
The Beacon

Guiding You Through the Process of Change

Published by Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC
40 Dale Road, Suite 201 Avon, CT 06001
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Volume 5, Issue 3

Summer, 2005

Should I Leave?

Are you discontent and unhappy in your partnership/marriage? Are you thinking of, or wishing for a way out? Before making this very difficult and life changing decision you may want to consider some common misconceptions many couples have about marriage. These misconceptions can cause you and your partner a great deal of unhappiness and perhaps unnecessarily lead you down the path towards divorce.

If you love me you would know: Don't expect your partner to read your mind. Take responsibility for what you want, whether it is a gift you wanted and did not get or a sexual intimacy issue. Say what you mean and mean what you say.

Marriage is a 50-50 partnership: Balance is different in every marriage. When you truly love someone, your desire can be to make life a little easier and more pleasant for the other. If keeping tally sheets and a "you owe me" attitude is held, you may be employing an attorney soon.

We should be able to say anything to each other: Intimate relationships require the same courtesy, civility and respect we are apt to pay to total strangers. Politeness, tact and good humor all help create a relaxed and loving environment. Saying "anything" can be hurtful, cruel and disrespectful and does not honor the love and importance of the marriage.

True love means I shouldn't have to say, "I'm sorry": Unless you are willing to acknowledge being wrong and then genuinely apologize for errors or a lack of consideration, your marriage can become characterized by resentment, tension and even hatred. Try accepting differences rather than making them a source of

conflict. Sometimes differences aren't right or wrong, they are just different.

An unhappy marriage is better than a broken home: There are few things more unpleasant than a loveless marriage held together by fear, guilt or duty. When children are the basic glue that binds a marriage, their emotional needs are often neglected. When all efforts to rectify the relationship fail and chronic unhappiness and dissent prevail, remember that a constructive amicable divorce can result in two well functioning (but separate) households working together to take care of the children.

I am not in love with him/her anymore: I once heard a man who had been married for 52 years answer the question, "How did you get it to last that long?" His simple response was, "We never fell out of love with each other at the same time." Pay attention to what you can do to rekindle and affirm the love for your partner.

We just don't see things the same way: Differing perceptions about the same issue are at the core of many marital arguments. The healthy option is often to agree to disagree on the content and instead agree on getting emotional closure. Would you rather be right or get along?

Good marriages rely on cooperative, collaborative and unified bonds of functioning where both partners accept responsibility for their own happiness, communicate, and compromise. In a successful marriage mind-reading, blaming, telling the other what he or she is thinking or feeling, and attempts to reconstruct one another into the ideal image are kept to a minimum.

If you are contemplating leaving your marriage, please bring the subject to the table and talk about what's

bothering you with your partner first. If you think you can't talk because it will only create arguing and defensiveness you should seek help from a professional counselor who can be objective and try to help you resolve the conflict. You may not save your marriage, but you can learn to not repeat mistakes. Remember, you take yourself, your feelings and what you learn with you as you journey through life.

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Suggested Readings:

Marital Myths by Arnold Lazarus

Relationship Rescue by Philip McGraw

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