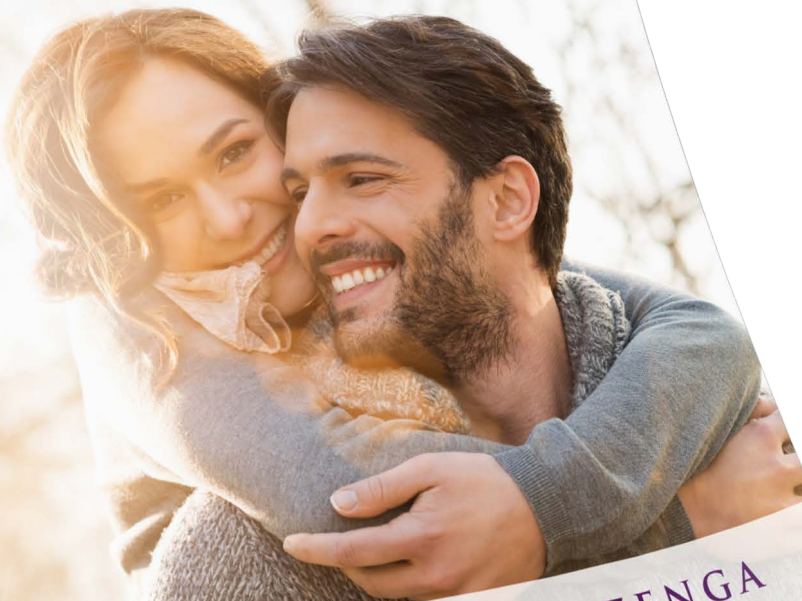


**THE ALTERNATIVE TO “FIXING”  
YOUR MARRIAGE OR “MAKING”  
LOVE HAPPEN**



**BY DR. BOB HUIZENGA**

# You CANNOT Force or Fix Love

**Once you fall out of love, you often find loving and being loved difficult.**

- You feel the burden, the weight of the world on your shoulders.
- You try with all your might to make your marriage better.
- Your spirit is about dead. Your heart simmers with low-grade anger. Your dreams of intimacy, of a happy marriage of being cherished and respected are fading.
- You walk through the park on a bright sunny day and see an elderly couple walking hand in hand;
- Your heart sinks with the thought that this might not ever be you.
- You roll over in bed in the morning and come face to face with someone you don't know.

- You stand next to a stranger you are reluctant to touch or receive touch – in so many ways.
- You feel alone... oh so alone.
- Your heart aches. S/he is gone...at least emotionally.
- A wall of tension, of emptiness and of fear separates the two of you.
- And the disconnect goes on... and on... and on

And, you may be the only one “trying.” And on top of it all, the more you try, the more you persist, the more s/he seems to fade away.

The pit of emotional emptiness you feel right now you want filled with the warmth of a true and lasting love. You want a deep emotional connection.

Yes, you can have that powerful emotion! And, I want it for you.

I assume this is not your first attempt to find information on how to have a great marriage or relationship. Am I correct?

There is not a shortage of marital and relationship advice floating around you.

And, from mainstream and conventional sources (professional and self help) you get your typical advice and suggestions:

- Get your partner to talk about feelings
- Try to get an agreement to work on the marriage
- You must meet his/her needs, expecting reciprocity
- Do special things for your partner
- Try out new communication techniques
- Plan a surprise or special event.
- Be more sexy or romantic
- Register for a weekend marriage conference
- Suggest marriage counseling

# Conventional Advice falls far short

Most of these suggestions DO NOT get at the core issues underlying your marital pain and emptiness.

Now, some of these approaches may be helpful. The stress and strain may be lessened. You may feel better, although that is not a given, especially if one is resistant.

I coached a woman who was feeling empty and alone, wanting more from her husband. She pursued, suggested and asked for more support, connection and “romance.”

So, he spent \$30,000 for a week at an exquisite 5 star Resort for couples in Puerto Rico. She said the first day or so was rather tense, she picking up on some of his resistance. But after that they had a great time.

However, she sadly reported that once they flew back, landed at the airport, drove to their home and opened the front door, the old empty feelings returned. The core issues of that relationship were not addressed: only glossed over and avoided by an expensive week away.

Believe me, those who espouse traditional and conventional methods are good people; some of them great people, some of them my best friends. They truly want the best for you.

However, these approaches or theories are limited. Plus they often take a great deal of time and money!

And, remember, the divorce rate is stuck at 50% and 9 out of 10 people continue to report dissatisfaction in their relationship. I'm sure most of them have utilized conventional methods, which in the long run failed.

## **The 3 Premises of Conventional Relationship Saving Advice**

Here's the core of the problem: the foundation for Conventional advice is based on these three assumptions that seem reasonable and logical and are deeply embedded in the very fabric of how we think and feel about ourselves in a relationship and how we view that relationship.

Read carefully these three assumptions:

1. Something “out there” will make you better. Your partner can take away your emptiness. Romance can fill the void. An expert will unlock the door to your unhappiness. A new strategy or method of relating or communicating will make your world better. Something “out there” has the POWER to change you and make your life different. Your partner changing will make you change. A new pill or magic potion will revitalize your marriage or relationship.

2. The second assumption is that you are defective. Something is lacking in or about you. You or your relationship is dysfunctional. You must change. You are sick and need to get well. You lack. Your marriage is a mess. You are a mess. (And, again, something out there will treat your sickness or add where there is lack.)

3. The third assumption: you must perform. You must get healthier, become more attractive, lose weight, learn communication skills, be more romantic, listen better, talk more, talk less, and the list goes on and on. If you act differently, if you meet particular standards, your life and marriage will be better.

You are exposed to these three assumptions in one form or another every day; through advertising, self help articles and in other forms of media.

You are lead to believe that you can, through using conventional advice, tricks and strategies, “make” your other love you more or “make” your relationship better.

It is also pounded into to you that if your relationship is broken, you can “fix it.”

These three assumptions I refer to as the “Fix it/Force it” laws.

### **Your worst relationship moment contains these three assumptions**

Take some time. Think of your worst marital moment. What defined that moment? What was happening? What deep within you and the relationship fed the distress?

Take a minute, give this some thought.

Didn't you really tend to believe that...

If only our spouse were different, your marriage would be better,

Deep down, if you dare to admit it, something was wrong with you. You lacked something.

You needed to change in a particular way to get (or manipulate) the love you want from your partner.

Let me strongly state to you that if you live by these assumptions, you will NEVER have the love and emotional connection you long for! Never!

When you live by these three assumptions, you experience these results:

- End up silently sobbing after sex, feel so alone
- Heart rate spikes, tightness in chest when spouse comes home
- You wonder where s/he is. What s/he doing
- You feel like you play a role. You've lost 'you.'
- Particular words or looks trigger the anxiety and tension
- You feel unappreciated, not wanted
- You fear s/he is becoming more distant
- Your self esteem continues to erode
- You resent giving so much
- You are afraid to speak the truth
- You feel trapped, stuck

Conventional marital and relational advice seems reasonable and practical – to try to move “closer.” But “Closer” does not mean intimacy at its deepest and most satisfying level.

And it seems that common sense tells you that if there is emotional distance in your relationship you should try to “make” your other move closer.

The three assumptions of most conventional advice is an attempt to push two people together – into a form of pseudo intimacy. However, this closeness is not a closeness of freedom and joy, as we have seen; it eventually becomes a trap in which a relationship and those within the relationship feel stuck, anxious and exude tension.

There is a technical term for this pseudo intimacy condition, arising out of Marital Systems theory back a few decades. The technical term is Emotional Fusion.

Couples or family systems that live by the 3 assumptions I outlined above eventually become Emotionally Fused.

Attempting to “make” – whatever subtle or not so subtle trick, game or strategy you use – will result in Emotional Fusion.

Relationships become emotionally enmeshed, reacting with negativity to each other, in a futile attempt to declare their own space and sense of individual well being.

The fusion over time becomes more intense; the anxiety skyrockets and the system feels deep pain and isolation, even though they are seemingly “close.”

My clinical training was mainly in the arena of Marital and Family Systems, and I was terribly excited and hopeful as we developed a framework that enabled couples and families to “defuse,” grow and experience the joy and satisfaction of being in life-giving relationships. We developed systems to counter the Emotional Fusion tendencies.

Please know that this position counter to conventional relationship advice was, as you can imagine, not always popular in the medical communities. We were seen as undermining some long held assumptions about “treatment,” which meant you went to a doctor because there was something wrong with you and you needed to follow his advice to get better. (Please reflect on the 3 assumptions outlined earlier.)

While serving on the State Board for Marriage and Family Therapy in the 90s I became disillusioned with many Marriage and Family Colleagues, whom from my perspective, abandoned the framework of Family and Marital Systems and reverted back to the 3 assumptions, tied closely to the medical community. (Insurance companies and a therapist's need for reimbursement played a large part.)

From the mid 90s to today, I observe the underlying assumptions of Emotional Fusion to take a foot hold on many different levels of our society.

### **You are programmed to Emotionally Fuse**

The world around you screams for you to emotionally fuse, not only with your partner but with a product, a person or an idea.

You are told that a pill, a facial lotion, a procedure, a diet plan, a guru, a car, etc. etc. will make your life better. Take that something out there, place it in your life and your life will be immeasurably better.

Get married and you will live happily ever after. Use 3 different secrets to make your spouse be more romantic and all will be well. Someone or something "out there" will make your life better.

You are missing something. You lack something. You are not attractive enough. You don't communicate very well. You are too aggressive. You don't listen. You are sick. You are dysfunctional. (And, others have the secret or therapy to make you better.)

You must perform. You must learn how to win friends and influence people. You must say the right words. You must learn to convey power with your body. You must utter particular words to get to your man's heart. You must learn to be more aggressive to attract your mate.

It is no surprise that the divorce rate continues at 50%.

We are like the proverbial dog chasing its tail.

To experience self worth, to relax and allow love to emerge seems like a foreign world. We do not speak that language or live that life.

The world screams at you to Emotionally Fuse. The self help communities, therapists included, unknowingly perpetuate "Emotional Fusion."

You are encouraged to (1) look to a source outside yourself for help, that (2) you lack something and (3) you must act (perform) differently to get the love you want.

These 3 elements slap you in the face on television, in advertising, at the grocery checkout counter, in self help books and yes, in the therapist's office.

You are told:

Be more romantic. Be sexier. Seduce. Charm. (Perform) to win him/her back (focus on him/her.)

Focus on your spouse's needs. Accommodate and s/he will reciprocate. (Focus on him/her)

Learn communication and confrontation skills (perform)

Get counseling. Conventional counseling is based on treating a disorder (something is wrong with you.) Why do you suppose men won't go to counseling? Who wants a disorder label stamped on their receipt? Why do you suppose women go to therapy too much? Do they want something outside themselves to "make them better?" (Please know I'm aware of gender stereotypes.)

EMOTIONAL FUSION will NEVER Give you the Love you REALLY Want

EMOTIONAL FUSION is thought to be love: it is not.

EMOTIONAL FUSION is thought to be intimacy: it is not!

And, here's the kicker; your sense of being stuck, hopeless and swirling in your never ending cycles of negativity will only get worse if you live (unwittingly) by the assumptions of EMOTIONAL FUSION.

Trying to “make” your other love you will not work.

Learning a skill or implementing the latest self help strategy will NOT FIX your relationship.

**You cannot FORCE love.**

**You cannot FIX love.**

## About Dr. Huizenga

Dr. Bob Huizenga is an author, researcher and coach specializing in relationships of emotional investment. He began his practice as a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in 1981 working since then with thousands of individuals and couples wanting better relationships. In 2002 he wrote one of the first and best selling ebooks on infidelity, "Break Free From the Affair." In addition, Dr. Huizenga recently finished two online courses, The Infidelity Recovery Center and the Marriage Building Online Course, reflecting his research and marital clinical experience over the past 30 years. <http://infidelity-recovery-center.com/member-sp-7-17/> and <http://www.saveamarriageforever.com/member-sp-a/>