

Resiliency-build Your Marriage

By Patricia Morgan © 2009

“Unfaithfully Yours: Infidelity is eroding our most sacred institution. How to make marriage matter again.” This was the headline of the July 13, 2009 issue of Time. The article featured governor Mark Sanford, John Edwards and, of course, Jon Gosselin of Jon and Katie Plus 8 fame. Regrettably the article described failures more than “How to make marriage matter again.”

After 41 years of marriage I marvel at the poor fidelity and marriage sustainable record of some very intelligent and successful men and women. After all, Desperate Housewives is considered entertainment. Bill Clinton comes to mind. Fortunately for their marriage Hillary knows how to forgive. I felt huge disappointment when I heard that one of my Canadian inspirations, award winning comic strip creator, Lynn Johnson, was divorced. How ironic that her marriage did not reflect the title of her long running strip, For Better or For Worse. That’s the rub—*for better and worse*.

The bad news is soooooo visible. Yet couples continue to tie the knot that they never imagine will gag them. They desire a faithful partner who will cheerlead in the good times and soften the bad times. This year our darling daughter, Katie married her sweetie. We’re glad. We’re thrilled. We’re hopeful. So what do I wish for her and her intended life partner? Consider the beginning lines of my wedding blessing.

*May you cherish each other’s beauty and gift
While accepting each other’s shadow and weakness.*

*May you have enough disagreements to grow
While seeking to understand the other.*

Note: if you want the complete blessing please email me at patricia@SolutionsForResilience.com

How to Make Marriage Matter Again



patricia@SolutionsForResilience.com
www.SolutionsForResilience.com

Since the 1980s John Gottman, has extensively researched marriages. He can predict with about 90% accuracy the couples who will survive and thrive, and those who will collapse. Gottman identified four key patterns that create intimate relationship failure:

1. Contempt--coming from a superior position with put-down or demeaning language and gestures
2. Criticism--finding fault and pointing out errors
3. Stonewalling--especially avoiding discussing problems
4. Defensiveness--pushing back and denial

You could take each one of these dynamic patterns and rate your relationship from 0=never to 10=so much I'm sick most days and it would be best if I left:

	My Behavior:	Spouse's Behavior:
1. Contempt:	0.....10	0.....10
2. Criticism:	0.....10	0.....10
3. Stonewalling:	0.....10	0.....10
4. Defensiveness:	0.....10	0.....10

Do something about your own scores first. If you have scores of 6 or over under "my behavior" please make a positive change and/or seek outside support. If you have scores of 6 or over under "spouse's behavior" learn some assertive skills and/or seek outside support. When you have a mutual shooting match seek outside support ASAP.

Gottman also discovered marriages that thrive have a 1 to 5 ratio of negative to positive interactions. Rate your relationship from 0=never to 10=so much we nauseate the neighbors with our devoted love:

	My Behavior:	Spouse's Behavior:
1. Caring gestures --acts of service or <i>favors</i> :	0.....10	0.....10
2. Affectionate touch:	0.....10	0.....10
3. Expressions of appreciation:	0.....10	0.....10
4. Expressions of cherishing --"I love, love, love you."	0.....10	0.....10
5. Pleasant surprises --treats, gifts:	0.....10	0.....10

When your scores for contributing positively to your relationship are under 6 all you need to do is increase the frequency of enhancing gestures, preferably the ones your partner welcomes and appreciates. When your partner's scores are under 6 make a behavior change by expressing appreciation for the love gestures you want to experience more often.

Summer is filled with wedding gowns, honking horns and vows of “I do.” I suggest you fill it with many expressions of “I love you.”

Resources:

- ***Five Love Language*** by Gary Chapman
- ***The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*** by John Gottman
- ***Divorce Busting*** by Michele Weiner-Davis.
- Banff Couples Conference at www.banffcouplesconference.com

Patricia Morgan is an author, speaker and workshop leader
Woe to Wow—Solutions for Resilience
Contact her to help your people become stress hardy at 403-242-7796,
patricia@SolutionsForResilience.com or www.SolutionsForResilience.com