

INTRODUCTION

*“Being deeply Loved By Someone Gives You Strength,
While Loving Someone Deeply Gives You Courage”*

—Lao Tzu- Chinese Taoist Philosopher

Recently I saw a couple for the third time. I thought the marriage was over. They had been referred to me by a divorce mediator because the husband wanted to try to repair their marriage before filing for divorce. In their twenty years together he had never been willing to see a couple's therapist. For years he had dominated his spouse through criticism and demeaning comments. He had grown up in a family culture where a man was in charge and never said he was sorry. Now their children were almost grown. His wife had given up hope.

In counseling I gave them the tools, books to read, my experience and expertise. Before meeting for this session, the husband's homework had been to meet with his four sons as well as his wife to explain how his behavior had not honored their mother, his wife, all these years. He was to further explain how he was truly sorry and planned to change.

In this session his wife said she couldn't trust that her husband wouldn't go back to his old behaviors. She said, "I want it to be done". He bristled and said, "then let's stop"... ..Silence.....A moment later, they scheduled to meet with me the following week....They had decided not to give up.

This couple scheduled another appointment and left...I closed the door and wept. I had witnessed a miracle.

After being a therapist for twenty seven years, a mediator for eighteen of those years and a coach the last two years, my wish for you is to not give up if your relationship is challenged. I wrote this book for you. In my own marriage of thirty seven years and with all the countless couples I have worked with, I have discovered there are almost always answers and methods of personal growth that can make your relationship joyous and successful once again. So let's begin.

If I asked you what you feel is the purpose of marriage, what would be your answer? The most common answers I've received from couples over the years have been:

- To experience sexuality, comfort, support and companionship.
- To express love.
- To show commitment.
- To start a family.
- To build financial security together.

These are logical and noble purposes. Answers from couples who have been happily married for a decade or more add a new perspective on what might be the purpose of love over a lifetime.

Here is what they said:

- To be with someone who will enrich my life.
- To be with the person who is going to help me grow.

Whether we knew it when we approached the altar or we came to understand it over time, we chose the path of marriage because we wanted someone to help us grow and live a more fulfilling life.

The marriage of your dreams is a marriage between two interdependent individuals growing to love themselves and learning to love each other over the course of a lifetime.

Marriage of Your Dreams

You should know this is not a book for the faint-hearted. It is for couples who want to develop a deep, abiding love. This love will transform both you and your partner and benefit everyone around you.

When I look across the table at my husband of 37 years, I think of everything we have experienced, learned, enjoyed, grown from, lived with, laughed at, cried for, lost and loved. When we met in our early twenties, we'd only begun to understand ourselves. We'd only begun to understand what part our past played in who we are.

Over the years, we've grown together, come to understand ourselves better, and learned to love and accept each other and ourselves for who we are.

As a couples counselor, mediator, coach, parent and happily married woman, I have seen how the creation of a sensual, loving marriage can bring strength, joy, laughter and a sense of accomplishment and value to both partners.

Supporting one another has made us feel nurtured, valued and fulfilled. This has enabled each of us to grow in our love of ourselves as well as each other. This provides a source of well being that enhances all aspects of our lives including the lives of our children, relatives, friends and all those lives we touch.

This is my dream for you: a relationship so loving that you have to pinch yourself to know it's true.

How do you get there?

Thirty seven years ago my husband and I embraced marriage with passion, hopes and dreams.

*JUST TWO SHORT YEARS LATER,
WE COULD BARELY STAND EACH OTHER.*

- What happened?
- What was missing?
- How did we renew our love?

This book will answer all these questions and give you the tools to make your relationship sensual, loving and strong. All that I teach in my practice and in my workshops is in these pages.

Problems that couples have are not always unique to them but more often than not reflect common scenarios. For that reason, I have described many couples whose situations are likely to be as overwhelming and challenging as yours who have used these very same tools with great success. They share their stories so you can learn from them.

The Five C's

After years of work isolating the tools that resolve differences and renew the love in relationships, I have designed five principles that will guide you to a successful marriage. I call them the Five C's.

*THE FIVE C'S TO CREATING THE SENSUAL,
LOVING MARRIAGE YOU DESIRE ARE:*

Commitment: The willingness and dedication to work on your marriage in good times and bad to create the kind of marriage that will enhance your life and the life of your spouse.

Communication: Improve your ability to understand and connect with each other creating a bridge of love between you and your spouse.

Conflict Resolution: Negotiating through differences of opinions, emotional wounds, and learning to fulfill the needs of both partners.

Cherishing: Learning to appreciate your partner and expressing that appreciation, gratitude, sensuality, and love in your relationship.

Communion of Spirit: Expressing your intimacy, growth and purpose as a couple.

Through the pages of this book, I describe these principles in detail, and show you how many couples have used these Five C's to revitalize their love. If you have doubted your marriage or simply want to make a good thing even better, you'll find the answers you have been looking for in this book.

First I want to highlight the following key concepts included in creating a joyous, growing relationship.

Emotional Wounds

Because the marriage relationship is so intimate and close, your emotional wounds from the past often will be triggered. Healing these wounds through your relationship is the opportunity. Too often this is where marriages fail. The arguments or inability to trust seems to be the problem. In fact this pain is an indicator of a need, desire or wound from the past that goes much deeper.

Wounds are not simply traumatic instances involving violence or death. They can be the judgments a child accepts from others about themselves or makes about themselves as the result of another's actions or words. Many times they come from childhood experiences that were confusing, invalidating, or in some other way emotionally painful. As the chapters of this book unfold I will explain how to recognize these feelings, release them, and

take positive actions to replace the negative coping mechanisms you had been using.

THE HEALING OF CHILDHOOD WOUNDS IS KEY TO A FULFILLING MARRIAGE.

Needs and Requirements

As you work the Five C's, you will determine what are your essential needs in a lifelong partnership? For example, a person who values friends and family needs a partner who is supportive of these relationships. A partner who has a particular career needs a spouse who is supportive of this expression of their talents. Another partner may require that their spouse listen more as well as talk with them when they spend time together. Unless each partner in the couple identifies what these needs are and asks for them, resentments can build and upsets often follow.

Sometimes you and your partner will need to negotiate a compromise in which both spouse's needs can be satisfied. Through the exercises in this book, you and your partner will learn to identify your needs, learn how to communicate them, and learn how to resolve the differences

Love Stories

I believe that real learning is accomplished through life experience. This book therefore contains much more than advice. It tells real-life stories of couples that represent many types of married relationships. Each story is composed from the experiences of one or several couples whose identities have been changed to protect their confidentiality. I call them *Love Stories* because *they are the story of each couples path to fulfilled love*. These examples will help illuminate the principles I describe in this book, making it easier

to apply them to your own life. You will find my husband's and my story and these Love Stories throughout all the chapters.

Couples Exercises

In each chapter you will be given exercises you can do by yourself and with your spouse. These are the same successful procedures I use in my office and in my workshops.

In the exercises you'll find yourself becoming more vulnerable and yet, stronger. You'll learn when to talk and when not to talk. You'll learn to give up judging your partner and yourself. You will learn all about expressing Commitment, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Cherishing and Communion of Spirit in your marriage.

Don't Give Up Easily

If times are tough in your relationship right now, have faith. A relationship that brings each partner joy is a treasure and worth your investment in time and care. If your relationship isn't working well at this time, don't let your defensiveness, disappointment or false pride cheat you out of a better life together. Make the decision to heal your wounds, identify and express your needs and do your best to apply the principles in this book to make your partnership work.

I invite you and your partner...if he or she is willing...to read the following chapters, learn from the couples, and use the exercises. Know that what I am teaching you here has worked for thousands of couples as well as for my husband and I. If you put in the time and effort, you will learn what to do to have a Love for a Lifetime.

"To love and be loved is to feel the sun from both sides."

—David Viscott, Psychiatrist, Best-Selling Author