

**Common Barriers to Keeping the Marriage
Building Focus**

By: Dr. Bob Huizenga

Major Reason why Focusing is so Difficult



I've observed that we live in an ADD – OCD culture.

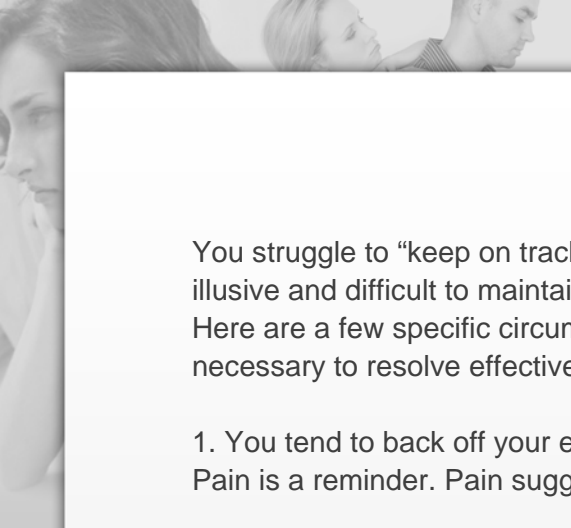
You may flit from thought to thought, project to project and for the life of you find it difficult to maintain your focus. Our medical community labels this as Attention Deficit Disorder and prescribes medication.

Or you may work extremely hard controlling your environment or the people in your world. You want to feel safe and mentally become exhausted plotting and arranging your world so it feels safe. Our medical community labels this an Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and prescribes medication.

In the first case it seems impossible to focus on anything for a period of time. In the second case your focus is so narrow you miss what is important.

The intent of both ADD and OCD is to manage your tension.

When a marriage crisis invades your life you find it extremely difficult to maintain your focus on the core issues in your marriage crisis.



You struggle to “keep on track.” Your spouse also may wander. A meaningful connection feels illusive and difficult to maintain.

Here are a few specific circumstances that typically make it difficult to maintain the focus necessary to resolve effectively and permanently your marital dilemma:

1. You tend to back off your energy and commitment once the pain recedes. Pain is a motivator. Pain is a reminder. Pain suggests you keep focused on repairing and rebuilding.

And, if you are like most, you deplore pain.

I’ve observed over the years that counseling, whether individual or couple, has relief expectations. The medical community again describes counseling as “treatment.” And, the ultimate goal, at least in our culture, is relief from the discomfort.

Once relief or pain reduction is achieved, I’ve encountered untold couples and individuals call a halt to not only counseling but also the process of shifting and addressing any elephant left sitting in the room.

2. Others will distract you from the often complex but exciting rebuilding process. Your family and friends again, don’t want you to suffer (probably because it reminds them of THEIR suffering) and so they offer simplistic and pop culture solutions.

And so you hear, “Get rid of him/her. I wouldn’t put up with that! Why do you put up with that? Just work harder. Meet his/her needs. You need counseling. Spend more time together. Hey, I just read this book on marriage....” Etc.

They fail to “get” your journey or the depth to which you desire healing and restoration. And, if you change too much, become someone different, you may pose a threat to their sense of familiarity.

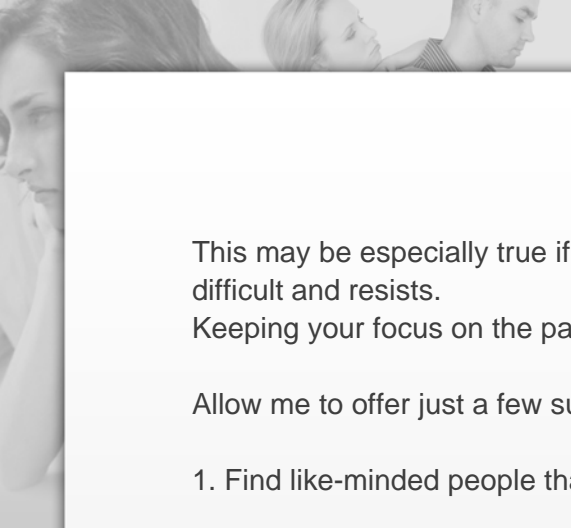
3. The lure of the familiar may be too much.

To embrace a world of powerful love, an intimacy that craves depth and understanding, a self that desires to be more vulnerable and give and receive more expectantly means you are moving into the unknown.

There are moments of doubt and concern for those who truly want to move into that world of intimacy.

The old self, the self that could predict the response of your partner, although not what you wanted, still relishes the familiar.

And so, you might back off your new path. You might one day slide back to the familiar world of lack and distance.



This may be especially true if your spouse or significant other finds the new path extremely difficult and resists.

Keeping your focus on the path of restoration and a deepening intimacy has its challenges.

Allow me to offer just a few suggestions on what you can do to better maintain your focus.

1. Find like-minded people that support and encourage you.

It may be difficult to find such a group locally.

This is where the power of the internet serves you.

Hundreds of those who read my first ebook, “Break Free From the Affair” not only found the materials extremely helpful, but used support groups and chat rooms I established online.

Many attest to the healing power of those groups and relationships. Some, who lived in proximity to each other, would gather locally to continue their support.

2. Read. Keep informed. Learn.

When I face a crisis I usually have 3-5 books on the topic open and reading. I devour new information.

Knowledge IS power.

A new world opens. (Do you suppose one of the purposes of a crisis is to do just that – open a new world?)

3. Journal and write, if it fits you.

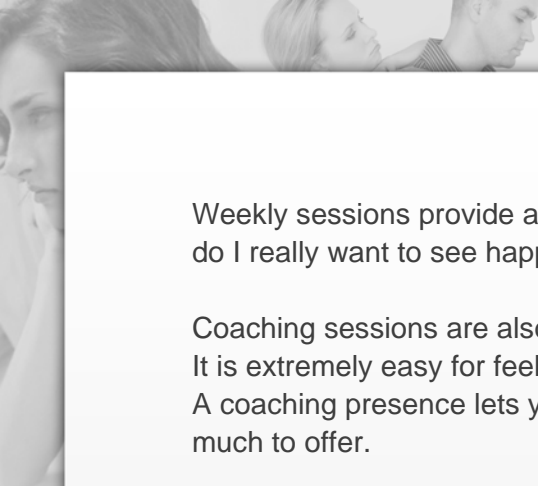
Writing for some, is a powerful way to keep your mind and spirit focused.

The words often flow freely when I write. It's as if words come from within me automatically and freely.

Those words express most fully at the moment what I need and must express to complete the next chapter of my journey.

4. Have a Personal Coach

Many find it helpful to contract with me or Jeryl for coaching sessions as a way to keep focused and accelerate the change process.



Weekly sessions provide a framework of accountability. (What will I focus on this week? What do I really want to see happen and experience?)

Coaching sessions are also vital to maintain your self esteem and sense of well being. It is extremely easy for feelings and thoughts of worth to slide down the toilet in a marital crisis. A coaching presence lets you know that you truly are OK, have value and worth and do have much to offer.

5. Place a rubber band on your wrist and when your mind and heart wanders to the negativity, snap back to reality.

This trick is especially helpful when you identify a negative theme or way of thinking that triggers a long and hard slide to illusions and distortions about yourself or your spouse that become self-defeating and destructive.

6. Reframe your pain.

Think of your pain as your friend.

Think of your pain as a part of you that is merely suggesting you seek another way of thinking, feeling and acting that will bring deeper joy and more meaning in your life.

Just notice your pain. Acknowledge your pain.

And, this may sound a little weird, listen to your pain.

Your pain or that part of you will let you know what you really want.

It will keep you focused on moving into the next wonderful chapter of your life and relationship.

You need not allow circumstances or your internal struggle to knock you off focus.

Use the suggested tools to keep you on target, moving toward a life and relationship that keeps a smile on your face and warmth in your heart.

Shift Your Focus



When confronted with a marital crisis, your knee jerk reaction is to focus “out there” to stop the crisis.

An almost obsessive like focus on your spouse or partner during a marital crisis I find extremely common, at least when the crisis first erupts.

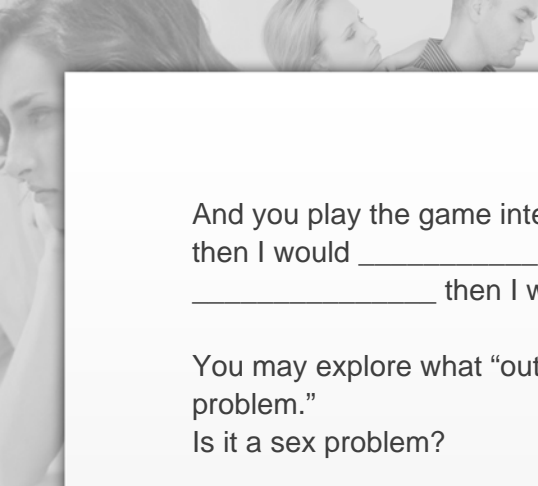
Your world is thrown into chaos. Your future suddenly is marked by uncertainty and fear.

You may want assurance from your spouse that this is not as bad as it seems. You need to hear from him/her that your world will indeed be ok.

You need to hear that you are still cared about, considered and yes, loved.

You wonder what s/he is thinking. Where did this come from? You need information. You need data. You want to know what in the world is going on. What moved him/her to this crazy like behavior? After all, YOUR life is on the line.

And so, your eyes, your words, your thoughts, day and night focus and wonder about him/her.



And you play the game internally and also with him/her; If only you would _____ then I would _____. And your spouse/partner replies; Well, If only you would _____ then I would _____.

You may explore what “out there” caused the problem. You begin to work diligently at “fixing the problem.”

Is it a sex problem?

Is it a money problem?

Is it a work problem?

Is it a children problem?

Is it a friend/family problem?

Is it a health problem?

Is it a time problem?

You search for any inkling of what problem “out there” needs to be fixed to short circuit the crisis.

You are taught to “fix” a problem that exists in your world, so you rack your brain attempting to create solutions to your problem.

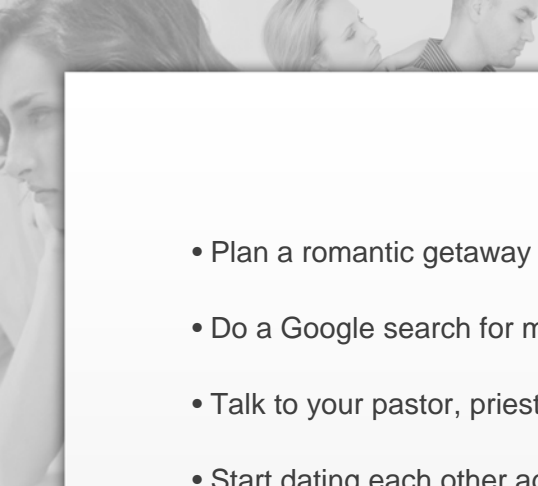
You eventually will discover that attempts to “fix the problem” are met with resistance at best and sabotage at worst.

Your crisis is fueled not by a problem “out there” that needs to be fixed but an inner emptiness or chaos that cries for relief.

The next step of external focus is to seek help; to look in your world for something or someone who can “make” you – and your spouse or partner – better again.

And you think about:

- Get into marriage counseling
- Find a good couples’ therapist
- Attend a weekend marital retreat or conference
- Read a self help book on rebuilding a marriage

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- Plan a romantic getaway
 - Do a Google search for marriage help
 - Talk to your pastor, priest or rabbi
 - Start dating each other again
 - Spend time talking about your feelings

Now, some of these approaches will be helpful. You will feel better. The stress and strain will most likely diminish.

Although these rebuilding strategies are commonly espoused, **they are temporary fixes at best.**

Most fail to address the underlying process of building a marriage or relationship of deep emotional investment. As well, they often fail to get at the core issues that are vital to a healthy long-term relationship.

Creating a lasting and mutually satisfying emotional connection that you can trust and know will endure the test of time only occurs once the marital process is embraced and core issues are addressed.

Summary: No one “out there,” no therapist, no retreat, nothing “out there” will give you what you ultimately want – peace, fulfillment and passion.

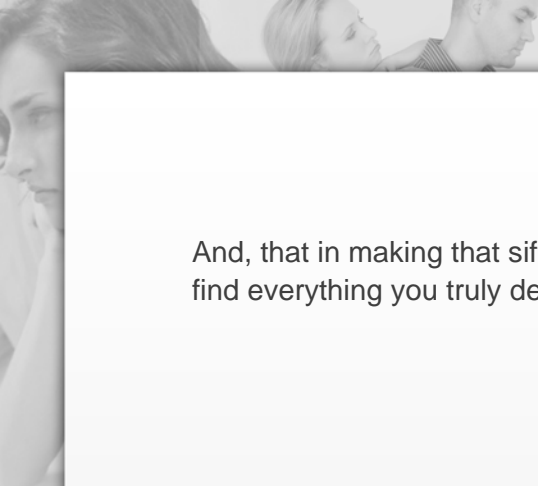
Once you shift your focal point from what outside you can “make you better” to “what am I experiencing now?” your healing and change accelerates.

You begin to ask: What triggers do I respond most intently to? Where is my pain? What is my pain trying to say to me? What do I truly want? What are MY standards? What do I value? What do I TRULY want to convey to my spouse or partner about ME? What is MY position in this marital crisis?

Please know that you are taught, it’s deeply embedded within you, that your crisis can be treated by something “out there.”

Treat yourself with leniency and respect as you shift your focal point from “out there,” to your experience.

My personal one-on-one coaching is often a gentle and caring reminder that you can make that shift.



And, that in making that sift you find the intensity of the crisis diminishing and personally you find everything you truly desire, and more!