decision-making.
Once Upon A Time — We Were Together

Your marriage was a ceremony to celebrate the bond of togetherness that formed as you were dating. You had made an equal effort to show you cared and to let your partner know you were committed to the relationship.

It was easy to show that you cared when you were dating. You showed interest in your partner’s daily experiences and received similar attention. A bond of mutual support formed.

If your relationship had been conducted on a football field (excuse the sports analogy), you would have met on the fifty-yard line. You let your partner know that he or she was valued and that you wanted the relationship to continue.
Responding to a Distancing Spouse

You were supposed to remain in the middle of the field, forever committed to working on the relationship. But now you are faced with a partner who is difficult to recognize. Warmth has been replaced with cool indifference. Efforts to discuss the relationship are met with excuses that prevent that connection.

You find yourself desperate to connect. You want to understand what has caused the distance. You recognize that the relationship is not perfect, but you cannot understand why your partner is unwilling to discuss improving the relationship.

You begin searching for an answer. Your imagination searches for all of the reasons that could result in this distance. You feel tense, fearful and sad. But your pain is met with indifference.
Your partner is experiencing ambivalence. Ambivalence is different from confusion and the difference is important. When you are confused, more information can be helpful, but the ambivalent partner has strong competing emotions that prevent a decision.

Your partner is like someone on a fence unable to decide which side to get off on. On the one side of the fence is re-committing to the marriage and on the other side is divorce. Competing emotions keep him or her from deciding.

The fence analogy is important for how you respond. If you try to pull someone sitting on a fence, they will pull in the opposite direction to maintain their balance. Similarly, if you try to make a case for why your partner should recommit to the marriage, he or she will be reminded on all the reasons for not committing to the relationship.
Danger: Pushing Your Partner Further Away

Pursuing a distancing spouse will push him or her further away. Also, you will diminish yourself in the process.

Although it is a far more intense situation, imagine you are in high school. You are interested in someone, but find out that your feelings are not met. You would not respond by pursuing your love interest, because pursuing in that situation would devalue you.

Instead, you must accept your partner’s distance, but this does not mean that you are powerless. In fact, you must establish power in order to attract your mate and display your value.

But how do you establish power when you are feeling so vulnerable?
Attracting Your Mate From The Fifty-Yard Line

1. Demand respect. Do not accept disrespectful behavior in order to “keep the peace”.
2. Bargain for time rather than the relationship. Good decisions take time. Avoid injecting emotions into the process.
3. Be unpredictable. Hopelessness is the enemy of the marriage. Behave in a way that suggests that you are open to an improved relationship.
4. Listen for your partner’s emotions. Accepting his or her emotional state will make those emotions less powerful.
5. Take care of yourself. Address your physical, emotional, spiritual, and social needs.
6. Do not sacrifice yourself for the marriage—you are more valuable than the marriage, even though both are precious.
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