

# **Rethinking Love, Marriage & Divorce**



**An examination of what makes love work, why it succeeds,  
why it fails, and why sex has so much to do with it all.**

**By  
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# Rethinking **Love**, **Marriage** & **Divorce**



**I**t was Leonardo Da Vinci who said, “Marriage is like putting your hand into a bag of snakes in the hope of pulling out an eel.”

His lack of optimism about marriage is shared - and voiced - by many. So much so that one might wonder, what’s the point of marriage in this day and age? Yet every year, an estimated two million people throw caution to the wind, roll the dice, and tie the knot.

Despite those seemingly high numbers, a study released in December 2011, by the Pew Research Center, based upon U.S. census data, confirms that marriages are in fact, on the decline. The study finds that today 51% of all adults age 18 and older are married, compared with 72% in 1960.

Those statistics inspired me to write this article, which takes an in-depth look at the phenomenon called love, its many nuances and the institution called marriage to which almost half of all adults belong. It reviews the history of marriage, and examines its purpose in the context of today’s modern world and changing values. It also analyzes the role of sex in relationships, people’s motives for getting married, and the reasons why marriages tend to succeed and fail. My goal in writing it is to help you rethink love, marriage, and divorce.

## **MARRIAGE: WHAT’S THE POINT?**

During my freshman year of college I took a pilot course called the *Psychology of Male and Female Relationships*. One of the most heated debates in that class stemmed from this question: does marriage still serve a purpose? My classmates, who ranged in age from eighteen to fifty, vocalized a wide array of opinions. Some expressed their belief that marriage is about family, and others expressed a sentiment that has become quite popular: marriage is archaic and has lost its relevance since the women’s lib movement, which economically empowered women and reduced their financial dependency on men.

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MARRIAGE**



Once upon a time, marriages were instigated between families to preserve economic and social status. How the arranged couple felt about each other was of no concern. After all, they had the rest of their lives to get to know, like, and love each other. The roles were clearly defined: the woman’s job was to cater to her husband, procreate, and attend to the resulting offspring and household. The man supplied the resources to take care of them all.

Things have changed.

Today, for the most part, both the man and woman share the economic responsibilities of the marriage. While many of today’s marriages may not be predicated on economics, perhaps they should. When surveyed, women report that their top three causes of divorce are money, adultery, and abuse. Men report that their top three causes of divorce are money, sex (or lack thereof), and in-laws. It’s interesting (if not ironic) to note that women don’t cite sex as a cause of divorce, but they do cite the sex their husbands have with *other* women (44 percent of husbands and 25 percent of wives - likely more - have committed adultery). That can be explained: the portion of the brain that governs sex drive (the medial preoptic area located in the hypothalamus) is 2 -3 times *larger* in men; resulting in men being more neurologically wired to seek *more* sexual activity than women. A lot more.

## **MEN: IT’S ALL ABOUT THEIR RESOURCES**

Since money is a resource of paramount concern to both sexes, it warrants greater scrutiny. David Buss, a renowned professor of psychology at the University of Texas, Austin, has studied the mating strategies of mammals for decades. In his book, *The Evolution Of Desire*, he demonstrates that females in both species are on a quest to attract and mate with the “dominant male.” The female animal is biologically driven to capture the seed of the male who has the greatest resources for the benefit of her children. These resources include looks, intellect, connections, status, and, money.

According to Buss, one of the crucial decisions for females in selecting a mate is whether they are seeking a short-term or long-term partner. The short-term partner (viewed strictly as a recreational love interest) satisfies the urge for sexual gratification. The long-term partner (viewed as marriage material) has greater resources to provide the woman and her children. If women fail to find (or doubt their ability to attract), the dominant male, and are suddenly faced with the prospect of a life-long commitment of raising children who are the byproduct of sex with a short-term partner, the result is women who are *willing* to become single mothers.



Despite the fact that the number of babies being born each year is on the decline (a previous average of 4 million), marriage (which is also on the decline among those who are between the ages of 25 and 34) is no longer an antecedent. It's estimated that 4 out of 10 children are now born out of wedlock; women in their twenties account for 60 percent of those births - which makes it a modern mindset. Clearly, the stigma of having a child as an unwed mother has eroded.

There are, of course, instances when the female finds a dominant male who is reluctant to commit to a long-term relationship. While marriage may not be likely, capturing his genes will provide significant advantages for her offspring, and may provide financial rewards for her. While marriage is averted, the benefits of marriage are obtained.

Studies show that women are outpacing men when it comes to college degree attainment, and there is a strong correlation between career-minded women with higher education levels who are waiting longer to get married, but are choosing to become single parents while their biological clocks are still ticking; thereby negating the need for a dominant male or his resources.

The result? According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, more than a third of all U.S. children are now born outside of wedlock, including 25% of non-Hispanic white babies, 46% of Hispanic babies, and 69% of African-American babies. The percentage of two-parent families (not necessarily comprised of the biological parents) varies by ethnic/cultural group: 87% of Asian children live in two-parent homes; 76% of Caucasians; 70% of Hispanics; and 42% of African American.

So, does marriage still serve a purpose? One could factor religion and its accompanying moralities into the equation to find the answer. You could do the same with the legalities of marriage and guardianship. Those have their place, and certainly their relevance, but purpose and meaning often overlap. As long as people search for meaning and purpose in life, marriage and children will provide a means to that end...even if not combined...or in that order.



As discouraging as marital statistics can be, they will always get trumped by the romanticism of living happily ever after - whether or not people decide to marry. These are the notions that we grow up with.

Women fantasize about having their "big day" with the man of their dreams, and men dream of finding the perfect girl. The very idea that you can find someone who truly loves you, and wants to spend their life with you by securing your presence through marriage, is emotionally and psychologically appealing; it's securing and managing the commitment that creates anxiety.

## RELATIONSHIPS & COMMITMENT

Like many of my classmates, I took the *Psychology of Male and Female Relationships* course because I wanted to learn more about the opposite sex in an effort to better relate to them, and thus, have better relationships with them. Aside from the stimulating debates, I was exposed to the philosophies of psychologist Erich Fromm.

Fromm believed that love is a verb; not an emotion; a skill that can be taught and developed. He argued that one should work at becoming a *loving person*, before trying to love someone. His book, *The Art of Loving*, argues that the active character of true love involves four basic elements: care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge. He also believed very strongly in self-love. His definition of self-love means caring about oneself, taking responsibility for oneself, respecting oneself, and knowing oneself (e.g., being realistic and honest about one's strengths and weaknesses).

But getting to know one's self is no easy task. Relationships offer an abundance of opportunities for self-discovery. What we like, and don't like; what we want, and don't want gets revealed through these daily interactions. Introspection is not automatic...it's a deliberate process that can yield invaluable self-knowledge *if* we reflect on our behaviors and choices,

as well as the motivations behind them. These are *intrapersonal* communication skills (relating to one's self), which are not emphasized as much as interpersonal skills (relating to others).

So if getting to know ourselves is a challenge, how long does it take before we *begin* to really know someone else?

Psychologists say 18 to 24 months - depending on the amount of time spent together and the interpersonal skills of the individuals involved. Time spent together should *not* be confused with time spent *living* together. One is spent in courtship (the process of evaluating and getting to know someone) and the other is spent cohabitating. Couples living together that have open communication regarding their *intention* to get married, and *plans* to do so, report higher satisfaction levels with their living arrangements. Those who live together merely to reduce expenses report long-term dissatisfaction.

## PLAYING HOUSE

It's estimated that 7.5 million couples live together in the U.S. While living together may be a great way to audition someone for the role of long-term partner, studies show that people who live together before marriage have higher ratios of divorce....and perhaps more doubts about getting married in the first place.

## LUST & THE PINK LENS EFFECT

When we first meet someone in whom we have romantic interest, it seems as if they are perfect, and can do no wrong. They mesmerize us; capturing our attention and hearts. Pretty soon, we become addicted to them. It's a biological fact that lust results in surging dopamine levels, which increases testosterone; the hormone that's at the root of our sexual desires.

Coincidentally, all addictions are associated with elevated levels of dopamine, which result in increased energy, less need for sleep or food, focused attention, and delight in the smallest details of a novel relationship. So with this addiction and sexually charged connection, are new couples happier?



The answer is yes...while dopamine levels are high. Guess how long these levels can remain elevated? 18 - 24 months.

Psychologists have demonstrated in several studies that newly smitten lovers often exalt their relationships (i.e., believe that it's better than everyone else's) causing them to exaggerate their positive qualities, magnify the other's virtues, and ignore or explain away their flaws.

This behavior is called the "pink lens effect," and it creates emotions which blur the perceptions we have of our romantic love interests. Those who suffer from the pink lens effect are simply not able to see their new love interest objectively, causing them to turn a deaf ear to any feedback that contradicts their perceptions.

## KEEPING THE FIRE BURNING



Long-term relationships or marriage can't compete with the intensity and euphoria of a sporadic romantic affair. The novelty of new love releases a constant stream of dopamine into our systems, which sexually charges us. The physical act of having sex releases oxytocin, a hormone which promotes bonding and creates attachments between lovers with physical affection and sex. The brain doubles the dosage during orgasm, causing new couples to lose their minds.

People are quick to equate this euphoric state with being "in love," and when the intensity subsides, they demote themselves to merely loving the person they are with. Because we live in a society which promotes *being in love* (i.e., maintaining this euphoric state), many people jump to the erroneous conclusion that their relationship or marriage is dying, or that the fire is no longer burning, when the intense feelings weaken.

Long-term relationships and marriages are about stability, companionship, and comfort - the very things that German researchers say are responsible for their sharp *declines* in dopamine levels, which, along with young children, negatively impact the sexual desires of both married women and men. "Keeping the fire burning" is not just an overwrought phrase popularized by marriage counselors; it's something that couples must consciously and actively do to stay happy.

## TYPES OF LOVE



John Lee, researcher and author of the book *Colours of Love*, conducted extensive interviews with people in an attempt to define what love is. To no surprise, he discovered that love has many definitions, but ultimately was able to categorize the *styles* of love that people describe most often. Which styles of love *typically* describe your relationships from his list below?

- **Eros** - A strong yearning to be emotionally and physically close. It thrives on attraction and romanticism.
- **Ludus** - Love that's characterized by dishonesty, game-playing, control issues, manipulation, and deception.
- **Storge** - Tends to be born out of friendships and evolves gradually.
- **Agape** - Is more of an altruistic, compassionate, and caring love for others.
- **Mania** - Happens quickly, is all-consuming, obsessive, crazy, out of control, and practically psychotic.
- **Pragma** - Is practical and based on the fulfillment of one's needs in a sensible, business-like fashion.

## DEDICATION & COMMITMENT

With such a high preponderance of cohabitating couples one could question the validity of commitment in the context of marriage. After all, many of the attractions and benefits of marriage (e.g., shared health care, tax breaks and deductions) don't hold as much appeal to a younger generation. Or could it be that younger generations are simply reluctant to make the same commitments as previous generations to obtain them? And if that's the case, is living together tantamount to marriage in this new era?

After all, who is at liberty to say what commitment means and what it entails? There can be as many types of commitments as there are relationships, right? The affinity between *dedication* and commitment is a philosophical conversation worth having. According to Websters' dictionary, dedication is defined as: a devoting or setting aside *for a particular purpose*; self-sacrificing devotion. Commitment is defined as an *agreement* or pledge to *do something in the future*.

So based upon the actual definitions of dedication and commitment (and not subjective interpretations), a loving couple can be *dedicated* to each other, but not necessarily *committed* to a future together. In this instance, dedication can lead to commitment. Commitment is what's really at the heart of the legalization of gay marriage. For many, (legal) commitment represents the culmination, validation, and officialization of their union.

## MAKING IT WORK, MAKING IT LAST

Anthropologists and evolutionary psychologists know that the union of a man and a woman for a lifetime, considering the nature of humans, is an unlikely one. There is a massive body of work that exists to support this statement, but if it were widely disseminated, or publicized, it would add to the growing cynicism associated with marriage.

We want to believe, and in many cases *need* to believe, that boy meets girl, boy and girl overcome conflicts, and live happily ever after. That's been a tried and true formula for Hollywood love stories for years. These movies focus on the "magic" of falling *in love*; not the less glamorous aspects of managing relationships while dealing with the vicissitudes of life, time constraints, rigors and sacrifices of raising children, job stress, career transitions, health issues, shifts in personal priorities, changing beliefs, and the occasional change of heart.

So how do you get through the "non-magical" phase? What predicts our ability to do so? Maturity.

A major finding is that (older) age and (increased) education positively affect one's ability to honor commitment. The average age for first-time brides and grooms is the *highest* it's ever been: 26.5 years old for brides and 28.7 for grooms. Maybe we were getting married too early? Despite the increases, psychologists still say that the best age for men to marry is 34. Regardless of age, when we do marry, there are predictors of happiness.

## FIVE PREDICTORS OF MARITAL HAPPINESS?

50,000 married couples completed an inventory survey (ENRICH) and found the top five categories that are *most* predictive of marital happiness:

- 1) Communication
- 2) Flexibility
- 3) Couple Closeness
- 4) Personality Compatibility
- 5) Conflict Resolution Skills

## COMMENTS ON MARITAL HAPPINESS PREDICTORS



While there has been much discussion about communication, I don't feel proper attention has been given to the importance of communication *styles*. It's not enough to identify and popularize communication as the greatest challenge facing couples in a relationship. Couples tend to *talk* more, and *say* less over time. When they do have something to say, it often gets heard, not listened to.

When we think of communication, the first thing that comes to mind is talking, but it's empathetic listening that makes us *feel* understood and connected. When people *honestly* and *openly* communicate (without an agenda) their true communication styles are on display.

Relative to communication skills, are conflict resolution skills. It's a given that *all* relationships will have conflicts. How those conflicts get resolved is what will determine how harmonious a long-term relationship or marriage will be. Because conflicts of all sizes can creep up without notice, it's *vital* that couples can extinguish them and move forward without harboring resentment.

As much as we like to say that opposites attract, they rarely stick. And when they do, it's the *Law Of Functionality* at work (more on that below). People who are similar in personality, temperament, values, interests, and goals, have more compatibility, and report greater satisfaction in their relationships. Obviously, rigidity in personality will result in inflexibility in thought and behavior, which may impact couple closeness, but just as marriage has interdependencies, the items on this list are interrelated.

So why isn't money on this list if it's cited as one of the top causes of divorce by both men and women? This is a composite list of what people think predicts marital happiness. The fact that 50,000 people did not cite it *enough* to have it listed as a happiness predictor adds credibility to the studies which show that it's often overlooked, and consequently not readily discussed. Also, money, per se, is often not the point of discussion for many people *before* getting married; it's the *lack* of money, and *how* money is going to be spent and managed, that become the real point of contention during marriage.



## THE LAW OF FUNCTIONALITY



Theories about what makes relationships successful abound. Some are complicated. Some are simple and easy to see. Psychologist Theodore Reik believed that we choose mates who satisfy an important need we have, including qualities we lack (hence the phrase someone who "completes me"). It's been my experience, and observation, that couples uphold this theory. While it may not be apparent why someone chooses another, time spent in the presence of couples will usually expose their individual strengths and weaknesses; as well as how one partner compensates for qualities lacking in the other.

I have my own theory that picks up where Theodore Reik leaves off. I call it the *Law Of Functionality*. I believe that whether a relationship survives or thrives depends on how well a couple is able to function *in spite* of their individual weaknesses or shortcomings. For example, if one partner is not very organized, the other partner must have organizational skills to compensate. If one partner is not good with finances, the other partner needs to be strong in this area. In both cases, the compensating partner needs to *accept this reality*, and the *role that they must play* in order for the relationship to function at its optimal level. Some couples do this instinctively, others do it begrudgingly.

Yes, this can create a sense of learned helplessness, but in doing so, it further defines the roles and the duties associated with them. When a couple is constantly experiencing discord, the *Law Of Functionality* dictates that it's usually because someone is not compensating for the others' weakness or shortcoming. In this instance, the weakness or shortcoming becomes magnified and will pose a threat to the functionality, quality, and life of the relationship.

Because weaknesses and shortcomings are not typically the topic of conversations on first dates, they don't usually get discussed. People are reluctant to admit their shortcomings because most can't identify them; studies show that most people have an inaccurate view of themselves. As much as we would like to believe that relationships are a mirror of truth, many people choose partners who support their view of themselves; making it difficult to get an objective read, and to grow. The *Law Of Functionality* dictates that if delusion is needed in order to function, and the other partner accepts and supports it, the relationship can succeed. The same applies to any range of character flaws.



## WELCOME TO YOUR QUALITY WORLD



The most profound and useful strategy for making relationships work that I've come across, really has nothing to do with relationships. It has more to do with *understanding* what's important to the people that we have relationships with.

Dr. William Glasser, who is known for his *Choice Theory*, which offers an effective way to get along with people, has a concept that he calls *Quality World*. He believes that the key is to find out what a person's idea of their quality world is and respect and support it.

Our parents are the first people in our quality worlds. Much of what we experience in childhood, including our attachment styles, and our parents' efficiency in satisfying our needs, helps to create the pictures and template for our quality worlds as we get older. The role of the parent is eventually taken by our partners.

The quality world is predicated upon three things: *people* (we most want to be with), *things* (we most want to own or experience), and *beliefs* (which govern our behavior).

### PEOPLE

In this model, you are the person that your spouse wants to be with most. You honor the significance of the other people who add quality to their world; colleagues, friends, and relatives. Know who they are, and support their efforts to maintain relationships with them.

### THINGS

What are the things that bring quality to their world? These can be as exotic as trips to foreign countries, clothes, jewelry, technology gadgets, books, food, events, financial security, or daily gestures of thoughtfulness and consideration. Everyone has *something* that they have attached value to, and in turn has given it the power to enrich their lives, and add quality to their world. Whatever these things are, it's your job to support your partner in their pursuit of them. How you feel about them is irrelevant. When the presence of a partner prevents the other from obtaining the things which add to their quality world, disenchantment quickly occurs.

### BELIEFS

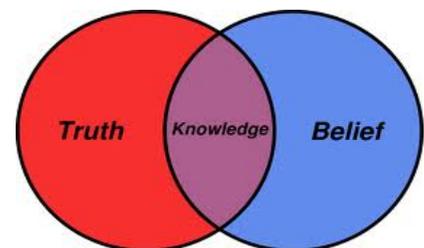
Beliefs are powerful. Emotions fluctuate, but beliefs are constant. They are what really connect people. They are often underestimated, but very pronounced in discussions regarding politics and religion. People die and kill for their beliefs. In relationships, our beliefs embody our truths as we see them. It doesn't matter if those truths are inconsistent with our partner's truths, or even a truth defined by the real world. *Your* truth is *your* belief, and it's real - very real; real enough to cause thousands of couples each year to file for divorce under the category of "irreconcilable differences."

One could never spend too much time discussing beliefs during the initial phases of courtship. Down the road, beliefs - or rather conflicts regarding beliefs - will inevitably surface. When they do, a couple will find this area the most difficult to make compromises in.

When people change their beliefs, they change the dynamic of their relationship. It's unavoidable. Your belief system governs your thoughts, and influences your actions.

As people grow, new perspectives evolve; germinating new beliefs, but fundamental beliefs (the ones most important to the couple e.g., religious practices, philosophy on raising children, lifestyle activities) create the most friction.

In our quality worlds, the people we most want to be with (including our partners) can change; the things that we want the most may change; the beliefs that we hold sacred in the moment can also change. When they do, a new template is created upon which your idea of happiness must mirror the truth *as you see it*. The greater the similarities are to what you believe, and what you perceive, the greater your happiness.



## PREDICTING DIVORCE

No article such as this would be complete without mentioning the work of Dr. John Gottman, who is arguably one of the most respected authorities on the topic of why marriages succeed and fail.

Heralded for his groundbreaking scientific data on marriages in the 70s, at a time when love was not viewed scientifically, Dr. Gottman blazed a trail with his book *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*.



Dr. Gottman sidesteps the communication bandwagon, and in fact, encourages others not to jump on it. What has he identified as the keys to a successful marriage for couples?

- 1.) Their *quality* of friendship and
- 2.) How they argue.

How did he arrive at these conclusions? By observing more than 650 couples over a fourteen year period. Most of the couples who he and his team observed were on the brink of divorce, but were able to avoid it after learning his principles. Not all of them were as fortunate; however, Dr. Gottman was able to predict, with 91% accuracy, whether a couple will get divorced or stay married. The determining factors all relate to the aforementioned conflict resolution skills, and impact on the quality of friendship. I will share his predictors of divorce with you in a moment, but first a couple of notable observations from his fourteen year study.

If you have major differences of opinion in your marriage, it may be doomed. He found that 69 percent of arguments revolve around *the same thing*, and are unresolvable. He points out that *significant* disagreements are about values and different ways of seeing the world - things that don't change. He emphasizes that successful couples know this and decide to *accept and respect* these differences. It becomes a constant point of contention for the couples that don't.

## GETTING IT RIGHT & MAKING IT LAST



If you are sincerely interested in making your marriage last (as you should be), Dr. Gottman has compiled a list of “red flags” that indicate whether your relationship may be in danger. Trouble lurks if you, or your spouse, consistently engage in the following:

- 1.) Harshness and sarcasm
- 2.) Personal criticisms (which is not the same as complaining)
- 3.) Contempt (name calling, mockery)
- 4.) Defensiveness (not being open or receptive to communication)
- 5.) Stonewalling (tuning your partner out and not listening)
- 6.) Flooding (*constantly* overwhelming your partner with concerns or anxieties)

In Dr. Gottman's view, marriage is supposed to be about shared meaning. Each partner is supposed to support the other's dreams and hopes, and that if one partner has to sacrifice what they want in order to make the other person happy the marriage is going in the wrong direction.

## HEADED NO WHERE

Positive psychology research shows that men are often oblivious to when things are going in the wrong direction. It also shows that while men benefit from merely being married, women need to be happily married in order for marriage to be of benefit (emotional well-being) to them.

Because women are biologically wired to have more active senses, they ruminate on things more than men do; which according to Martin Seligman, co-founder of positive psychology, and author of *Learned Optimism*, women are diagnosed with depression at a rate that's two to three times higher than men.

So it's more likely for women that depression will result from rumination over marital unhappiness, while men maintain the status quo of a less than satisfactory union. This sheds light, at least partially, on why 70% of divorce proceedings are initiated by women.



## DIVORCE: INSIDE THE NUMBERS



80% of marriages end in divorce after ten years, with the majority of those divorces taking place between the fourth and seventh year. After ten years of marriage, it is predicted that only 25% of couples will still be *happily* married. More on this in a moment.

If you are vaguely aware of divorce statistics, you've heard that 50% of marriages end in divorce (though many are beginning to dispute these stats). What is *not* tabulated is the number of people who separate *without* legal proceedings; technically, making it higher.

What can simple math teach us about the prospects of finding our "soul mates" and living "happily ever after?" It teaches us that half the people who are married, are indeed married to the *wrong* person. Of the remaining 50%, 25% are married for reasons *other* than love, which means that only 25% of couples are actually happily married. That's 75% of marriages that contain discontented individuals with unmet (and often unexpressed) needs, who are susceptible to extramarital affairs, and other forms of escapism.

## CHILDREN AND DIVORCE

One of the top reasons why people remain in unhappy marriages is children. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 1 million children are affected by divorce each year, which means that 40% of children will watch their parents divorce before they become adults. Why do people sacrifice their own personal happiness for the sake of their children? I believe that it's because their children are placed front and center in their quality worlds, replacing their spouses. When both spouses place the children front and center in their quality worlds, the marriage can endure. Also, many married couples shy away from divorce because of the following facts:



- Children *never* escape divorce unscathed; they suffer psychologically in ways that may not be apparent for years
- Children of broken homes are more lonely, unhappy, anxious, insecure, and often have fear of commitment
- Children of divorce are twice as likely to feel socially withdrawn and drop out of school
- Girls of divorce are more promiscuous and have higher rates of teen pregnancy
- For boys, losing a father results in increased aggression and disobedience
- 85% of prison inmates came from fatherless homes
- Children of divorce are subjected to a lower standard of living

## OVER AND OUT



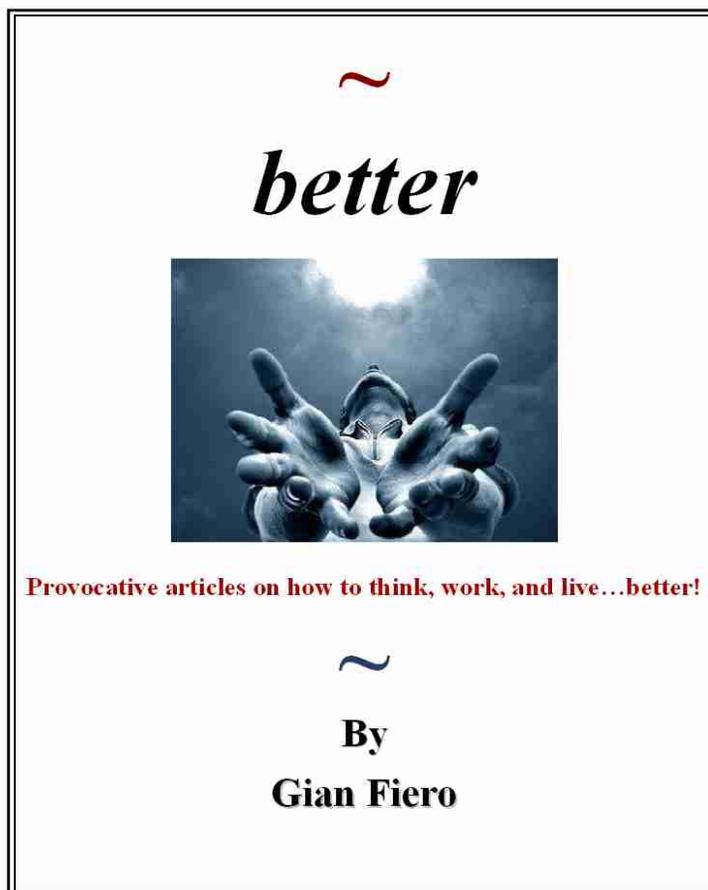
No one gets married with the intention of getting divorced. Every person who has said "I do" has done so with the *intent* to see their marriage through; even if they secretly had doubts, lacked the ability to commit, or the skills to navigate through its challenges. But despite the best of intentions, and the strongest of convictions, many people, every day, find themselves pondering the question which will have the greatest ramifications on their lives and the lives of their children: to leave, or stay in their marriage.

No matter who files for the divorce, the end result will be the same: amnesia. Forgotten will be the reasons why they fell in love in the first place; effectively eroding the foundation upon which the marriage was built. What someone did to capture your heart years ago does not eclipse what they did to break it just yesterday. It's proof that we live in the moment, from moment-to-moment, which makes love and relationships vulnerable. The only *real* constancy is commitment, which too often is affected and overruled by emotion.

When I reflect on my *Psychology of Male and Female Relationships* course, I realize that subconsciously, I started this writing this article decades ago. It was only was after the experience of one divorce and two marriages that I could realistically fit the pieces to the love puzzle together, and consequently conclude that marriage *does* serve a purpose: whatever purpose people want or need for it to serve. After all, everyone wants to be happy, and people continue to view marriage and family as a means to that end...in spite of its odds of success or accompanying struggles.

Many of the brokenhearted who vow never to love or marry again often change their tune and emerge from the ashes of disintegrated relationships with new beliefs, new things that make them happy, and soon enough, new people that they want to be with most in their quality worlds. And although children represent the greatest source of distress in parting couples, they do adjust, as best as they can, and grow up to formulate their own thoughts on love, marriage, and divorce.

This article is an excerpt from the e-Book ***better***.



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