

Fix Your Relationship For Good

**...a practical, no-BS guide
to help you stop arguing and re-connect
—no matter what you've already tried!**

Paul McNiff

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DEDICATION

*No matter how your relationship might be, whether you're fighting
a lot or avoiding spending time together,
or even if you're trying to get past an affair...*

*...if you're ready to find out how to put all of that behind you
and make your relationship great,
this book is for you!*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere and heartfelt thanks go to my amazing partner—who has stood by me for the last 24 years, and to my parents. You have all inspired me to reach above and beyond, and to become the best version of myself. Thank you for your support, love, and constant encouragement. I really could not have done this without you...

My thanks also go to the countless couples, families, and individuals I've had the honor and privilege to work with. Thank you for letting me into your lives and for inspiring me to expand my thinking... and develop and refine my approach. I feel humbled by your openness, honesty, and incredible resilience.

Thank you – thank you – thank you!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul McNiff is a Psychotherapist and Relationship Specialist coach who works in Private Practice in Brisbane, Queensland—on the sunny east coast of Australia. Paul holds a Degree in Counselling and Human Change (Psychotherapy) and works with couples, individuals, and families to help them make their relationships, their lives, and their connections amazing.

Paul is passionate about helping people to grow, evolve, and stop feeling stuck so they can live fulfilling lives. This passion led Paul to specialize in helping relationships and families and to develop the powerful approach that he's sharing with you in this book.

As well as working with couples, families, and individuals in Private Practice, Paul is an educator, speaker, and presenter covering areas such as relationships, anxiety, depression, confidence, parenting, and personal empowerment. You can contact Paul directly via his website: PaulMcNiff.com

INTRODUCTION

NO MATTER WHAT YOU'VE ALREADY TRIED, and no matter how long you've been struggling in your relationship... don't give up because you can make things better. The truth is that most of the things people are told to do to fix their relationships just don't work! In fact, most of the things couples do to fix things actually end up making things even worse over time. This is because they're based on false assumptions and unrealistic ideas. But don't give up!

This book outlines a simple, yet powerful approach that I've developed in my work with couples over the last few decades. My simple-to-apply approach has yielded phenomenal results for countless couples, even those who were:

- Fighting, bickering, and arguing a lot of the time
- Not communicating well—or at all
- Struggling with trust issues
- Living more like housemates than lovers
- Pretending to be happy, but not feeling happy
- Holding onto a lot of resentment
- Feeling like they'd fallen out of love
- Questioning if they were in the right relationship, or
- Trying to get past an affair or infidelity.

So, no matter how things look in your relationship right now, let me show you exactly what you can do and say to change that—fast! Within these pages, I'm going to show you:

- The REAL reason why your relationship isn't great (this will probably surprise you)
- Why struggling in your relationship isn't actually your fault

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- Why the things you're likely to have tried to fix your relationship not only didn't work, but made things worse, and
- Exactly what you CAN DO to stop fighting, bring down those walls, and re-connect with your partner (husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend, fiancé, or lover) so you can completely transform your relationship—starting today!

Now, obviously, I don't know you personally. And I don't know the specific details of your relationship. But if you're anything like the thousands of couples and relationships I've worked with, that's likely to be the case.

And it makes sense! Perhaps you have read one of the relationship self-help books or attended couple or relationship counseling. Or maybe you were given advice or suggestions from well-meaning friends or family members. If so, chances are you've been:

- Looking for the good in your partner when they're annoying you
- Ignoring your anger or frustration to try to avoid arguments
- Walking on eggshells to avoid your partner getting angry, hurt, or upset
- Not talking about topics that could create arguments
- Counting to ten before you say anything when you're frustrated, or
- Prioritizing your partner's wants and needs ahead of your own, to try to keep them happy and avoid conflict.

These are some of the common things that others suggest, which I'm talking about. While they sound OK and they might 'appear' to work temporarily, they're not helpful in the long term.

Based on the experience of countless couples who'd tried those things before seeing me, as I said, these things are much more likely to make things even worse in your relationship over time.

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So, if you're arguing or fighting a lot, or if your relationship feels empty and you're not communicating well, please don't give up yet. Because here's the good news: turning your situation around is much, much easier than you might think.

I'm going to show you what DOES work. That's my passion. In fact, it was my search for effective solutions—to help the couples I was working with—that actually led me to develop this approach.

When I completed my Degree in Psychotherapy and also my Advanced Couple Therapist training, I had been given a set of tools that were supposed to be great. I was told they would help couples get past their issues and turn their relationships around.

But as I started to use them in my Practice, I got frustrated. They didn't work as well as I wanted them to. Sure, they'd help a couple stop fighting about a single issue for a moment. But it was only ever temporary. Typically, a month or so later, that same couple would be back with yet another problem. And this time, their relationship would be much worse. And what I was seeing was that even though the topic they were arguing about appeared to be different on the outside, it was actually the same underlying issue.

For me, this wasn't good enough. I wanted to help people solve their problems for good—not just give them a Band-Aid for one issue, which would last for three minutes but lead to more issues.

And even though I'd studied the tools and techniques of twelve different therapeutic models in my Degree, I wasn't satisfied. So, I started looking at other therapeutic models, hoping to find tools that would help couples get past their issues... for good!

One of the models I researched is called Transactional Analysis (TA). I liked TA and the basic model that it offered. As I tried to apply it, however, I realized that it, too, fell short. It focuses on the communication between people but lacks any 'how-to tools' to show people what they need to do to get past their challenges.

And not just that, but I saw some aspects of the model differently. So, I obtained permission, and started to develop, test, and tweak a set of how-to tools and strategies to help the couples I was working with. And that's how the approach that I'm sharing with you in this book started to evolve.

FIX YOUR RELATIONSHIP FOR GOOD

So, who am I? My name is Paul McNiff, and I'm a degree-qualified Psychotherapist and a Marriage & Relationship Specialist. I've worked with thousands of couples, families, and individuals to help them get past their issues and make their relationships great.

The approach that I've developed has been getting phenomenal results for couples, which is why I've written this book—I want to give you an opportunity to get these same remarkable results in your relationship.

So, as I'm sitting here writing, I'm wondering what I can say to help you see just how relationship-changing, and even *life-changing*, this approach is. And suddenly, my phone beeps and the answer arrives in the form of a text from a couple I worked with a few years prior. Before I tell you what the message says, let me give you some background about Jan and Peter's relationship and situation.

When I met them, their relationship was in a challenging place. They were struggling—big time! They'd been through the wringer. They'd spent several years arguing, bickering, and fighting. They'd also had lengthy periods—several months at a time—when they'd avoided and basically ignored each other, barely talking. And to top it off, they'd even experienced some physical domestic violence in the relationship. So, when I met them, their relationship was desperately in need of some help!

Before they booked an appointment with me, they'd seen a few other Counselors, Therapists, and Psychologists. But even though Jan and Peter had done everything they'd been told to do (including many of those so-called strategies I mentioned earlier), nothing had worked. Jan told me their relationship had been getting worse even though they'd been doing those things. So things were extremely dire for them at that time.

In our very first session, Jan told me that the last person they'd seen, just prior to booking in with me, had told them “their relationship was hopeless” and “they should just split up.”

But Jan wasn't ready to give up on their relationship. And on the advice of a few friends, she booked an appointment with me.

INTRODUCTION

I remember it as if it were yesterday: in that first session, Jan told me that I was “their last hope.” She said that if I couldn’t help them, they’d give up. No pressure—right!?!

In truth, I felt confident because of the results I’d been getting using my approach with others. I knew I could help them turn things around—especially because they both wanted that.

I worked with Jan and Peter for a short time. I taught them the approach and the strategies I’m about to share with you. And they realized that the real reasons why they were fighting were very different from what they’d previously been told... and believed.

As they started to use the strategies that I taught them, their relationship started to turn around. And based on the text below and following up later, it’s still going strong. Thank goodness Jan and Peter didn’t take that previous advice and give up on their relationship... because the text message that just arrived reads:

“I’m almost scared to say it out loud... but here goes: We are doing really, REALLY well! A number of things have changed for us and we’re probably the strongest we’ve ever been together. We’re happy and appreciative, patient and kind to each other. It’s just great. I/we feel safer and happier together than we have for a very long time. You’re right. This stuff just works! Thank you, Paul, we could never have survived long enough and grown enough to reach this point without you! Jan”

{2023 UPDATE: While revising this book as part of changing the title and re-launching this book, I spoke to Jan and Peter and checked in on them to find out how they’re going. The good news is that they’re still doing extremely well! Jan and Peter are not their real names, of course. Like every other couple I refer to in this book, I’ve changed their names to protect their privacy. But they’re still doing extremely well!}

So, the bottom line is this: even if you think you’ve already tried everything (you haven’t), and even if you’re questioning *if there’s actually anything that can help your relationship*, please don’t give up yet. What you’re about to learn can change all of that.

FIX YOUR RELATIONSHIP FOR GOOD

You're about to find out how to apply this simple, yet incredibly powerful approach to completely transform your relationship. And believe me, it's much easier than you might think. I'm going to show you:

- The two things you and your partner **MUST** talk about if you truly want to get past your issues and create a future that you both want
- What's really been getting in the way and holding your relationship back (this is going to surprise you)
- Why your attempts to fix things have probably been making things worse and building up more frustration and resentment, and
- Exactly what to do and say—in a range of different situations—to stop arguments in their tracks and approach your partner in a way that will bring you even closer, rather than pushing you apart and building more resentment

My goal isn't just to help you *survive* your relationship. I want you to *thrive* as a couple! I want you to wake up every day feeling loved, supported, and valued—knowing, without any doubt, that you are exactly where you need and want to be. So let me ask you:

- Are you ready to transform your relationship?
- Are you ready to find out what's really been keeping you and your partner stuck—and change it for good?
- Are you ready to create a future together where you can wake up every day feeling supported and loved—and knowing, without any doubt, that you're in exactly the right relationship?

If you are, then get comfortable, and let me show you how,

Paul McNiff

Psychotherapist & Relationship Specialist

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

THIS BOOK IS SPLIT into three parts. I've outlined the details of each part below. While it might be tempting to jump ahead to interesting chapters, if you want to get the most out of this approach, I suggest reading this book from cover to cover—and then taking action. This book is going to become the instruction manual for your relationship and communication. Read it all from cover to cover and apply the strategies... and you'll see your relationship transform before your eyes.

Part 1: What's the REAL Problem?

In this section, as the title states, I'll help you understand what the real problem is (this is likely to surprise you). I'll also talk about why, despite their best intentions, most couples will struggle at some time. Plus, I'll show you why your attempts to fix things have probably been making your relationship worse rather than better.

Part 2: Let's Change Your Approach

In Part Two, I'll take you through the core parts of my approach. I'll outline some themes that will help you stay on track as you start to apply this approach in your relationship. Plus, I'll show you an incredibly powerful way to communicate with your partner. This is going to be pure gold for your relationship.

Part 3: Strategies for Relationship Mastery

In Part Three, I'll share with you 20 extremely powerful and easy-to-use strategies that you can use to transform your relationship—regardless of how your partner might be reacting at the time. I'll show you EXACTLY what you need to say—and EXACTLY what you need to do, so you can stop fighting, dissolve the resentment, and reconnect with your partner—for good.

A QUICK NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY

The word: ‘Partner’

I’m using the generic term ‘partner’ to mean your husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend, fiancé, live-in partner, lover, or spouse.

The word: ‘Unconsciously’

When I use the word ‘unconsciously,’ I mean this in an everyday way, meaning that someone does something automatically—without consciously thinking about it or choosing to do it.

Levels of Emphasis

Throughout this book, I provide several dialogue examples to make it easy for you to learn this approach. Naturally, you can’t hear that dialogue (because it’s a book). So, to help you distinguish how that dialogue would sound, I use increasing levels of emphasis, from the least emphatic (*italics*) to strongly emphasized (UPPERCASE):

1. *italics*
2. **bold text**
3. UPPERCASE

And note that contrary to email communication, where uppercase text means that someone is YELLING at you, that’s never the case in this book. Uppercase words in this book merely indicate that the word or phrase is strongly emphasized.

Part 1:

What's the Real Problem?

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Sienna reached over and gently put her hand on Roy's shoulder. She couldn't believe just how quickly their relationship had changed. It felt like she could finally trust him to be there...to really support her. What a huge change!

Only three months ago, Roy was quiet, withdrawn, distant, and shut down. He'd been more like another one of her children than the husband and true partner she'd longed for.

Sienna now looked at Roy, feeling peaceful and happy for the first time in years. She couldn't help herself. She had to ask him what had changed—what had clicked for him—so quickly.

Roy turned to her and said, "I don't know what you did, and I don't know why... but I finally get it. I realized I had to grow up—and be your partner. Until then, I'd never really understood just how much I'd been taking you for granted. I'm sorry..."

CHAPTER 1

WHAT KEEPS COUPLES STUCK?

IF YOU AND YOUR PARTNER ARE STRUGGLING in your relationship in some way, rest assured, you're not alone. Most couples struggle in their relationship at times. This struggle can look different for different couples.

Some couples struggle in ways that are obvious to everyone around them. For example, they might argue and fight a lot, or you might hear them constantly bickering at each other.

Other couples, however, can struggle in ways that are much less obvious. They might be avoiding spending time together—almost living separate lives. Going on separate vacations or spending a lot of time with others.

Couples like this don't feel very happy, content, or satisfied. They often feel like they're living more like housemates than partners. And their interests tend to grow further and further apart as time goes on. But because they don't visibly argue, these couples can be so convincing that even their adult children might think their relationship is going fine.

In other relationships, it might only be one person who is unhappy. This person might have decided to say nothing, to avoid creating an issue. Or they might have tried to talk about it earlier, but because nothing changed, they resigned themselves to how their relationship is. In a lot of these relationships, even their partner doesn't even realize how unhappy this person is.

But no matter how it looks, living in a relationship that doesn't feel satisfying isn't OK. And you can change it. You just need to know how! So, no matter how you might be struggling in your relationship, whether you're arguing a lot... or feeling resentment and struggling in a more subtle way, all of that is about to change.

Why Do Couples Really Struggle?

We often assume that when a couple is struggling, it's a result of the bad intentions or the negative behaviors of one or both people in the relationship. And while this might be true at times, in most cases it's the opposite of that.

Contrary to what many people believe, most couples end up struggling in their relationship, not because of bad intentions, but because of each person's *good and positive intentions*.

I know that sounds strange, so let me show you what I mean, using a story.

Lisa

After being together for three years, Lisa discovered that her boyfriend, Ron, was cheating on her. Mortified, she ended the relationship immediately and vowed to never date again.

Even though Lisa's closest friends felt sad for her, they were happy that Ron was out of the picture. He'd been extremely unsociable, and this had prevented Lisa from attending several dinners and parties. Lisa could actually count on the one hand the number of times that Ron had attended any social event with her and her friends in those three years.

But Lisa's friends could see how hurt she was, so they tried to get her to sign up for an app and start dating again—to help her get over Ron. But, despite their attempts, Lisa refused, telling them that she wasn't interested in meeting or dating anyone else... ever!

So Lisa remained focused on her work and refused to even think about dating. But then, seven months later, she was introduced to a guy named Todd at a friend's party. Todd was extremely interested in Lisa straight away. But Lisa, who was still reeling from her breakup with Ron, made it very clear that she wasn't interested in pursuing anything. But Todd wouldn't take "no" for an answer and kept pushing. So, Lisa eventually agreed to go out with him one time—just to shut him down. And, as you might have guessed, the evening together went well, and they started dating.

WHAT KEEPS COUPLES STUCK?

Lisa enjoyed spending time with Todd. He was quite charming and attentive. He was also extremely sociable and enjoyed spending time with her and her friends, which was very different from Ron. Their relationship was growing, and Lisa couldn't have been happier.

But over the next month Todd got a little grumpy and snappy at times. He reacted badly to something Lisa said when they were at dinner with her friends. However, not wanting to create a scene and embarrass him, Lisa said nothing at the time. But as she thought about it later, it concerned her. So, the following morning she phoned Todd to talk about it. But he got furious. He ended the call and wouldn't take her attempts to call him at all.

During that time, Lisa was worried. She thought she'd ruined their relationship by trying to talk about his reaction. She couldn't stop thinking about what had happened the night before... and about what life would be like with him. And, as the day went on, she decided that she'd probably overreacted. She reminded herself that Todd was under a lot of stress at work and decided that arguing with him wasn't worth it.

So she messaged him, apologized for what she'd said, and asked him to come for dinner that evening. Todd begrudgingly accepted! He arrived at six, with a nice bottle of wine and they enjoyed the cannelloni that Lisa had made for him—Todd's favorite meal. They avoided any talk of the previous evening. And things went back to feeling normal again.

But then, a week later, Todd snapped at her in front of those same friends again. This time, again, Lisa ignored it and didn't react. And then later, when Todd went to the restroom, she made excuses for his behavior, telling her friends that he was stressed at work and that he hadn't been sleeping well.

And the following day Lisa didn't dare bring it up. She wasn't going to let it turn into another bad reaction or argument. Lisa was building genuine feelings for Todd, and she wasn't going to put their relationship at risk by saying something.

* * *

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As you can see, the first time Todd reacted badly, Lisa tried to talk to him about it. But because that conversation didn't go well, Lisa chose to say nothing when it happened again. She didn't want to put their relationship at risk. So, instead of talking about it at that time, Lisa made excuses for Todd and said nothing.

This behavior is extremely common for people in new relationships. Early in a new relationship, if someone's partner says or does something that annoys or frustrates them, they might try to talk about it at first, just like Lisa did. But if that conversation doesn't go well, or if they think that talking about it might create more of an issue or put their relationship at risk, this person is likely to hold back and decide to say nothing instead—just like Lisa.

And this behavior makes sense because the last thing people at that stage of a relationship want is to rock the boat and put their relationship at risk. I call behaviors like this 'peace-keeping behaviors.'

Peace-Keeping Behaviors

Peace-keeping behaviors include anything you do or say that is done specifically to try to keep your relationship safe and free from arguments and conflict. Examples of peace-keeping behaviors might include:

- Holding back and not saying what you want to say... because you're worried that your partner might get angry, upset, or react badly
- Avoiding discussing specific topics... because you think that doing so might create an argument
- Choosing not to talk to your partner about their 'less-than-great' behaviors... to avoid arguments and conflict
- Regularly—more often than not—going along with what your partner wants, even though you might not want to... as an attempt to prevent your partner from getting angry, hurt, or upset.

WHAT KEEPS COUPLES STUCK?

Do any of these behaviors sound familiar in *your* relationship? Do you ever feel frustrated or angry with your partner, but you decide there's no point saying anything because it will probably just create an argument?

Most couples engage in peace-keeping behaviors in the initial stages of a relationship. And this makes sense. After all, at that time they're so excited and happy to be falling in love, and the last thing they want to do is argue and put their relationship at risk.

But while peace-keeping behaviors appear to work at the time, the truth is that they're incredibly unhelpful in the long run. In fact, based on what I've seen, and this is important, engaging in peace-keeping behaviors is one of the reasons, if not THE reason, why most couples end up fighting down the track. To see why I say that, answer the following questions:

- Would you be happy in a relationship where you felt like you needed to constantly hold back and not say what you wanted to say—just to keep your partner happy and avoid arguing?
- Would you feel good about your relationship if you felt like you had to give up what you wanted and do what your partner wanted most of the time, just to prevent them from getting angry, hurt, or upset?
- Would you be happy to close your mouth and say nothing and just let your partner be grumpy or angry at you?

I'm pretty sure that none of those would make you feel great about yourself or your relationship. After all, isn't your relationship supposed to be the place where you can be who you are... without censoring yourself or giving up on what you want? I thought so.

This is why these peace-keeping behaviors can be incredibly toxic to relationships. They push you to give up on what you want and prioritize your partner's wants and needs ahead of your own—just to keep the peace. So even though these behaviors can appear to work at first, they're actually THE reason why couples end up arguing down the track.

FIX YOUR RELATIONSHIP FOR GOOD

To see that in action, let's look at Lisa and Todd's relationship four years later.

* * *

Lisa kept making excuses for Todd. And the following year Todd proposed... and they were married. Lisa fell pregnant just prior to the wedding, and they now have a two-year-old daughter, Eliza, who they both adore. Lisa is now loving her new life as a stay-at-home mom, although all of the housework now falls on her, which she finds extremely tiring.

Seeing how tired and stressed Lisa was, Todd previously agreed to load the dishwasher and wash up each night to help out. But he seldom does. In fact, Lisa could count on the one hand the number of times Todd helped in those ways. Instead, he typically sits on the couch and watches TV, beer in hand—leaving Lisa to clean up.

Just as Lisa did with Todd's grumpy behavior in the beginning, she tried to talk to him, a few times, to try to get him do what he said he would. But each time she did, Todd reacted badly and woke up Eliza. So Lisa gave up and resigned herself to doing it all herself.

So, how do you imagine Lisa is feeling about Todd and the relationship? How would you feel in this situation?

Lisa's resentment had obviously been building up. She's totally exhausted and completely fed up with how things are. She has a busy three-year-old at home and a partner who barely does anything to help. So the more she sees Todd relaxing on the couch... while she's cleaning up and doing all the work, the more frustrated Lisa gets, and the more her resentment grows.

Then, one evening, without meaning to do it, Lisa just snapped. She'd been feeling so much resentment and frustration towards Todd that rather than doing what she'd done before, which was to shut herself down and say nothing (peacekeeping), Lisa did something VERY different. She yelled at Todd to get off the couch and help. She told him that she was no longer going to do HIS chores—and that from now on, he could get off “the damn couch” and do them himself!

WHAT KEEPS COUPLES STUCK?

Well, as you'd imagine, this didn't go down very well. Todd reacted badly. He yelled at Lisa, telling her that she didn't appreciate how hard he worked... and that the kitchen cleanup was her job anyway. And then, in his fit of rage, he called her lazy and unappreciative and told her that she was lucky he even came home.

While Todd might not have realized it, what he was unconsciously doing was exactly what Lisa had inadvertently taught him to do. When Todd had reacted badly in the past, Lisa had given up on what she wanted and let him have his way. So it makes sense that this was the tactic he unconsciously tried. But this time, it didn't work.

If you've heard the saying 'the straw that broke the camel's back,' well, that's exactly what happened. Instead of backing down when Todd reacted badly, as she'd done in the past, Lisa snapped! She was furious and couldn't help herself or hold it back.

Lisa yelled right back at Todd—even louder than he had been. And this turned into a screaming match, with both of them yelling over the top of each other until, without even realizing it, Lisa found herself hurling the saucepan lid that she was holding at Todd.

Luckily, she missed him and hit the couch. But that surprised both of them. They both stopped yelling at each other long enough to realize that Eliza had woken up and was screaming in the next room. Lisa left to calm her down. And Todd, still furious and a little in shock, grabbed his car key and stormed out of the house. It took Lisa quite some time to get Eliza back to sleep. And once she did, she decided not to do what she'd previously done, which was to call Todd and apologize to him.

Todd returned the following morning, having stayed with his brother overnight. But Lisa wasn't budging. In fact, several days passed, and they barely said a word to each other. They only started talking to each other again a week later, when Eliza fell and hurt her arm and ended up in the hospital.

* * *

FIX YOUR RELATIONSHIP FOR GOOD

So, what do you think happened? Can you see the link between the initial peace-keeping behaviors and Lisa's extreme reaction? Let me show you why they're directly related.

People start to use peace-keeping behaviors with good intentions. They don't want to fight and put their relationship at risk. We can see this in the example with Lisa and Todd. But peace-keeping behaviors are unhelpful because the more you use them, the more you feel like you're giving up on your own needs and prioritizing your partner. But even worse, by engaging in peace-keeping behaviors, you inadvertently teach your partner that:

- Their needs are more important than yours
- No matter how grumpy or snappy they are... or how badly they treat you, you're willing to put up with it and say nothing
- If they want to stop trying to talk about something—even if you really want to talk about it, all they have to do is react badly, and you'll give up and give in.

So, the more you use peace-keeping behaviors, the more you give up on your own power. And, of course, this leads to something highly toxic to relationships: resentment!

Think about how that works. No matter how well-intended peace-keeping behaviors might be, there will always come a time when it becomes impossible to say nothing when your partner is being unsupportive, inconsiderate, or not pulling their weight. And this leads to an increase in feelings of frustration and resentment. Let's look at that in Lisa's and Todd's situation.

Lisa's feelings of resentment started small at first. Remember that she tried to talk to Todd about it the first time it happened. But because of his reaction, she gave up trying to talk about it because she wanted to protect their relationship. She therefore felt some frustration and resentment towards Todd at that time. But she then talked herself around, making excuses for his behavior, such as his work stress and being tired.

WHAT KEEPS COUPLES STUCK?

But as time went on, Todd's behavior got worse. Why? Because Lisa was unconsciously teaching him that he was more important by allowing him to get away without stepping up.

So, what do you think happened to Lisa's resentment? It continued to grow. This is because there's a direct link between the amount of resentment someone feels towards their partner and their ability to tolerate their partner's less-than-great behaviors. Let me show you what I mean.

Resentment

Let's consider someone's level of resentment towards their partner as being on a scale from ZERO to TEN.

Zero Resentment

Zero resentment (or frustration) is how people typically feel at the beginning of a new relationship. At that time, people hold no resentment towards their partner. In fact, they might consider their partner's less-than-great or unusual behaviors as 'cute or quirky.'

Level Five or Six Resentment

If resentment grows and reaches level five or six, that person's ability to tolerate their partner's less-than-great behaviors is significantly lower. At this time, their partner's less-than-great behaviors, which they'd previously thought of as 'cute or quirky,' feel annoying or frustrating instead.

At these levels, this person is likely to argue or nag at their partner a little. This is their conscious or unconscious attempt to talk about and resolve the issue or issues causing the resentment.

But if doing that doesn't work, which it generally doesn't, this person is faced with a dilemma. They still want to keep their relationship on track. But because they don't know what else to do, they often stop nagging and resort to peace-keeping behaviors again.

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Why? Because this is the only way they know to avoid arguing. And it does seem to work for a moment. But the problem is that the more they re-engage those peace-keeping behaviors, the more resentment they build up towards their partner. And their resentment level, therefore, continues to grow until it reaches...

Level Nine or Ten Resentment

When someone's resentment reaches level nine or ten, almost everything that their partner says or does starts to annoy them!

- “Why are you chewing like that?”
- “Why do you walk like that?”
- “Why do you breathe like that?”

They have very little respect for their partner, if any. And their tolerance for their partner's ‘cute and quirky’ behaviors is zero. At this point, couples often start to avoid spending time together!

Tolerance

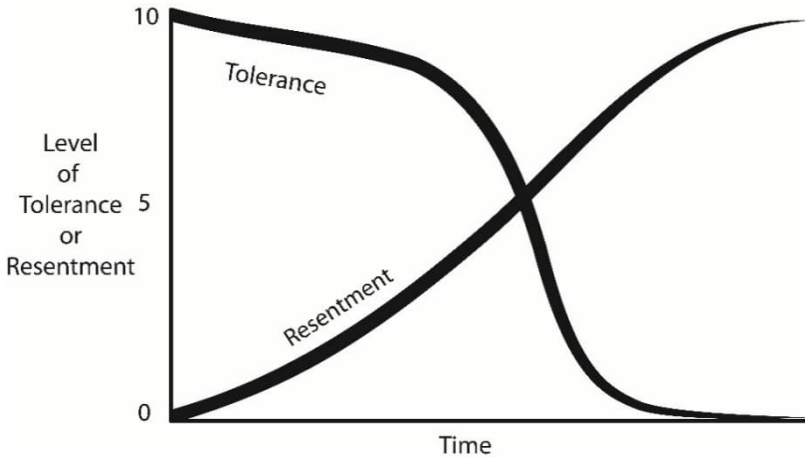
Let's also plot that same person's ability to tolerate their partner's not-so-great behaviors.

- Level ZERO means they have absolutely no tolerance for their partner's behaviors,
- Level TEN means they have a huge amount of tolerance for their partner's behaviors. People generally enter new relationships with this high level of tolerance for their partner's ‘cute and quirky’ behaviors.

Now, let's plot these on a line graph, including another factor: TIME, which represents the amount of time that passes while the couple is still unable to resolve the issues that are creating the resentment.

WHAT KEEPS COUPLES STUCK?

Here's how that graph would look:



Let's use Lisa's experience to work through this graph. At the beginning of her relationship with Todd, Lisa had a huge amount of tolerance for Todd's less-than-great behaviors. And she had no resentment towards him. But as time went on and Lisa continued to be unable to talk to Todd and resolve their issues, her resentment grew.

And as Lisa's resentment grew, her ability to tolerate Todd's less-than-great behavior dropped. And eventually, she was experiencing so much resentment and had so little tolerance that she reacted strongly and that's when they had that major argument. This is because...

Resentment lowers Tolerance!

The more resentment you feel towards your partner, the less tolerance you have for their less-than-great behaviors. This is why peace-keeping behaviors are one of the main reasons why most couples end up arguing. Because let's face it, no one wants to be in a relationship where they have to continually hold back on what they say or go along with things they don't want to do—to avoid arguing and fighting.

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And therefore, the more you do those things, the more resentment you feel towards your partner. And this increased amount of resentment reduces your ability to tolerate their behaviors... and eventually creates arguments and reactions, as we saw with Lisa and Todd.

The Conundrum

Isn't it ironic that the peace-keeping behaviors, which most couples use at times to try to keep their relationship free from conflict, not only don't work... but end up creating the very thing they were designed to avoid: CONFLICT!?

I call this a 'conundrum'—a relationship or marriage conundrum, to be more specific: the things couples typically do to try to prevent something from happening... or to make things better either end up creating the very thing they were trying to prevent, or make things worse, instead.

It's a cycle that builds up. Couples argue about something but are unable to resolve the issue and end up fighting even more. (I'll tell you why that's often the case as we continue.) But then, because they don't truly resolve the issue, it builds up resentment.

This means that they end up fighting and arguing even more because their tolerance has been impacted—trivial things that their partner says or does end up feeling big and creating arguments. It's like a wound that hasn't been healed.

And then, not wanting to fight anymore, one person reverts to peace-keeping behaviors to try to stop fighting and make the relationship peaceful and conflict-free. But the longer they do that, the more resentment they build up. And not just that, but these peace-keeping behaviors unconsciously teach their partner that their wants and needs are more important than their own. And this reinforces the cycle even further.

WHAT KEEPS COUPLES STUCK?

Here's the typical cycle:

- People want to avoid conflict to keep their relationship safe, so they resort to peace-keeping behaviors—giving up on their own needs and often avoiding talking about challenging topics.
- This appears to work for a moment. But the longer this person feels like they have to give up on their own needs and let their partner have their way, the more resentment they build up.
- As their resentment grows, they become less willing to tolerate their partner's less-than-great behaviors.
- This increasing resentment leads to a bad reaction over something their partner says or does.
- They might try to talk about it, but that doesn't work because of the unconscious pattern between them, where they've taught their partner to react badly if they don't want to talk about something. So they resort to even more peace-keeping behaviors, which, of course, leads to more resentment...
- And then BAM! Without even realizing it, they're in the middle of a giant argument or fight. Conflict!

And this is why peace-keeping behaviors are the real reason why couples end up struggling in their relationships at some point. And given that most couples engage in peace-keeping behaviors at some time, most couples are almost destined to struggle at some point.

So, if you and your partner are struggling, don't worry. As we continue, I will show you exactly what you need to do to successfully navigate through that phase so you can get past the past, connect with your partner on a deeper level, and feel great about your relationship.

In the following chapter, we'll look at another reason why couples often struggle to resolve issues

CHAPTER 2

WHY MANY ATTEMPTS TO STOP FIGHTING WILL NEVER WORK

IN THE LAST CHAPTER we looked at how peace-keeping behaviors, which are designed to avoid conflict, actually end up creating conflict down the track—because of rising levels of frustration and resentment and diminished tolerance.

If this has been impacting your relationship in any way, you might be wondering what you can do to get past this. Of course you want to stop those peace-keeping behaviors and address the resentment. But the problem is that you can't suddenly stop peacekeeping and expect things in your relationship to improve immediately.

Think back to Lisa and Todd from the last chapter. Lisa had been using those peace-keeping behaviors for a long time. And as we saw, by doing that, she'd inadvertently taught Todd that if he didn't like what she said to him or if she confronted or questioned him in any way that he didn't like, all he had to do was react badly and she'd give up and let him have his way. And the moment she finally stood up to him, albeit in a not-so-great way, that created even bigger arguments between them.

So, you can't just suddenly change the rules and stand up to your partner in that way... and expect that to work. You need to replace those peace-keeping behaviors with new behaviors and a failsafe strategy that will work.

It's about changing your approach and subtly influencing your partner to work with you in a different way. I'll show you how to do that as we keep going. But first, let's look at addressing and resolving the issues that might be getting in the way.

What Does Resolving Issues Really Mean?

Resolving issues requires you to do the opposite of avoiding conflict. It's about dealing with problems head-on... discussing them in a way that you can resolve them—so they don't continue to create frustration, anger, and upsets between you.

One of the challenges around resolving issues is that many people believe that resolving an issue means they have to agree with what their partner thinks, or vice-versa. But that's not necessarily true.

Resolving your issues does NOT mean that you both must see things the same way... or agree with each other!

You can actually resolve issues as a couple, even if you and your partner don't agree with each other's ideas or opinions. Of course, that being said, there will be some issues or challenges that you do need to decide on, such as what schools to send your children to. Issues like these require more agreement. And the approach I'll outline in this book will help you deal with all of those.

But, as I said, resolving most issues doesn't mean you need to agree. Instead, it's about:

1. Trying to understand as much as you can about your partner's ideas and opinions
2. Accepting that your partner has the right to see things their own way, even though you see things differently or struggle to understand how they could possibly see things that way
3. Negotiating the *wiggle room* between your two different ideas or opinions and working out a plan you can both agree on.

Notice that I said it's about respecting your partner's 'right' to see things in their own way, not agreeing with their opinion or idea! This is important to remember as we keep going.

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You don't have to agree with each other's opinions every time. But you do have to negotiate and jointly agree on a plan for the future. And note that this plan doesn't necessarily have to be seen as the final solution. It might be an interim or temporary plan that you put in place to see what might work. And you might tweak or adapt this plan over time.

For example, imagine if you and your partner are arguing about how to discipline your children when they misbehave. You might want to use a 'time out' process, such as making your child sit on a chair, 'the naughty chair,' or in a specific spot, 'the naughty spot,' for a length of time as a consequence of their misbehaving.

Your partner, however, might prefer to use a 'currency consequence,' meaning that the child would lose access to something they hold dear to them for a short amount of time, such as losing access to their favorite toy for an hour.

If you and your partner can't agree, you might decide to use the 'wobble room' idea and perhaps try both ways. You might use the 'time out' consequence for one week. And the following week, you might use the 'currency consequence.' This way, you and your partner could work out which worked better for your children and decide to continue that approach.

This is where both ideas are helpful because you might even find that one or more of your children respond better to the 'currency consequence,' and others respond better to the 'time out' consequence. And therefore, by not just giving in and agreeing but instead, by using the 'wobble room' idea, you might end up with an even better plan than either you or your partner had thought about in the first place.

Naturally, as I said, there will be some larger decisions that won't be as straightforward as that, such as decisions about school, vaccination, etc. These types of decisions, which are typically harder to reverse, will require more negotiation.

This approach will help you negotiate those types of issues. But the key point here is that resolving issues doesn't always mean you have to agree with your partner.

Now, let's look at a few other challenges couples often face, which can make it hard for them to resolve their issues.

Are You Talking About the Right Thing?

What if I was to tell you that when couples are trying to resolve an argument, they're often not talking about the right thing? I know that might sound a little odd or confusing right now. You might be thinking something like:

“What do you mean? Of course we're focusing on the right thing... we're talking about what caused the fight in the first place!”

But even though this might seem true, it's often not as straightforward as that. Let me show you what I mean, using a story about a farmer called James.

James and his family have a huge farm where they grow wheat and barley. One morning, James wakes up bright and early and steps outside to discover...

...TO BE CONTINUED

Are you enjoying what you're reading?

There is much, much more... As the book continues, I outline the two crucial things that couples **MUST** be talking about if they want to truly resolve their issues and work as a team. I also outline a simple approach to relationship communication, which is entirely different from anything you will have read about elsewhere. This is a way of communicating with your partner in a way that will help you truly discuss and resolve the issues that you face... easily.

It doesn't matter whether your partner is completely shutdown, or whether they're volatile and reactive... or even if they don't believe that there's anything wrong, so they refuse to talk to you about issues or challenges...

FIX YOUR RELATIONSHIP FOR GOOD

This approach will show you how to communicate with your partner in a way that will help you to:

- Resolve the issues between you
- Discuss even highly challenging topics without arguing
- Deal with any resistance or negative reactions your partner might have easily
- Get past the past and create a future that will feel great

In section two I will show you how to easily change your communication in a way that will inspire your partner to work with you as a team, rather than pulling away or reacting badly. And in section three I outline twenty detailed, step-by-step strategies, together with specific examples of dialogue—what to say and when to say it—so you can quickly and easily apply this new way of communicating in your relationship.

I will also show you how to address extremely challenging issues with your partner (spouse, husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend, lover) in ways that will make it almost impossible for them to react badly—no matter how they've been before, and no matter how challenging the topic has been in the past.

And as we continue I'll show you how to take back your power and feel much, much better in your relationship. You will learn how to apply a specific skill that you use elsewhere in your life, in your relationship... in a way that will supercharge the connection between you and your partner. Plus, you'll discover that many of the things that we're all programmed to do from childhood are getting in the way and keeping your relationship stuck—and how to change that.

If you want to find out how you can easily tweak your communication and, by doing so, completely transform your relationship, then click the link below to get your copy from Amazon today.

[Click here to get your copy today!](#)