

A couple walking on a beach, seen from behind, with the ocean in the background. The image is slightly faded and serves as a background for the text.

THE TOP 10 IDEAS

Almost Everyone has about

**SAVING A
MARRIAGE**

or Being Married that is

**DOWNRIGHT
DANGEROUS**

*to your Marital Health
and Well-being*

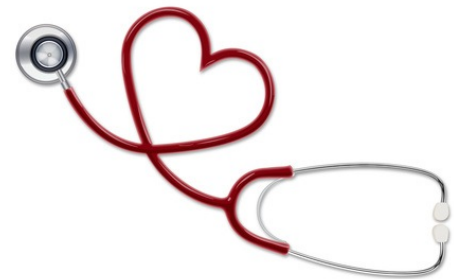


The Top 10 Ideas Almost Everyone has about Saving a Marriage or Being Married that is Downright DANGEROUS to your Marital Health and Well-being

Introduction

I had a wise clinical supervisor, who happened to have a thriving private practice, who said to me after my masters program, “If you want to be a top-notch therapist, you must unlearn what you’ve learned.”

He was right. I could not be an effective therapist by trying to implement theories and skills I had learned from a text book or from a teacher who had no clinical experience. Effective therapy had to come from within ME.



And you as well, to rebuild and create a love you can trust forever, must unlearn or rethink assumptions you were taught about love, marriage, intimacy and relational well-being.

In reality, most of us were not formally taught much about love or marriage. We had few if any classes, no books were recommended and no one spent much time talking about the ingredients of a healthy marriage. Instruction, if any, came in the form of moral or religious principles.

We learned about marriage by observing other marriages.

We learned about love from movies, television, tabloids, books, advertising and other forms of media as well as “locker room” talk and late night sessions with friends and peers.

Much of what we learned was inaccurate and/or distorted and has not served us well. The results indicate that much. The divorce rate hovers around 50%, and has so for years, and 9 out of 10 people report they are unhappy in their marriage. This probably does not include those who reluctantly accept a less than stellar form of intimacy in their marriage.

Look at the concept of “romance” or “falling in love.” We are taught through media and it’s deeply imprinted upon us that “romance” and “falling in love” is the ultimate in beginning a relationship and maintaining a marriage.

Billions each year are spent on Romance Novels, Valentine Day, weekend get aways to exotic places, chocolate, flowers, etc. We stare at grocery checkout tabloids that list the most recent romantic flame or flame-out of our celebrities.

I would be very wealthy if I received a dollar every time I heard the phrase from an unhappy marital partner, “I fell out of love, or I’m no longer in love” with my spouse. Or the belief, “We need more romance in our marriage.”

I want to twist your mind.

I want you to examine basic assumptions about love and marriage that cause you misery, unhappiness and a deteriorating marriage. I want you to throw away the illusions and distortions you were taught and incorporate new ways of thinking and feeling that will set you free from your misery and place you on the path, a rather enjoyable path, of creating a love you will enjoy and will last.

Below is the list of the top 10 Faulty ideas about marriage. These ideas of marriage are limiting at best and destructive at worst.

Top 10 Faulty Ideas are Limiting at Best

These ideas often lead to:

1. A pressure to perform in a marriage rather than be genuine.
2. Responsibility is given to someone else, which reinforces one's neediness, dependency and a sense of victimization and helplessness.
3. Surface solutions and short term fix promises. There is no staying power, nothing to build on for the future.
4. The faulty ideas often lead to phony marriages, with spouses responding as they think they should rather than constructively coming from the heart.
5. Perpetuate illusions that keep one less than excited about the potential freedom and fun found in a marriage.
6. Keep a couple cycling through the negativity and reactivity.
7. Provide a false hope of shortcuts.
8. Marital stagnation. There is no forward movement or consideration of growth and change being crucial in one's future.
9. Do not do justice to one's uniqueness and spirit – key ingredients of creating a love and passion that is trustworthy and safe.

Once you dig into the faulty ideas, these points will become clear.

Take some time to carefully study and incorporate, using the Ground Hog Process, the Top 10 Ideas about Saving a Marriage or Being Married that are Downright DANGEROUS to your Marital Health and Well-being.

Faulty Idea #1: We Must “Work On” the Marriage and/or Relationship to Rebuild or Keep It Fresh

Groundhog Process



Step #1

Identify the Problem

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions:

To what degree do you believe you must work on your marriage or relationship?

We must					Not that important
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of working on the marriage:

What type of feeling do you get when you think of working on the relationship?

What does it mean for you that you must work on the marriage?

What is your level of comfort when you think of working on the marriage or relationship:

Comfortable					Uncomfortable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Many stuck in the negativity and reactivity of a downward spiraling marriage believe they must “work on” the marriage to make it better or reverse the momentum.

- ✓ “Working on” the marriage may mean:
- ✓ Attend joint counseling sessions
- ✓ Attend a Marriage Encounter or Retreat specifically for couples
- ✓ Read self help books on rebuilding a marriage (this ebook included!)
- ✓ Date... again
- ✓ Be more “romantic”
- ✓ Set aside specific times to “talk” about feelings and/or the marriage
- ✓ Make an extra effort to meet his/her needs
- ✓ Make an extra effort to be “nice”
- ✓ Do more errands or work around the house for the other
- ✓ Go on a vacation together
- ✓ Be a more involved parent
- ✓ Be more appreciative and showing it
- ✓ Learn new communication skills
- ✓ Talk...and talk...and talk
- ✓ Etc.

Perhaps you have tried one or more of these strategies and perhaps they reduced some of the tension (or submerged it) for a period of time.

However, you knew that much was left on the table, unspoken, and the ignored elephant still haunted the marriage.

As well, “working on” the marriage is often a one-sided effort. One wants to “work on” the marriage to alleviate the hurt, pain emptiness or whatever the internal suffering may be and the other is often a reluctant participant, IF s/he even chooses to accommodate the request.

This happened in my private practice:

A colleague was having a terrible time with a couple in marriage therapy. This couple had gone through some very difficult times (he had been involved with another woman.) The OP (other person) was legitimately and in all ways out of the picture and they were both committed to “working on the relationship.”

However, they were having a terribly frightful time making headways. My therapist colleague finally out of desperation referred them to me, hoping I could see them through the impasse.

They walked through my door, took a seat and the session began. Both told me they truly wanted a better relationship and were working hard to make it happen. They were sincere.

She described what she would do when he came home after work, trying to make him comfortable, affirmed and welcome.

He explained how he tried to talk more, be present for her and meet her needs. He listed 3-4 ways in which he was trying to make her feel more desirable and loved.

Each was hanging on the other's words.

In addition to a rather large aura of tension that surrounded them, the couple exuded a deep sense of weariness and tiredness. They were exhausted. Emotionally they were spent. There was little life in each of them and in the relationship.

They looked at me as if, "OK, the last therapist tried her bag of tricks to make us better. And we worked diligently on every one of them. What do you suggest we do to make this better?"

So, I gave them a very simple but counter-intuitive assignment and followed it with an exclamation point.

I said to them, "Stop working on the relationship. Stop trying to figure out how to make this dead marriage better. Stop trying to make the other person feel better. Don't go there. Don't even think about it, ever, for one week!"

They walked through the door the following week smiling, light, like a breath of fresh clean air sweeping through my office.

She, especially, thanked me profusely.

I saw them for 3-4 more sessions and they were happily on their way.

I helped the couple make a simple, but MAJOR mental shift that catapulted their marriage to a new level of intimacy.

(Please know that ALL couples do not respond this way, nor do or did I as a therapist, always implement this rather radical intervention.)

However, what often "works" is counter-intuitive to "working" on the relationship or marriage.

Groundhog Process



Step #2

Seek out new information

6 Common Traps for Couples who believe they must "Work on" the Marriage or Relationship

Here's new information and distinctions you most likely have not entertained that will enable and set off the mental shifts that will help you approach the rebuilding of your marriage and love in a more helpful and productive manner.

Well intentioned couples, who truly want to feel better in their marriage, often find their marriage grinding to a halt when they believe they must "work on the relationship."

Here are some difficulties and traps typically experienced when a couple commits to "working on the relationship:"

1. "Working on the relationship" often implies that each "should or must" act, feel and think particular ways to make their efforts successful. A "should" sets one up for failure and disappointment, for no one ever fully acts, thinks or feels as they "should." An atmosphere of effort and grinding it out permeates the couple. And, each holds his/her breath, as they both believe that failure follows the next interaction. Talk about pressure! I assume you want a different environment created in your relationship.
2. "Working on the relationship" for a huge percentage of the couples I encounter means being "nice," accommodating the other and being on your best behavior. Conflict is seen as a

catastrophe. Such a strategy, in essence, obscures and clouds the truth. The truth, which sets a couple free, is relegated to the background and buried under the surface.

3. "Working on the Relationship" often means trying to find a "middle ground." There must be "something in common" that holds the couple together and make it better. Well, maybe there isn't any "common ground!" And, just maybe that is good. Perhaps the differences, the extremes, give the couple fire and passion and create, together, that which each, at one level, is looking for.
4. "Working on the relationship" often means working hard to meet the needs of the other. I "sacrifice" my needs, or at least put them on the back burner, and intentionally go about "making my partner happy" by attending to his/her needs. This may work for a period of time but resentment at some point emerges since one or both believe that the need meeting is not being reciprocated to the degree he/she would like.
5. "Working on the relationship" often is thwarted because there is not enough depth. Individual differences are not pursued with a curiosity and intensity that allows for maximum growth of the individual and therefore couple. "Issues" are not torn apart, looked at, marveled at, appreciated and seen as a resource for further self exploration and self disclosure.
6. "Working on the relationship" often comes up short because a couple easily reverts to old patterns. They begin to "swirl" in the old communication patterns and ways of thinking, feeling and acting. When lacking adequate exploration of differences and avoiding conflict the couple easily slides back into that which was familiar, not pleasant or comfortable, but certainly known territory.

Reflection:

Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully to what your experience in working on the marriage?

What has this been like for you?

Groundhog Process



Step #3

Shifts to Implement

In the next step of the Ground Hog Process you begin to make the mental shifts that you will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to place a checkmark in the box that most closely fit where you are now relative to the two opposing beliefs.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now			Constructive Belief	
We need to work on the marriage.				I want to know myself and him/her better.	
We should be doing something to build the marriage				I want to discover the feelings and behaviors that best fit and are me.	
We must meet each other's personal needs.				I want to examine my personal need system and get them met once and for all.	
I must carefully do what is correct and proper in this marriage.				I want the freedom to be fully me.	
We must avoid or skip over important issues.				I fearlessly face what is crucial in a radically constructive manner.	
I fear that we will revert to old habits with each other.				I can stop when I begin to go where I don't want to go.	

If you want to take this a little further:

List other shifts you would like to make:

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Groundhog Process



Step #4

Engage Self

I do not want you at this point to share your findings and thoughts with your spouse or partner.

You engage you. You don't engage the other.

Engage yourself means spending some time in the next day or two consciously and intentionally thinking about the above exercise; specifically the distinctions and shifts you desire.

Shift your focal point away from him/her to a degree. This, in itself, may be a significant shift. (Be aware that s/he will probably notice and may react. If able, plan your response if s/he reacts.)

Choose one shift and give that shift your full attention. What would that shift feel like? What would you be doing as you make that shift? What would that shift bring to you?

Reflect on and Answer these questions:

I will be most aware of these new distinctions and/or shifts at this time and place during the next day.

I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.

**Groundhog
Process**



Step #5

**How did I enhance my
personal power and/or voice?**

Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

Evaluate what it was like to spend a day or two focusing on your desired shift and the distinctions you are beginning to make.

Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

Remember, you are just beginning. Don't be upset or alarmed if you find it difficult to pinpoint change and shifts.

Employing the Ground Hog Process for most takes a number of attempts. It gradually will become part of you. And, when it becomes part of you, you will have it for life.

These questions will help you evaluate your experience:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being as bad as it can get) I now rate my bad feelings as _____.

I notice this new thought coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this feeling _____ located in this part of my body
_____ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Faulty Idea #2: We Must Talk, Especially About Our Feelings, to Rebuild Love and Trust

Groundhog Process



Step #1

Identify the Problem

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions:

To what degree do you believe you must talk to rebuild your marriage or relationship?

We must					Not that important
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of talking to your spouse, especially about feelings?

What type of feeling do you get when you think of talking to your spouse?

What does it mean for you that you must talk, especially about your feelings, to rebuild your marriage?

What is your level of comfort when you think of talking, especially about your feelings:

Comfortable					Uncomfortable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Another trap for couples attempting to rebuild a hurting marriage is to believe they must “talk” through their problems or “talk” about solutions and in that process find their way to a new relationship.

Let’s take a closer look at this perceived need to talk through marital problems or the concept that a couple must “get feelings out” and talk about them for healing and health to exist.

Groundhog Process



Step #2

Seek out new information

The Top 10 Reasons Why Talking Can Be Woefully Inadequate in Rebuilding the Love You Can Trust

Please consider these assumptions and misconceptions about “talking” as a road to healing:

1. “Talking” is often perceived as a means to an end. The ultimate desired end is not merely talking but effective communication. Further down the need scale is the desire to be deeply emotionally connected to someone. “Let’s talk about this” means, in essence, I want you to know me and I want to know you better. I want to feel closer to you. I want to experience that emotional connection, that closeness.
2. That emotional connection or closeness can happen WITHOUT talking. A look, a facial expression, a glance, a touch or a warm movement of the body may “connect.” I prefer to use the word engage rather than talk. I want to engage you.
3. One spouse is always more of a “talker” than the other. One most often relies upon verbal acumen to get what s/he wants, make a point or move the relationship or other person in a specific direction. The “non-talker” may feel inadequate verbally which often leads to a one-down position in the relationship which precludes the development of intimacy or a desired emotional connection. The non-talker may also control with his/her non-talking.
4. The one who wants to talk often is the pursuer. S/he is attempting to cope with and move toward getting a specific set of personal needs met. S/he may feel more desperate in getting his/her her personal needs met or may be more fearful of impending pain in the relationship (or lack of it.)
5. Talking often serves as a fertile ground for triggering upset. If words can’t kill, they can certainly trigger negative thoughts and feelings. What one says, how one constructs his/her words, the tinge of judgment or accusation in a word, although not intended, may quickly and powerfully destroy any positive momentum and good feelings in the relationship. Words are a powerful trigger.
6. The “talker” often comes from his/her personal need system or neediness, looking to take or receive and not give. The other spouse quickly picks up on this and usually withdraws, attacks, explains or defends.

7. "Talking" may have the purpose of persuading. The "talker" may have a rigid expectations of what a marriage and whom his/her spouse should be and the "talking" is an effort to persuade the spouse to meet those expectations and create a marriage or relationship according to the "talkers" ideas. This may seem reasonable (since most talkers are reasonable) to the other spouse, but that spouse out of confusion or reluctance, doesn't buy in.
8. We need to "talk" may mean, "I need to tell you how you must change, what is wrong with you or how you are not acting appropriately in this marriage. It's scolding time. "Talking" is often focused on the other person; what s/he is or is not doing, feeling, thinking, etc.
9. "Talking" may be used to maintain distance. A couple "talking" does not necessarily mean they are engaging at a meaning and significantly intimate level.
10. Some process, grow and learn better through thinking and silence. Silence may be more powerful in generating healing than "talking."

I hope it is obvious that "talking" is not always a panacea. I've discovered over and over again in my private practice and coaching that a reluctant partner who talks, and thereby acquiesces to the desire of the other person to get it out, does so in ways that continue to avoid the truth of the relationship and self.

Sometimes it is best NOT to talk. And effective talking or what I call engagement can happen only under particular circumstances and when other business is first addressed.

Reflection:

Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully to what your experience in working on the marriage?

What has this been like for you?

Groundhog Process



Step #3

Shifts to Implement

In the next step of the Ground Hog Process you begin to make the mental shifts that you will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to place a checkmark in the box that most closely fit where you are now relative to the two opposing beliefs.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now			Constructive Belief	
We need to talk.					I want to engage my spouse.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Talking will produce the result I want.					Sometimes I can connect with a touch, look or even silence.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
We must talk about our feelings.					I desire an emotional connection.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I must talk to get my point across.					I can express my position, maybe without talking.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Talking gets me into trouble.					I can constructively express myself without judgment or criticism.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I must talk to get him/her to understand me.					I want to understand him/her.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I've always talked to get what I want.					I can explore different ways of getting my personal needs met.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I've always got what I wanted by not talking.					I can explore different ways of getting my personal needs met.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I can't help the way I respond when we talk.					I can control myself.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
I MUST talk. I can't keep quiet.					I can listen.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Our talking goes in circles.					It's possible to emotionally connect.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

If you want to take this a little further:

List other shifts you would like to make:

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Groundhog Process



Step #4

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Reflect on and Answer these questions:

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I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.

Groundhog Process



Step #5

How did I enhance my personal power and/or voice?

Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

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Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

Remember, you are just beginning. Don't be upset or alarmed if you find it difficult to pinpoint change and shifts.

Employing the Ground Hog Process for most takes a number of attempts. It gradually will become part of you. And, when it becomes part of you, you will have it for life.

These questions will help you evaluate your experience:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being as bad as it can get) I now rate my bad feelings as _____.

I notice this new thought coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this feeling _____ located in this part of my body
_____ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Faulty Idea #3: We Must Have or Recapture the Romance in Our Marriage

Groundhog Process



Step #1

Identify the Problem

A popular belief exists in western culture that romance is a key to marital bliss.

Romance is equated with creating “sparks,” passion and sexual pleasure. It is the essence of “being in love.”

Movies that sell well are often “romantic comedies.” Therapists and self help gurus espouse romantic getaway weekends or vacations. Men are encouraged to be more romantic. Women stereotypically look for the man who will “sweep me off my feet.”

Millions of dollars are spent annually on Valentine’s Day, chocolate and flowers as effort to be “romantic” or create romance in a marriage.

Those old “romantic feelings” once experienced perhaps profoundly, seemingly disappear in the marriage.

S/he (and this is not merely a female problem!) wants to “recapture” those feelings. It is thought that those “in love/romantic feelings” comprise the essence of a marital or highly invested relationship and if absent indicate a dysfunctional marriage or a marriage doomed to the boredom heap for the rest of one’s life.

At the core is a deeply engrained belief that “romance” is the savior and benchmark of a great marriage or intimate relationship

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions:

To what degree do you believe you must talk to rebuild your marriage or relationship?

We must					Not that important
□	□	□	□	□	

What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of romance?

What type of feeling do you get when you think of romance?

What does it mean for you that you must recapture the romance in your marriage?

What is your level of comfort when you think of recapturing the romance in your marriage?

Comfortable					Uncomfortable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Groundhog Process



Step #2

Seek out new information

Please consider these Key Points on why believing you must have romance or be romantic limits your intimacy in a marriage or may, in reality, create more frustration, pain and feelings of inadequacy.

Here are some reflections on romance:

✓ "Romance" is subtly touted in our culture (USA) as the ultimate experience in an intimate relationship. Romance is idealized in movies, songs and books as the ecstasy of being "in love."

We can't get enough (hugely profitable grocery counter tabloids) of which "stars" are currently "in love" with whom. And, it often does not matter (really) if they are married. Oh gosh, to be like that, to experience that. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

"Falling in love" is the norm – the implication being, that if "love" doesn't happen, or if "love" goes away, something is wrong – with you, your spouse or the marriage.

The odds are stacked against any couple attempting to navigate a marriage when bombarded by movies, TV, novels, the radio, advertising and grocery checkout magazines that point to the power (gosh, don't you envy some of those hip couples?) of finding and losing "love." To create a lasting, intimate and wonderfully joyful marriage in our Western Culture we first must unlearn a great deal.

✓ Romance begins by two people who serve as mirrors to each other. Each mirror back to the other what the other wants to believe and think about self. These often are illusions based upon some fantasy or idealized image of one's self. In other words, both say and communicate to the other what the other wants to hear and experience. The bottom line is: "You are wonderful, special, awesome, my soul mate, etc."

Such mirroring can certainly feel good, especially when one lacks an inner compass. "Falling in love" or romance belongs to adolescence since the process of "falling in love," sometimes over and over again, provides a fertile ground for learning about self, especially in developing intimate relationships.

Those who live according to prescribed roles, yet have an innate sensitivity to others (politicians who know how to work a crowd, the salesman who knows how to read others, the housewife and soccer mom feels empty and the celebrity who instinctively plays roles and knows little about self,) are

especially vulnerable to a string of romantic encounters or believe that that essence of intimacy is romance.

✓ Romantic movies are often called "romantic comedies." Ever wonder why they are so funny or why they should be? Or, at the other end, romantic movies are tragedies (Romeo and Juliet). How about the smaltzie "Bridges of Madison County" where the woman and man (Clint Eastwood) never get at the huge emptiness or lack of purpose in their lives? Ever see a "real" romantic movie?

✓ The search for romance in marriage often belies powerful personal needs. It has little to do with love and more to do with getting our personal needs met. Most of us have strong needs such as to be acknowledged, adored, cared for or perhaps cherished. Another powerful need is to feel "special." This is often the pattern for a man overindulged by his mother (forgive me for bringing in Freud) or a woman who was the "apple of her father's eye," yet was emotionally deprived in that relationship.

Romance becomes the vehicle through which these needs are supposedly met without needing to name those needs or talk about them. (Gosh, he/she knows what I want before I do. S/he can read my mind. He/she/we are special!)

Don't get me wrong. Personal needs are ok. We all have them. Personal needs drive, often powerfully, what we go after. But, and this is a huge but, if we do not consciously name them and get them met once and for all (and that can be done!) they continue to drive us and we live perpetually in frustration, always wanting more.

Once we move beyond the merry-go-round of personal need meeting we discover our personal passion, our purpose and reach down and touch the essence of real joy and peace.

✓ Romance is for mating. Sex (sexual union) is often the bottom line. The "chemistry" described in "romantic love" we are finding, is truly that - raw chemistry. Studies now show that those "in love" have a high concentration of specific dorphins (chemicals) in their bodies. These are the chemicals found when animals are in "heat."

✓ A person needing to feel that "loving feeling" usually has a need for drama and excitement. That "loving feeling" is closely associated with the need to feel excitement and intrigue. The secret and clandestine nature of extramarital affairs lends itself nicely to seemingly meet these two powerful needs of feeling 'in love' and living an exciting life.

Emotional juice from the fall-out of emotionally intense relationships reigns rather than living life from the core of who one is.

✓ A person seeking romance is often someone looking for a high. They want to feel good. They expect they should feel good. They believe they should jump on something that feels good. They want the pill, the drug, the retreat, the experience that will take away their pain, their emptiness, their loneliness and make them feel good. Of course, it is only temporary. The nagging pain continually emerges and their eternal search for quelling the storm within seeks a new substance.

✓ The person who was driven to find "that loving feeling" (reminds me of a song...) usually experiences a high degree of guilt and conflict.

He/she is often married to a "good" person and the desire to "find that loving feeling" seems selfish (which it is) and immature (which it is). Intuitively (and this person usually has a great deal of intuition and sensitivity) s/he knows at another level that he/she is not on the right path.

✓ Attempting to recapture and go back to the romance in a broken marriage is futile. That type of romance or connection served a purpose at a particular point in time for the couple. However, relationships have a developmental process, a movement toward deepening understanding and

intimacy. Going back would be an escape and retreat from knowing each other with more intensity, power and passion. Why would you want to go back when so much more joy and satisfaction presents itself to you in the present and future?

✓ Feelings of inadequacy and personal impotence surround romance. How in the world can anyone measure up to an illusion or fantasy? How do you suppose most men feel when their wife's nose is stuck in a romance novel with this hunk on the cover, bare chest and all, perfectly seducing a woman? Or, how do you suppose a woman feels when she finds it difficult to respond warmly to flowers and chocolates and fakes an orgasm?

Romance is about performance, not acceptance and validation of uniqueness. And, whenever performance is front and center, personal feelings and thoughts of inadequacy are not far behind.

✓ The end of romantic feelings is not the end of the marriage or relationship.

The ending of romantic feelings is NOT "falling out of love."

Love continues, just in other forms with different expressions. The ending of the romantic feelings denotes a time to begin exploring differences and facing more profound issues of intimacy, problem solving and need meeting that invariable arise in a healthy and maturing relationship.

The "in love feelings" are replaced by a deeper warmth, connection and appreciation for the marriage, the other person and self.

So, should I forget the cards, the notes, the special events I plan secretly for him/her, the I love yous and be cold, frigid and distant?

Of course not. Please understand the temporary place of "romance" and the fact that your relationship longs for moments, days, weeks and years in which you declare yourself more and more fully and welcome (sometimes with trepidation) the declarations of the other and together explore the depths of acceptance and heightened awareness (love) that moves beyond romance and knows no end.

Here is a brief questionnaire that gets at destructive and limiting characteristics of romance.

☐	Do you feel incomplete, not really yourself, unless you are in love or have a spouse or partner?
☐	Do you find that you have a pattern of repeating bad relationships?
☐	Do you get "high" from romance? And then crash?
☐	Do you find yourself unable to stop seeing a specific person, even though you know that seeing this person is destructive to you?
☐	Do you feel that life has little meaning unless you have a lover, partner or spouse with whom to share?
☐	Are you unable to concentrate on other areas of your life because of thoughts or feelings that you are having about another person?
☐	Do you find the pain in your life increasing, no matter what you do? Are you afraid that deep down you are unacceptable?

☐	Do you feel that your romantic life affects your spiritual life in a negative way?
☐	Have you ever thought that there might be more you could do with your life if you were not so driven by romantic pursuits?
☐	Do you wish you could stop or control your romantic activities for a given period of time? Have you ever wished you could be less emotionally dependent?

Reflection:

1. Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully to what your experience of romance?

2. What has your experience and thinking about romance in your marriage been like for you?

Groundhog Process



Step #3

Shifts to Implement

In the next step of the Ground Hog Process you begin to make the mental shifts that you will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to place a checkmark in the box that most closely fit where you are now relative to the two opposing beliefs.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now			Constructive Belief	
We must have romance in our marriage.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
S/he needs to be more romantic.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We must recapture that romance.				☐	☐

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A man/woman completes me.			I can enjoy and thrive being alone.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like the high or romance and falling in love.			My feelings are very important to me.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I need a man/woman to love me.			I am acceptable and a person of worth just as I am.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I need excitement in our marriage.			I want to play and relax with him/her.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The end of romantic feelings means we are falling out of love.			Relationships mature and bring new opportunities to experience love in radically different but profoundly satisfying ways.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you want to take this a little further:

List other shifts you would like to make:

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Groundhog Process



Step #4

Engage Self

I do not want you at this point to share your findings and thoughts with your spouse or partner.

You engage you. You don't engage the other.

Engage yourself means spending some time in the next day or two consciously and intentionally thinking about the above exercise; specifically the distinctions and shifts you desire.

Shift your focal point away from him/her to a degree. This, in itself, may be a significant shift. (Be aware that s/he will probably notice and may react. If able, plan your response if s/he reacts.)

Choose one shift and give that shift your full attention. What would that shift feel like? What would you be doing as you make that shift? What would that shift bring to you?

Reflect on and Answer these questions:

I will be most aware of these new distinctions and/or shifts at this time and place during the next day.

I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.

**Groundhog
Process**



Step #5

**How did I enhance my
personal power and/or voice?**

Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

Evaluate what it was like to spend a day or two focusing on your desired shift and the distinctions you are beginning to make.

Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

Remember, you are just beginning. Don't be upset or alarmed if you find it difficult to pinpoint change and shifts.

Employing the Ground Hog Process for most takes a number of attempts. It gradually will become part of you. And, when it becomes part of you, you will have it for life.

These questions will help you evaluate your experience:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being as bad as it can get) I now rate my bad feelings as _____.

I notice this new thought coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this feeling _____ located in this part of my body
_____ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Faulty Idea #4: There Must Be Something Wrong With Me, My Spouse or the Marriage If We Struggle

Your Marriage Didn't Become Lousy Overnight

The seeds of marital crisis, pain, confusion, hurt and fear are spread and sprout over a period of time.

You do not wake up one morning and say, "Wow, this marriage is a mess!" You look back and see a series of messes along the way building to the present.

Marriages and relationships that are void of love and intimacy or have only bits and pieces of longing for intimacy are usually locked in the pain of negativity and the powerlessness of reactivity.

This forms the baseline of the relationship and both suffer immensely.

And, often this negativity and reactivity is default for a couple. When areas of disagreement or differences arise you find yourself gradually or suddenly immersed in that same negativity and/or reactivity.

To move toward a more mutually satisfying marriage or relationship you must reverse the patterns of negativity and reactivity.

It is crucial you find a positive point of connection from which to begin the healing and resolution process and begin to feel more warmth, acceptance and "in love."

You must change the energy of your interaction from negative to positive.

How you do that is the topic of this ebook.

Why You Have a Lousy Marriage or Relationship

Before we begin learning and using the process in earnest, I want to attempt to reduce some of your suffering from guilt, shame or angst and first pound into your mind and heart, that if your marriage is a mess, or you seem miles away from a loving relationship you can trust, you are not alone.

Right now you most likely endure a lousy marriage. Or, you are in transition between relationships and fear entrusting yourself to someone else. Or, you are facing a relationship crisis.

You probably think of your marriage or relationship of emotional investment as less than desirable at best or lousy at worst.

If so, you are not alone.

If you are married, your marriage is most likely a mess.

Why do I say that?

You are reading this ebook for one thing and have an obvious desire for that connection.

And the reality: most marriages are truly lousy.

The divorce rate has hovered around 50% for decades. Of the other 50%, how many couples (or one person or both in the marriage) do you suppose are THINKING about divorce? Of the remaining 50%, how many do you suppose choose, for a wide variety of reasons - economics, values, for the children,

etc. - to stay in a messy marriage? How many of those who portray to others the "perfect marriage" have a marriage where there is no genuine emotional fire, or even spark?

9 out of 10 couples in a study taken some time ago indicated they were "unhappy" in their marriage.

I've specialized in marital infidelity over the past decade and I estimate that up to 80% of couples experience one spouse or the other at some point in the marriage, emotionally or sexually straying in one form or another.

So, if you are unhappy or distraught in your marriage, you are NOT alone. If you are reluctant to enter into an intimate relationship, your hesitancy is normal.

Absolutely Nothing is Wrong with You

I want to drive this point home, since I've experienced in my clinical practice those who believe that if they have a marital problem or are "unhappy" with their marriage, something is wrong with them.

They don't measure up. Because the "romance" has faded they think the marriage or they as a person are doomed. They feel guilt and shame when they perceive family members or friends to have that "perfect" marriage.

They are embarrassed and reluctant to share their dissatisfaction within their marriage with others.

A great many carry on, living lives of quiet desperation and emptiness, not knowing that almost everyone they meet experience the same reality within their marriage.

Please, know that you are not alone.

Groundhog Process



Step #1

Identify the Problem

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions:

To what degree do you believe there must be something wrong with you, your spouse or your marriage if you struggle?

We must					Not that important
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

What images or thoughts come to mind when you think there must be something wrong with you, your spouse or your marriage if you struggle?

What type of feeling do you get when you think there must be something wrong you, your spouse or your marriage if you struggle?

What does it mean for you that there must be something wrong with you, your spouse or your marriage if you struggle?

What is your level of comfort when you think there must be something wrong with you, your spouse or your marriage if you struggle?

Comfortable					Uncomfortable
	□	□	□	□	□

Groundhog Process



Step #2

Seek out new information

Key Points

Marriage is Difficult

Being married or in a relationship of deep emotional investment has its difficult moments. This is guaranteed. In reality, learning to be with another in marriage is one of the most, if not the most, difficult tasks you will face. It ranks with parenting in terms of difficulty.

We are exposed

The emotional entanglement, both good and not so good, with your spouse or significant other reaches down and touches unknown and unexpressed parts.

There is a vulnerability in all of us; at least all “normal” functioning people. A part may be afraid, unsure, empty, rageful, a void or feeling deeply inadequate.

In most relationships we control others’ access to that part of us. We can hide. We can pretend. We can avoid. We construct a socially acceptable part of us that engages the world.

We may attempt to use that same strategy with our spouse, but events, words and strong feelings emerge that cut through our façade and our spouse touches on that which one tries to hide. Our humanity, idiosyncrasies and foibles are exposed. They may or may not be accepted our spouse. They may be acceptable to a degree at particular times. We face each other and we experience the full range of the other.

We are taught an unrealistic ideal

We also are bombarded from the media and other forms of communication, even well intentioned self help people, with an image of marriage or being married that flies in the face of reality.

We are presented with an ideal and the message: We are to live up to that ideal. I watch parts of the “Bachelorette” on television and cringe. Is this what it means to “fall in love” or “be in love?” Are most of us really that naïve, or do we get off on the silliness and superficiality of the show? Or, is there a part of us that longs to be swept off our feet to some exotic place and live with that “love” for the rest of our married lives?

Or as baby boomers age, we see advertisements of a retired married couple, smiling at each other, walking hand in hand into the sunset.

And so we believe that these beautiful people “have it.” And, we don’t.

We feel our emptiness, our frustration, our resentment, our loneliness and we think, “What’s wrong with me/us?” I/we certainly don’t measure up.

We create roles

We also attempt to cope in married life by adapting and living different roles, thinking, “This is how I’m supposed to act in a marriage.” The husband plays the role of the provider. The woman is the nurturer. The man plays the take charge role. The woman plays the submissive and helpless role. One initiates sex. The other receives sex. One is the strong silent type. The other is the gregarious seductive vixen. One becomes the parent. The other becomes the child.

Roles may work for a period of time or may last the length of the marriage. However distance is perpetuated and the two never truly encounter one another, only the roles.

Emotional strain or emotional distance may characterize the marriage. One may believe, at one level, that s/he is performing for the other and self.

And, of course, beneath masks are people who feel deeply inadequate, confused, empty and lost.

The marriage has no passion, no trust, no excitement, no wonder and little joy.

Conflict is bad

Closely related to role playing is the old concept that conflict in a marriage is bad. We are bad if we fight. I am bad if I have difficulty with my strong feelings – either stuffing and blasting or consistently being snide, sarcastic and condemning.

My extensive clinical experience says over and over again that individuals WANT to be able to express their deepest parts but either believe they should not or do not know how to do so constructively.

Marriage means the end of fun

I've been privy to a number of weddings over the year and one of the most interesting traditions of a wedding is the bachelor (or more recently the bachelorette) parties.

Here's the underlying message: "I'm getting married. All the fun is behind me. I have to "grow up" and be responsible. I no longer can have fun or enjoy life. So, I better grab all I can now, before the "knot is tied" (interesting use of words!)

Marriage is seen as the end. Marriage is seen as something that will become stagnant, arduous and boring at best. Growing together may be talked about in the ceremony, but its message is not heard or taken seriously.

Unfinished business

We take into our marriages the unfinished business of maturation. The patterns and thoughts about self, others, marriage, sex, intimacy, abandonment, etc. we carry along and place it at the feet of our spouse. We don't do this consciously. We give this process little thought. But we DO it.

And so we play out with our spouse the unfinished business, the patterns that worked at one time for our psychosexual development, but may not work effectively in a marriage.

Being close to someone, being invited to be vulnerable, being invited to be real and authentic brings back the screaming child that thinks, "Don't do it. You will be sorry."

My needs will be met

Another underlying theme for marriages is the subtle injunction; marriages are a place where my needs will be met. I will be cared for (I will care for,) I will be loved (I will be able to love,) S/he will make me happy (I will make him/her happy) and more.

Need meeting feels good for a period of time, but the need is never fully satisfied. No want truly wants to be needy. As the need continues, although initial attempts to meet that need are welcomed, frustration and disappointment sets in. s/he never does quite enough. And, the person with the needs feels less and less worthy being such a "needy" person.

The erosion of the marriage and self

The end result of these scenarios is a slowly eroding marriage with two individuals, who at one level, feel more and more disappointed with themselves, more and more inadequate in being the good and faithful spouse.

They think: Something is wrong with him/her. Something is wrong with this marriage. Something is wrong with me.

Reflection:

Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully to what your experience in working on the marriage?

What has this been like for you?

Groundhog Process



Step #3

Shifts to Implement

In the next step of the Ground Hog Process you begin to make the mental shifts that you will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to place a checkmark in the box that most closely fit where you are now relative to the two opposing beliefs.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now			Constructive Belief	
I can't be vulnerable.	☐	☐	☐	I can express anything about me. I'm not defective.	☐
I want to be in love.	☐	☐	☐	I want intimacy.	☐
I have to be a particular way.	☐	☐	☐	I can be who I truly am.	☐
We must not fight.	☐	☐	☐	My experience can be powerful, passionate and constructive.	☐
Being married means the end.	☐	☐	☐	Being married is the beginning.	☐
I don't have to change.	☐	☐	☐	I am aware of specific ways I think and act that I bring to the marriage.	☐
My needs will be met in the marriage.				I will move beyond my needs in the marriage.	

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can't help the way I respond when we talk.			I can control myself.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I MUST talk. I can't keep quiet.			I can listen.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Our talking goes in circles.			It's possible to emotionally connect.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you want to take this a little further:

List other shifts you would like to make:

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Groundhog Process



Step #4

Engage Self

I do not want you at this point to share your findings and thoughts with your spouse or partner.

You engage you. You don't engage the other.

Engage yourself means spending some time in the next day or two consciously and intentionally thinking about the above exercise; specifically the distinctions and shifts you desire.

Shift your focal point away from him/her to a degree. This, in itself, may be a significant shift. (Be aware that s/he will probably notice and may react. If able, plan your response if s/he reacts.)

Choose one shift and give that shift your full attention. What would that shift feel like? What would you be doing as you make that shift? What would that shift bring to you?

Reflect on and Answer these questions:

I will be most aware of these new distinctions and/or shifts at this time and place during the next day.

I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.

Groundhog Process



Step #5

How did I enhance my personal power and/or voice?

Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

Evaluate what it was like to spend a day or two focusing on your desired shift and the distinctions you are beginning to make.

Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

Remember, you are just beginning. Don't be upset or alarmed if you find it difficult to pinpoint change and shifts.

Employing the Ground Hog Process for most takes a number of attempts. It gradually will become part of you. And, when it becomes part of you, you will have it for life.

These questions will help you evaluate your experience:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being as bad as it can get) I now rate my bad feelings as _____.

I notice this new thought coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this feeling _____ located in this part of my body
_____ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Faulty Idea #5: Marriage Should Be Modeled After Ward and June Cleaver

Groundhog Process



Step #1

Identify the Problem

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions:

To what degree do you believe you must live with prescribed roles in your marriage?

We must					Not that important
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of the model of Ward and June Cleaver (or a couple who is portrayed as having the “perfect” marriage)?

What type of feeling do you get when you think of Ward and June Cleaver (or your model marriage)?

What does it mean for you that you must have prescribed roles for each spouse in the marriage?

What is your level of comfort when you think of creating a marriage with prescribed roles?

Comfortable					Uncomfortable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Introduction

Who each is to be, how each is to act, the roles each is to assume is often not thought through by individuals or talked about by a couple. Assumptions are made of who each is to be in the relationship.

These assumptions are gathered over a period of time by watching other married couples and observing roles within groups of people. Perhaps the parents are the couple. Perhaps a relative couple is looked upon as the model or ideal couple with a great marriage. Perhaps it was Ward and June Cleaver, or some more modern media model of the perfect marriage.

Or, a person picks up from the media, a religious institution or some other source how they are to act and be in a successful marriage.

As I've mentioned often before, we are not offered many opportunities to intentionally reflect upon the roles we think we are to assume in a marriage and whether or not these roles intersect and enhance how we experience ourselves as a person.

Groundhog Process



Step #2

Seek out new information

The roles one assumes in a marriage can be many. But, for purposes of illustrating this point, let's look at more traditional roles and how they impact marital development at different times.

I use these illustrations since I believe they are most common. In over 30 years of clinical experience, working with hundreds of couples and thousands of individuals, these patterns emerge over and over again.

The Stress of Early Adolescence

A point of marital tension frequently emerges when the oldest child enters adolescence. Conflict and stress typically emerges if the husband has assumed the provider role and the mother the nurturing role.

If the oldest child is a male, the young man shifts his allegiance and need system away from his mother and onto his father. Bottom line: he needs more interaction with his father, since he's beginning to wonder what it means to be a male. If the father is wrapped tightly into the provider role with his energy and time given to his vocation, the young man will suffer and the marriage will feel the tension.

Likewise, if the mother has been the nurturer to the young man, she may feel a void or emptiness now that she is no longer "needed."

The degree to which the husband and wife feel bound by their roles (this is what I should do as a "good" father or mother) determines the capacity of the marriage and family to weather this crisis. The more rigidly they hold to the roles (this is all we know) the greater the possibility of an implosion.

This may be a time in which parenting concerns become a source of tension for the couple. Or, the marriage may beset by an acting out 7th grader who will get his attention from dad, and/or drive mom away, one way or another.

Mid Adolescence

Many women jump into the mothering role, especially during the early years of a child's development. This is wonderful, since children need a nurturing presence, a place of warmth and safety. The activities of mothering – raising an infant, toddler then the school and extracurricular activities of the children keep the mother's time and energy occupied.

Adolescence, since it is a time for a child to explore most fully who s/he is, often means: "Mom – get lost. Or, Mom, thank you, but I need to do this on my own. You are excused. Please get your own life."

The mother who has been bound in the mother role may feel displaced. She may feel empty and lost. She questions her place in life. If the husband is absent emotionally (providing) she may resent the marriage and no longer feel the "love."

I've coached many distraught husbands who encounter a wife at this time of marital development connecting with another male or using the famous words, "I love you but am not in love with you anymore."

Mid-life Crisis

I'm not sure Mid-life Crisis is a good term, but I have encountered untold people, often men, who make dramatic shifts (have an affair, radically change behavior patterns, become depressed and aloof and shoot themselves in the foot in a variety of ways.)

This time often occurs with an empty nest or the children assuming adult status.

The underlying theme of this crisis: I've been good. I've been a great provider. I've been a successful businessman, employee, professional etc. I've lived my role to the best I could. I've done everything, given my all to be successful and others pleased with me. I've arrived, or think I've arrived. I've done this (well) for two decades and look where it's gotten me?

I feel miserable. I feel alone. I feel unappreciated. I feel used. I thought I would be overjoyed with my success and I feel the opposite.

One can easily see the impact this has upon the marriage.

Lucky is the man (and spouse!) who knows of this emptiness and can express it and move through it. (And, moving through it means discovering who he is apart from the role[s] he's so adequately played.)

The Beginning of the Golden Years

For many they are not the Golden Years. They are faced with their immortality.

And dealing with one's immortality means, what is there to me other than the roles I've assumed throughout my life?

The characteristics of this time are similar to the Mid-life Crisis, but, I believe, more fear is involved. Time IS running out. There is not another chance to perfect one's role playing.

Often, this "last chance" is tied to one's virility and attractiveness. One may have emphasized virility or attractiveness and feels it rapidly fading, which may terrorize one internally because it seems nothing is there. Or one believes that it's now or never to fully succeed at assuming the virile or attractive role.

Reflection:

Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully regarding the roles you are to play in your marriage?

What has this been like for you?

Groundhog Process



Step #3

Shifts to Implement

In the next step of the Ground Hog Process you begin to make the mental shifts that you will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to place a checkmark in the box that most closely fit where you are now relative to the two opposing beliefs.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now			Constructive Belief	
What I do in the marriage is crucial.				Who I am is important.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My career, what I do, my role as a parent, etc. defines who I am.				I am who I am.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I must be primarily a good provider.				I want to care for...	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I must seduce.				I want to be sexually receptive.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

I conquer.				I want to move from my passion and purpose.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I give my all to my children.				My children enjoy and watch me caring for myself.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I want to be successful.				I want to enjoy life.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you want to take this a little further:

List other shifts you would like to make:

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Groundhog Process



Step #4

Engage Self

I do not want you at this point to share your findings and thoughts with your spouse or partner.

You engage you. You don't engage the other.

Engage yourself means spending some time in the next day or two consciously and intentionally thinking about the above exercise; specifically the distinctions and shifts you desire.

Shift your focal point away from him/her to a degree. This, in itself, may be a significant shift. (Be aware that s/he will probably notice and may react. If able, plan your response if s/he reacts.)

Choose one shift and give that shift your full attention. What would that shift feel like? What would you be doing as you make that shift? What would that shift bring to you?

Reflect on and Answer these questions:

I will be most aware of these new distinctions and/or shifts at this time and place during the next day.

I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.

Groundhog Process



Step #5

How did I enhance my personal power and/or voice?

Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

Evaluate what it was like to spend a day or two focusing on your desired shift and the distinctions you are beginning to make.

Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

Remember, you are just beginning. Don't be upset or alarmed if you find it difficult to pinpoint change and shifts.

Employing the Ground Hog Process for most takes a number of attempts. It gradually will become part of you. And, when it becomes part of you, you will have it for life.

These questions will help you evaluate your experience:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being as bad as it can get) I now rate my bad feelings as _____.

I notice this new thought coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this feeling _____ located in this part of my body
_____ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Faulty Idea #6: Marriage is the End of My Fun and Freedom

Groundhog Process



Step #1

Identify the Problem

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions:

To what degree do you believe your fun and freedom ends with your marriage?

We must					Not that important
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of the fun and freedom ending when married?

What type of feeling do you get when you think of your fun and freedom ending with your marriage?

What does it mean for you that your fun and freedom ends with your marriage?

What is your level of comfort when you think of the fun and freedom ending with your marriage?

Comfortable					Uncomfortable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Introduction

Have you ever reflected on the purpose of Bachelor or Bachelorette parties? In the USA it is a common tradition that friends of the male and female respectively throw a party for each person before the wedding. The party often involves raucous behavior where those in attendance “let loose” in a variety of ways. It’s like the last hurrah before the marriage.

It would appear the underlying message is: This is your last chance; your last chance to have some “fun” to be “free.” After all, once you are married, responsibilities kick in and you will have little chance to “let go” again. You are getting married and tying the knot – a very interesting choice of words!

Although a couple often anticipates the marriage with positive expectations and celebrates the wedding, the underlying thought is; my life will be much much different. It’s time to grow up and enter the world of responsibility whether it is children, vocation or meeting the needs of another.

There is a sense in which a person often believes that s/he must put aside the carefree and unrestrained single life.

For some, I believe it is carried a little further. One may subtly think that his/her life not only loses its freedom and capacity for spontaneity, but it must be subjugated to the wishes of another. My very self will be shoved away and aside.

Of course, most do not entertain these thoughts before the marriage. (Although my experience in premarital counseling tells me that more have these thoughts than most know.) However, as the “demands” of married life are assumed these fears of loss of self emerge, whether it is 5, 10, 20 or 25 years down the marital road.

Another dilemma for the newly married couple is observing the married people around them.

They often observe married couples who struggle. They have friends who recently married describe the frustration and conflict they encounter. The marriages that struggle and endure with pain far outnumber those they observe that offer life and health to the couple. Reality indicates to them that just perhaps marriage will be difficult.

Or, the recently married couple will observe the “perfect married couple.” Everything about this couple seems ideal. They do perfectly what married couples are to do. By looking at them interact; you would never know they have problems.

However, intuitively such a couple often seems fairly plastic and contrived. They play the roles of a happily married couple, but each person seems to lack the spark which comes from being accepted as a fully unique person in that marriage. They play the roles, but their “selves” are submerged under the perfect roles they play. They seem to have lost their humanity.

Good sex and intimacy will die the longer we are married is another latent belief. It is expected, especially if they talk to other married couples, that the marriage will grow “cold.” The passion will fade. The advent of children, the pressures of vocation and intrusion of a number of factors will dull the senses.

At some point we will be too tired, too overwhelmed, too busy to have good sex.

I will lose my passion, my excitement and my spontaneity as I give to my spouse, my children, my work and my community.

The underlying fear seeps through one’s self; I will lose more in this marital process than I personally will gain.

Groundhog Process



Step #2

Seek out new information

Imagine the difference you would experience living out these beliefs about marriage:

- ✓ I can fearlessly express myself fully in the marriage (I'm not talking about rage here.)
- ✓ I have full confidence my spouse will value me; my warts, my idiosyncrasies, and me in my bad moments.
- ✓ Marriage is a great catalyst for me to be more productive and effective in my vocation, as a parent, as a friend and in all arenas I choose to enter.
- ✓ I can feel free to express my needs directly and work out ways to get them met, without feeling needy or without resentment arising.
- ✓ Marriage is a place that can free us from our neediness and patterns that debilitate and push others away.
- ✓ Marriage will enable us to explore more deeply and with complete trust our sexual needs and desires and to feel more erotic and passionate with each other. My sexual life will be more fulfilling.
- ✓ We will feel like a team in our marriage, enabling us to create and do more together than either of us ever could alone.
- ✓ Marriage gives me the freedom to experiment and try out new behaviors and express different aspects of myself in a safe and loving environment.
- ✓ Marriage enables me to laugh and smile more.

The exercise in the ebook is intended to move you in that direction.

Reflection:

Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully about marriage limiting your fun and freedom?

What has this been like for you?

Groundhog Process



Step #3

Shifts to Implement

In the next step of the Ground Hog Process you begin to make the mental shifts that you will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to place a checkmark in the box that most closely fit where you are now relative to the two opposing beliefs.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now			Constructive Belief	
I must walk on eggshells.				I can speak freely.	
I fear rejection.				I am valued.	
Sex is a chore.				I enjoy sex.	
We always fight.				We are a team.	
I am so needy.				Been there, done that with my needs.	
I'm worn out.				I have a great deal of energy.	

If you want to take this a little further:

List other shifts you would like to make:

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Groundhog Process



Step #4

Engage Self

I do not want you at this point to share your findings and thoughts with your spouse or partner.

You engage you. You don't engage the other.

Engage yourself means spending some time in the next day or two consciously and intentionally thinking about the above exercise; specifically the distinctions and shifts you desire.

Shift your focal point away from him/her to a degree. This, in itself, may be a significant shift. (Be aware that s/he will probably notice and may react. If able, plan your response if s/he reacts.)

Choose one shift and give that shift your full attention. What would that shift feel like? What would you be doing as you make that shift? What would that shift bring to you?

Reflect on and Answer these questions:

I will be most aware of these new distinctions and/or shifts at this time and place during the next day.

I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.

**Groundhog
Process**



Step #5

**How did I enhance my
personal power and/or voice?**

Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

Evaluate what it was like to spend a day or two focusing on your desired shift and the distinctions you are beginning to make.

Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

Remember, you are just beginning. Don't be upset or alarmed if you find it difficult to pinpoint change and shifts.

Employing the Ground Hog Process for most takes a number of attempts. It gradually will become part of you. And, when it becomes part of you, you will have it for life.

These questions will help you evaluate your experience:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being as bad as it can get) I now rate my bad feelings as _____.

I notice this new thought coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this feeling _____ located in this part of my body
_____ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Faulty Idea #7: We Must Focus on Meeting Each Other's Needs to Have a Satisfying Marriage

Groundhog Process



Step #1

Identify the Problem

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions:

To what degree do you believe you must meet your spouse's needs?

We must					Not that important
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of meeting his/her needs?

What type of feeling do you get when you think of meeting his/her needs?

What does it mean for you that you must meet his/her needs?

What is your level of comfort when you think of meeting his/her needs?

Comfortable					Uncomfortable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Introduction

Now there is some truth to this belief. Personal needs are important and can be extremely powerful.

My clinical experience tells me around 80% of couples experience difficulty building a love they can trust because personal needs sabotage efforts. Most couples are unaware of the tension and frustration that emerges from personal need systems that covertly run rampant.

Groundhog Process



phenomenon.

Step #2

Seek out new information

Personal needs often lurk under the surface during a marital crisis. Out of sheer desperation and fear, one usually wants “more” from the other. And the other is often unsure or feels inadequate in delivering more. This is often the impetus for the pursuer-distancer

Unacknowledged personal needs usually result in an undercurrent of frustration and resentment. “S/he is not doing enough, giving enough or being enough, etc.” The frustration can quickly erupt or short-circuit communication.

So, a couple can experience the gratification of the spouse intentionally meeting his or her needs.

But, this satisfaction and relief is usually very temporary. There are problems that emerge that preclude meeting his/her personal needs being a long term strategy that ultimately builds trust. Let me explain.

Meeting the personal needs of your spouse is a temporary strategy.

Most know little about their personal need system

It is important to realize that most of us know little about our personal need system. We react to life; we make demands from our spouse often in subtle ways; we automatically and unreflectively respond to life around us out of our personal need system. We expect or strongly desire that our spouse or even world respond to us in particular ways, even though we don’t know why, or don’t even ask: why do I expect or what this?

We also may assume we know what our spouse needs. Even if we are intentional about meeting his or her needs, that need meeting may arise out of what we think s/he needs. Often what we think s/he needs is a projection of what we need or desire.

Needs are complicated, intertwined and many. I have a list of some 200 distinctive personal needs to guide one in determining his/her personal need system. This often surprises most.

Meeting Another’s Personal Need is Usually Never Enough

Meeting your spouse’s personal needs can go on... and on...and on...and on... In many cases it seems as if personal needs are never met sufficiently.

I run into two other common dilemmas.

There is “daddy’s little girl” who growing up was the apple of her daddy’s eye, carried that pattern forward and expects that men should meet all her needs and treat her as a princess – all without her asking. She has a strong personal need for attention, especially from men.

The counter part is “mommy’s boy” who was overindulged (and usually emotionally denied) and “spoiled” by mom. Mom thought he could do no wrong. He carried that pattern forward and expects the world, specifically women, should wait on him hand and foot. Never should a need go unmet. He has strong personal needs for appreciation and adoration.

Focusing on meeting the personal needs of these patterns is like draining the ocean. It never will happen. More always will be demanded and expected.

Both these patterns obviously create roadblocks to building a lasting love.

The Relief of Meeting His/Her Needs is Often Temporary

Feelings of relief and satisfaction may emerge once one attempts to meet his/her needs. It does feel good for those personal needs to be acknowledged and responded to. It often is a beginning of healing and understanding for a couple.

However, it is crucial for a couple to realize that need meeting is just that: a beginning. Personal need meeting is a start and usually a good start for what I call a “yellow” marriage, where frustration and tension abound as a result of inadequate attention to personal need systems.

I believe that “romance” and “falling in love” are often products of intense personal need meeting. One person intuitively mirrors back and responds to the personal need system of the other. The other reciprocates in kind and strong warm feelings emerge.

However over a period of time those feelings fade as other aspects of the relationship raise their heads.

Need Meeting Eventually Leads to Resentment

An exclusive focus on meeting the needs of the other invariable leads to resentment.

In reality, meeting the needs of the other is never enough. Without acknowledgement of that need and lacking the awareness to move on to other areas of personal growth the personal need continues to exist and demands, “Take care of me. That’s not enough.”

The knowing emptiness and frustration is never satisfied even if a spouse consistently attempts to meet that need. Why? Our personal need system is only a part of who we are. The meeting of needs does not lead to personal satisfaction and fulfillment. Other aspects of our life are there to fill us.

Resentment and frustration eventually characterize the mood of the marriage as one realizes s/he seemingly is never “good enough” at meeting my needs, even though s/he “should” do just that.

Resentment emerges as each spouse begins to expect reciprocity. I’ve met you needs; Now when are you going to do the same for me?

An internal scorecard emerges and the game playing begins. Intimacy, knowing and being know, flies out the marital window.

The External Focus Leads Away from Intimacy

Meeting the needs of him/her demands the focus be on him/her. This may appear altruistic and what all good spouse should do, but in reality, it short circuits lasting love and intimacy.

Focus on his/her need system is an external focus. I've heard over and over, "how do I win him/her back? How can I make him/her happy? How can I please him/her? I'm trying to make him/her happy, but it isn't working! I'm doing everything s/he has always wanted and I still get nothing in return. I sent her flowers and she didn't respond."

Intimacy emerges as I discover what it is I offer. Intimacy emerges as I discover what it is that I truly want and have to give.

This is often a huge shift for individuals and couples.

Once each in a couple take thoughtful time to explore need systems and set up other systems to acknowledge them with an intent to meet those needs, the couple is free to move beyond the personal need systems that lead to frustration and tension.

Reflection:

Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully to what your experience in working on the marriage?

What has this been like for you?

Groundhog Process



Step #3

Shifts to Implement

In the next step of the Ground Hog Process you begin to make the mental shifts that you will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to place a checkmark in the box that most closely fit where you are now relative to the two opposing beliefs.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now					Constructive Belief
S/he should meet my needs.						I am responsible for defining and getting my personal needs met once and for all.
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Meeting my personal needs is most important.				Living by my values and standards is important.	
S/he should know what I need.				It is important for me to state clearly what my personal needs are.	
S/he does not meet my needs.				I need not always focus on my personal needs.	
It's frustrating that my needs are not met.				I will ALWAYS be frustrated if I focus on others meeting my personal needs.	
Meeting my needs is intimacy.				Intimacy emerges as we know each other more deeply.	

If you want to take this a little further:

List other shifts you would like to make:

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Groundhog Process



Step #4

Engage Self

I do not want you at this point to share your findings and thoughts with your spouse or partner.

You engage you. You don't engage the other.

Engage yourself means spending some time in the next day or two consciously and intentionally thinking about the above exercise; specifically the distinctions and shifts you desire.

Shift your focal point away from him/her to a degree. This, in itself, may be a significant shift. (Be aware that s/he will probably notice and may react. If able, plan your response if s/he reacts.)

Choose one shift and give that shift your full attention. What would that shift feel like? What would you be doing as you make that shift? What would that shift bring to you?

Reflect on and Answer these questions:

I will be most aware of these new distinctions and/or shifts at this time and place during the next day.

I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.

Groundhog Process



Step #5

How did I enhance my personal power and/or voice?

Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

Evaluate what it was like to spend a day or two focusing on your desired shift and the distinctions you are beginning to make.

Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

Remember, you are just beginning. Don't be upset or alarmed if you find it difficult to pinpoint change and shifts.

Employing the Ground Hog Process for most takes a number of attempts. It gradually will become part of you. And, when it becomes part of you, you will have it for life.

These questions will help you evaluate your experience:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being as bad as it can get) I now rate my bad feelings as _____.

I notice this new thought coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this feeling _____ located in this part of my body
_____ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Faulty Idea #8: Something “Out There” Will Make Our Marriage Better

Groundhog Process



Step #1

Identify the Problem

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions:

To what degree do you believe something ‘out there’ will make your marriage better?

It will					It won't
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of something ‘out there’ making your marriage better?

What type of feeling do you get when you think of something ‘out there’ making your marriage better?

What does it mean for you that something ‘out there’ will make your marriage better?

What is your level of comfort when you think of something ‘out there’ making your marriage better?

Comfortable					Uncomfortable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Introduction

This belief is very subtle but very powerful in our culture. We are lead to believe; we want to believe; we subtly are taught that what we want in life is “out there.” What is “out there” will make us healthier, wealthier and wiser. More money, more success, more attention, more of this and more of that, out there, will complete our life and eradicate the emptiness and longing.

Groundhog Process



Step #2

Seek out new information

We often believe that what is “out there” is responsible for making our life/marriage better.

Allow me to be more specific. We blame something “out there” for the demise of our marriage. There are powers and influences “out there” that destroy a marriage.

Here's a short list:

- ✓ S/he takes me for granted.
- ✓ There's not enough money.
- ✓ There's too much money.
- ✓ There's not enough romance.
- ✓ In-laws, friends, family and children interfere.
- ✓ We are overwhelmed with the children.
- ✓ A(nother) child will bring us together.
- ✓ We're too busy.
- ✓ There's too much of a social life.
- ✓ There's not enough social life.
- ✓ We need to focus on creating our dream home.
- ✓ Our dream home is too much. We need to downsize.
- ✓ There are medical and health problems.
- ✓ There's too much television and computer time.
- ✓ Etc.

And, we often surmise, that if we take care of these problems, if we fix what we believe to be broken, or if we rearrange our environment our marriage will heal and rebound.

Let's take this a step further.

In addition to placing responsibility for pain and change “out there,” we commonly place responsibility on our spouse.

If only s/he would:

- ✓ Be more loving
- ✓ Be more romantic
- ✓ Be more talkative
- ✓ Be more attentive
- ✓ Spend more time at home
- ✓ Be a better parent
- ✓ Help around the house
- ✓ Spend more time with me
- ✓ Be less controlling
- ✓ Be more aggressive
- ✓ Call me while at work
- ✓ Spend less time with friends, family, etc.
- ✓ Watch less tv or be on the computer less
- ✓ Etc.

One expects that if s/he makes those changes the marriage would be on the road to health and passion.

Of course, such hoping seldom, if ever works. By abdicating responsibility to someone else a cycle of resentment and distrust builds that becomes more and more irreparable. A couple swirls around the frustration, anger and disappointment.

If only you would _____. Well, if only you would _____ then I would _____.

Looking to your spouse to solve the marital impasse only intensifies the impasse.

The step of looking “out there” for help is also subtly recommended by well meaning others and socially sanctioned.

If you have a marital problem it is often recommended that you get help. That help is from an expert or some experience “out there” that will supposedly transform your marriage.

You’ve heard:

- ✓ Get into marriage counseling
- ✓ Find yourself a good couples’ therapist
- ✓ Attend a weekend marital retreat or conference
- ✓ Read a self help book on rebuilding a marriage
- ✓ Plan a romantic getaway
- ✓ Do a google search for marriage help
- ✓ Go talk to your pastor, priests or rabbi
- ✓ Start dating each other again
- ✓ Spend time talking about your feelings
- ✓ Etc.

You Want More Than Merely Temporarily Feeling Good

Now, some of these approaches will be helpful. You will feel better. The stress and strain will be lessened. And those who espouse these methods are good people; some of them great people. (I’ve been a licensed clinician for 30 years or so and I suppose I’ve earned the right to evaluate the helping profession.)

They truly want the best for you.

However, these approaches or theories are limited.

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.

No one or nothing “out there” is responsible for making you or the marriage a place of health and satisfaction.

All that you truly want is within you. All the answers are within you. All the hope is within you. All the life you bring to another is within you. All the warmth you bring to another is within you.

And, you CAN be responsible for discovering it. It’s much more fun and exhilarating and freeing than hoping someone or something else will make it better.

My material to a large degree points you in that direction. (I hope you see the seeming contradiction here. If you do, you are on the way!) You can poke me in the ribs with a smile on your face!

Reflection:

Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully to what your experience in working on the marriage?

What has this been like for you?

Groundhog Process



Step #3

Shifts to Implement

In the next step of the Ground Hog Process you begin to make the mental shifts that you will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to place a checkmark in the box that most closely fit where you are now relative to the two opposing beliefs.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now			Constructive Belief	
If only s/he would _____, then I would feel better.				I am responsible for my own feeling state.	
I am waiting for him/her to change.				I can start being who I truly want to be.	
Why should I have to do all the marital work?				I benefit greatly from tackling this problem.	
S/he is such a great therapist.				I was able to find my answers in therapy.	
We need something to show us the way.				I will find great joy, freedom and confidence as I confront our marital difficulties.	
Everyone should know how special I am.				I am no more 'special' than anyone else.	

If you want to take this a little further:

List other shifts you would like to make:

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Groundhog Process



Step #4

Engage Self

I do not want you at this point to share your findings and thoughts with your spouse or partner.

You engage you. You don't engage the other.

Engage yourself means spending some time in the next day or two consciously and intentionally thinking about the above exercise; specifically the distinctions and shifts you desire.

Shift your focal point away from him/her to a degree. This, in itself, may be a significant shift. (Be aware that s/he will probably notice and may react. If able, plan your response if s/he reacts.)

Choose one shift and give that shift your full attention. What would that shift feel like? What would you be doing as you make that shift? What would that shift bring to you?

Reflect on and Answer these questions:

I will be most aware of these new distinctions and/or shifts at this time and place during the next day.

I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.

**Groundhog
Process**



Step #5

**How did I enhance my
personal power and/or voice?**

Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

Evaluate what it was like to spend a day or two focusing on your desired shift and the distinctions you are beginning to make.

Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

Remember, you are just beginning. Don't be upset or alarmed if you find it difficult to pinpoint change and shifts.

Employing the Ground Hog Process for most takes a number of attempts. It gradually will become part of you. And, when it becomes part of you, you will have it for life.

These questions will help you evaluate your experience:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being as bad as it can get) I now rate my bad feelings as _____.

I notice this new thought coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this feeling _____ located in this part of my body
_____ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Faulty Idea #9: I will be the Exclusive Object of Intense Interest to my Spouse

**Groundhog
Process**



Step #1

Identify the Problem

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions:

To what degree do you believe you must be the exclusive object of intense interest to your spouse?

Yes					Not that important
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of being the exclusive object of intense interest?

What type of feeling do you get when you think of being the exclusive object of intense interest?

What does it mean for you that you must be the exclusive object of intense interest?

What is your level of comfort when you think of being the exclusive object of intense interest?

Comfortable					Uncomfortable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Introduction

Many in the initial stages of a marriage believe that, “my spouse is totally loyal to me. S/he will NEVER stray.”

Groundhog Process



word is seldom explored.

Step #2

Seek out new information

It is assumed by many that in the course of the marriage a person will be the exclusive interest of the spouse. Once married the object of attention for each spouse is the other spouse. Loyalty is expected, although the extensive and situational meaning of that

Some couples talk about exclusivity before the marriage. It often goes, “If you cheat on me, I will be gone. I will not put up with that.” And, there is frequently an agreement for that type of exclusivity. This is especially true if one or both have observed the devastating consequence of infidelity in other relationships.

Often the issue of exclusive loyalty is not broached. It is assumed the other WILL be loyal. A naïve belief exists, “This will never happen to us or me. Our marriage is too strong. We love each other too much to allow that to happen.”

After 30 years of clinical experiences with marriages and individuals, I conclude that there are usually 2-3 others whom we bump into in a variety of capacities throughout a marriage for which we have some level of attraction. It just happens. Attraction to another happens in the best of marriages. We are drawn to a particular person for a variety of tugs and pulls. It’s a reality.

That does not mean we act on that attraction. It just means those attractions happen. The exclusive attention reserved for the spouse is threatened.

Assuming that the other spouse will not be attracted to another, believing in exclusive attention, I believe, puts a marriage at a higher risk for the pain of infidelity.

Closing one’s eyes, burying one’s marital head in the sand, probably increases the chances of a spouse acting out on that attraction.

One sets himself up for pain and the possibility of infidelity when the humanity of a person is not respected and marital life is lived on the surface with denial rather than welcoming the humanity of another.

The person who has an inner compass and who intentionally embraces self awareness and learning and discloses that to his/her spouse is more immune to acting on the tugs and pulls in encountering an attractive other.

Reflection:

Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully to you about being the exclusive object of intense interest to your spouse?

What has this been like for you?

Groundhog Process



Step #3

Shifts to Implement

In the next step of the Ground Hog Process you begin to make the mental shifts that you will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to place a checkmark in the box that most closely fit where you are now relative to the two opposing beliefs.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now			Constructive Belief	
S/he will never stray.	☐	☐	☐	S/he will probably be attracted to someone else.	☐
It will be the end of the world and our marriage if s/he strays.	☐	☐	☐	We will be able to manage that possibility.	☐
I'm only ok if my spouse remains totally loyal.	☐	☐	☐	My well-being is not dependent on his/her actions.	☐
I must always "keep my eye" on him/her.	☐	☐	☐	I trust myself and our marriage enough that we will know when this issue must be addressed.	☐

I'm afraid s/he will fall out of love with me and fall in love with someone else.

Love has nothing to do with attraction to another.

□

□

□

□

□

If you want to take this a little further:

List other shifts you would like to make:

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Groundhog Process



Step #4

Engage Self

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Choose one shift and give that shift your full attention. What would that shift feel like? What would you be doing as you make that shift? What would that shift bring to you?

Reflect on and Answer these questions:

I will be most aware of these new distinctions and/or shifts at this time and place during the next day.

I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.

Groundhog Process



Step #5

How did I enhance my personal power and/or voice?

Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

Evaluate what it was like to spend a day or two focusing on your desired shift and the distinctions you are beginning to make.

Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

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I notice this feeling _____ located in this part of my body
_____ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Faulty Idea #10: All Marriages Are Alike

Groundhog Process



Step #1

Identify the Problem

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions:

To what degree do you believe that all marriages are alike?

I agree					Don't agree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of all marriages being alike?

What type of feeling do you get when you think of all marriages being alike?

What does it mean for you that you all marriages are alike?

What is your level of comfort when you think of all marriages being alike?

Comfortable					Uncomfortable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Introduction

We throw the word marriage around lightly. What is a marriage? Is it nothing more than a socially sanctioned (the civil law, the church, etc.) way of two people being together?

I don't think you ultimately are concerned about the marriage. You are; however, very concerned about the act of being married, or in reality, the ways in which you and your spouse relate.

So, let's focus on the process of relating, not on marriage.

This may seem like splitting hairs, but I think the distinction is important.

Groundhog Process



Step #2

Seek out new information

In the Western world we tend to focus on the marriage. We talk about marriage enrichment, marriage retreats, marriage help or ways to strengthen our marriage. It's as if marriage is an animal.

The self help community talks about working on marital skills, about building communication skills in your marriage, about marriage counseling and about marriage and relationship therapy.

It's as if there are skill sets or activities that will strengthen and rebuild the marriage. You must communicate. You must talk. You must meet his/her needs. You must recapture the romance. It's as if one size fits all. Do these things and your marriage will be better.

However, in a marriage there are different ways of relating. There are different patterns of reality. People are different. Ways of relating are different. What works for two people in one set of relating will be disaster for another.

For example:

- ✓ I strongly suggest you do NOT talk about feelings and hurt when there is a persistent and frequent high level of conflict.
- ✓ Using "tough love" will work with a particular way of relating and be disaster for another.
- ✓ Listening and patience is crucial when there is distance and mistrust – not talking.
- ✓ Trying to solve the "problem" (which some in our culture excel at) will drive a wedge with a frustrated spouse.
- ✓ Focusing on the changes one wants will trigger withdrawal in one type of relating.
- ✓ Focus on needs being met will be met with huge resistance in one pattern and welcomed by another.

Once you begin to explore distinctions in ways of relating you are freed to find and pinpoint where specifically in your ways of relating you want change. You will be much more effective. You will reach down and touch the joy and satisfaction for which you long.

In the next chapter you begin to peel away the layers to find the type of relating that best fits you.

With an exercise you are able to identify your marriage as red, yellow or green. Once you discover your "color" you begin focusing on exercises and the Ground Hog process that speak specifically to the patterns of relating now facing you.

Reflection:

Which of the above distinctions speaks most powerfully as you consider that not all marriages are alike?

What has this been like for you?

Groundhog Process



Step #3

Shifts to Implement

In the next step of the Ground Hog Process you begin to make the mental shifts that you will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to place a checkmark in the box that most closely fit where you are now relative to the two opposing beliefs.

Destructive Belief	Check what you believe now			Constructive Belief	
We must rebuild our marriage.				I want to discover new ways of relating.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We need marriage counseling.				I want to explore ways I can find joy and satisfaction with him/her.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I want our marriage to be like the Cleavers (or other ideal).				I want us to be what we can be.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Marriage is difficult (or wonderful).				We are in the process of finding what uniquely works for us.	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you want to take this a little further:

List other shifts you would like to make:

	-->	
	-->	
	-->	
	-->	
	-->	
	-->	

Groundhog Process



Step #4

Engage Self

I do not want you at this point to share your findings and thoughts with your spouse or partner.

You engage you. You don't engage the other.

Engage yourself means spending some time in the next day or two consciously and intentionally thinking about the above exercise; specifically the distinctions and shifts you desire.

Shift your focal point away from him/her to a degree. This, in itself, may be a significant shift. (Be aware that s/he will probably notice and may react. If able, plan your response if s/he reacts.)

Choose one shift and give that shift your full attention. What would that shift feel like? What would you be doing as you make that shift? What would that shift bring to you?

Reflect on and Answer these questions:

I will be most aware of these new distinctions and/or shifts at this time and place during the next day.

I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.

Groundhog Process



Step #5

How did I enhance my personal power and/or voice?

Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

Evaluate what it was like to spend a day or two focusing on your desired shift and the distinctions you are beginning to make.

Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

Remember, you are just beginning. Don't be upset or alarmed if you find it difficult to pinpoint change and shifts.

Employing the Ground Hog Process for most takes a number of attempts. It gradually will become part of you. And, when it becomes part of you, you will have it for life.

These questions will help you evaluate your experience:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being as bad as it can get) I now rate my bad feelings as _____.

I notice this new thought coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this feeling _____ located in this part of my body
_____ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Module 6 Review

Review

- ☐ I now see better the value of change in the marriage beginning with me.
- ☐ I feel lighter, freer and more hopeful that I can find the love I can trust.
- ☐ I sometimes smile to myself when I encounter a faulty idea.
- ☐ I think of marriage much differently.
- ☐ I am more excited about the possibilities of our marriage, especially my place in it.
- ☐ I am much less fearful of engaging my spouse.
- ☐ I have a better understanding of a “true and lasting love.”
- ☐ I feel less guilt and shame for the state of my marriage.
- ☐ It’s freeing to know I’m not alone in my marital confusion and pain.
- ☐ I feel more “normal.”
- ☐ I am aware when I encounter a faulty belief in myself, my spouse or others.
- ☐ I’ve given input to Dr. Huizenga on this Module by completing this short survey:
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7T3K5G7>