

## **CHAPTER 11 BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DIVORCE**

### **WE MUST DISCOVER WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR INSIDE NOT OUTSIDE OF OURSELVES**

We all have an inner peace we can learn to consciously access.

External rational thought creates external feelings.

Internal conscious thought accesses internal feelings.

### **SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE INVENTORY**

- (1) Loss of communication causes divorce. True or False?
- (2) Lack of compatibility causes divorce. True or False?
- (3) Lack of commitment causes divorce. True or False?
- (4) Lack of intimacy causes divorce. True or False?
- (5) Sooner or later everyone gets over the pain of divorce. True or False?
- (6) Most people learn from their divorce. True or False?
- (7) If you are in a difficult marriage, the best time to work on yourself is after you are divorced. True or False?
- (8) Problems and adversities are the main cause for marital discord. True or False?

### **THE BLACK MASS**

We have all seen, heard, or known of a couple who recently celebrated their anniversary of some ten or twenty years, and within the next twelve or eighteen months they were divorced. What happened is called the "Black Mass". A Black Mass occurs when Satan worshippers steal consecrated host from a Catholic church in order to say the mass backwards, in a futile attempt to unwind what has been done. Sometimes what has been done takes years and years to build up. The unwinding takes almost no time at all. The fall of the Roman Empire was sudden: What took centuries to build was unwound in a few days. The fall of communism, considering how long it took to build up, was also sudden. This kind of slow build/rapid unwind cycle can be seen in a divorce.

### **FIVE STAGES OF DIVORCE**

There are basically five stages of divorce which correspond to Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' "Stages of Death and Dying." The stages include denial, anger, bargaining (guilt), depression and acceptance.

There is one difference. Kubler-Ross' stages in death cannot be reversed, but in the case

of a marriage, they can be. If you are in the midst of a difficult marriage, it might be helpful to take a moment and identify what stage you are in. As misinformation about life is the cause of a dysfunctional life, misinformation about relationships is the main cause of divorce.

**DENIAL.** There is "denial" when there is misinformation about where the pain is coming from. The misinformation is that pain comes from events. We deny pain in an attempt not to be weak and instead have the illusion of power. And this is characteristic of the early state of the stage of denial. In reality we begin to lose our power when we deny pain. Instead of changing their thinking to eliminate the pain, partners in a marriage often begin to work on their communication in order to avoid pain. But communication is a fruit, not a work.

**ANGER.** The misinformation in this stage is the belief that the event creates the anger. One partner blames the other for making them angry. One partner says: "Because you did this, I feel hurt. I am angry with you because it is all your fault. If you had not done that, I would not be angry, and if you had done this, I would be happy." The anger is an attempt to maintain control of the situation. In fact, when the angry partner begins to lose control, the more angry they become. Meanwhile, the other partner begins to work on trying to be compatible in order to avoid the anger. But, not trying to fail creates failure.

**BARGAINING/GUILT.** After the first trigger has been pulled and the first volley has been fired, the other person, because they believe that the event creates the feeling, begins to think: "He/she is angry with me because I did that. If I didn't do that, they would not be angry. It must be my fault and I feel guilty." The person who initiated the anger begins to think: "I hurt him/her because I was angry. It is my fault he/she is hurt, and I feel guilty."

One person begins to use their hurt to win the battle. Thinking they are becoming the victor, they are, in reality, becoming the victim. Then both begin to make bargains. "If you promise you won't do that, I promise I won't do this. I will be good, if you will be good."

Ultimately, the bargain cannot be fulfilled by either party and the deal breaks down. Trying to be something they are not won't work. It is like trying to live in a straightjacket. They then begin working on their commitment in order to avoid breaking their part of the bargain. It is an impossible task that only leads to loss of whatever sense of commitment remained.

**DEPRESSION.** When people cannot express their anger (which is caused by their pain), they feel guilty. When they cannot express guilt, they go into depression. They find themselves going in and out of the cycles, getting closer to the "black hole" that ultimately consumes their marriage. They are attempting to get their freedom through their silence. When you only have one way of acting, you lose your choice, becoming reactive, rather than proactive. The isolation breaks the relationship and a loss of intimacy sets in.

ACCEPTANCE. This is the last stage, after the divorce. People spend much of their life in anger, pain and depression. They have lost the years of investment in a relationship. Their children are put through the hell of two past partners fighting it out for their attention. The children blame themselves as their parents taught them. Sometimes turning to drugs, or perhaps running away into the hands of other dysfunctional people. All because of misinformation.

### **COUNSELING TO THE RESCUE**

Don't despair, it is never too late to have a happy marriage! George Pransky states, "A change of heart heals a relationship." A change of heart is a natural cure for insecurity or the loss of a sense of self. "If you have a physical dysfunction, it takes time to recover. In contrast, relationship dysfunction or conflict, needs no healing time and is always reversible. A change of heart occurs in an instant." (Divorce Is Not The Answer, pg. viii, TAB Books, 1992)

Many people enter counseling in the midst of marital misinformation. One main problem is couples are looking for a "quick fix" rather than "jump-start". They want to know how to communicate, become compatible, get commitment and regain intimacy. They are typically given various exercises. Most of the time they do not use them during the week. They come back for more quick fixes. The problem is most of the exercises wouldn't work even if they used them because exercises are not what they need. They need a change of head and heart. They need to clear up misinformation so they can change the way they are thinking.

### **SEPARATE REALITIES**

When different thoughts create different feelings in different persons, it creates a problem called "separate realities". In order to understand the concept of separate realities, we need to know two things.

First, events do not create feelings, thoughts creates feelings. When we think about some events, we can feel a certain way. In fact, thinking about the same event can create a different feeling in the same person at different times. So it is not the event that is causing the feelings, it is the perspective.

Second, we need to realize that everyone has an inner peace that they can learn to access. Miscommunication, incompatibility, lack of commitment, and difficulty with intimacy are caused by insecurity or being out the peace. Accessing this peace is the key to eliminating the insecurity which causes miscommunication, incompatibility, lack of commitment and lack of intimacy. You can access your inner peace by using your conscious spiritual faculties, rather than your rational physical faculties.

### **REVERSING THE CYCLE OF DIVORCE**

REVERSING DENIAL. We can stop denial when we realize we have been using misinformation to determine where the pain comes from. The pain is created by our thoughts, not the events. We can begin to recognize we do not feel the same pain every

time we think about the event. Sometimes we feel more pain than at other times. With this information, we begin to regain our power by changing our perspective or way of thinking.

**REVERSING ANGER.** We need to stop blaming the other person for our pain. The anger is not caused by the event, but by the pain. The pain comes by the event triggering a thought which creates the feeling. It is our perspective, not the event. We need to deal with the cause, not the symptom. We begin to understand the mood we are in makes a difference. If we feel differently about the same event at different times, and our mood makes a difference, it could not possibly be the event that is causing our pain. We also need to understand the power of the "trigger". There is a moment of passing grace when there is a choice to pull the trigger or not. We can either say to ourselves, "I am not going there", or we can say "Let her rip!" We can feel peace, or we can fire away. The time and energy it will take to clean up the battlefield is much better spent in the peace that comes from holding our fire. When we are able to hold our fire, we gain control of our lives.

**REVERSING BARGAINING/GUILT.** When we are in a low mood, we should not try to communicate, to find compatibility, or to work for commitment. We must first raise our mood by getting into the peace. We will then be able to have communication, commitment and compatibility because these are fruits of inner peace. We must also move away from the insecure position of "trying to be understood" to the secure position of "compassion" and "understanding". As we get into the peace, we begin to have a sense of self, and it is possible to desire understanding of your partner. When we are in the peace, we get "boundary control". We are no longer like jellyfish, all over the place, but rather we move to a point of common sense. We no longer try to win by being victims, but come together into "win/win" situations.

**REVERSING DEPRESSION.** This is the stage where action is more important than in any other stage. It is never too late to find a happy relationship with your partner, even if the marriage has ended. You do not have to take years to heal. It can happen in a moment of time, but it will take a lifetime of practice to keep yourself in the peace. It is possible to be in the peace and still be in a down or low mood. As a matter of fact, some of the greatest spiritual mystics experienced great depressions. In the height of their darkness, they would have a deeper experience of God. St. John of the Cross wrote of this experience in his "Dark Night of the Soul".

One thing people need at this time is hope. Victor Frankel was teaching on relationships. One student asked him what sign he looked for to know the session could be terminated. Frankel wrote on the black board the letters H-O-P-E. He said when he sees hope, he knows they are ready to move on. In the film, "Hope Floats," Sandra Bullock plays a woman whose husband has left her. She and her daughter go to live with her mother. They all have hopes that the marriage will get back together. At the end of the film it is obvious it is not going to happen. There is a lot of pain, tears and distress. Suddenly in the last five minutes of the movie it all comes together. Amid bursts of fireworks and the flash of color, Sandra walks down Main Street with a new boyfriend! All are happy, and

she explains that "hope floats". The critics were fairly harsh on the sentimental ending and rightly so. There was no connection between the first ninety percent of the film and the last few minutes. They had not shown how hope floats. It is true that it does, but how does it happen? Telling people "hope floats," however, is like telling them that "God is in them". It is true, but it may have no connection to their personal life.

The question is, "What difference does it make?". It is an example of the menu vs the meal: telling is not eating. People need to learn to access their inner peace by using their spiritual or conscious faculty of discerning the peace of God within. As this happens, hope will begin to float up to the surface and things will begin to change, internally and externally.

### **RECEIVING ACCEPTANCE**

. The marriage is over. There is not much left but the memories. But which memories will be lived with? It is your choice alone. In order to make a good choice, one must learn the meaning of forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean saying that everything was right. It means you

Stop blaming the other for your pain. As you begin to do this, you will be able to see more clearly and with greater understanding what is the right thing to do. It is not only for your own health but for the sake of your children. It can break the guilt and pain the children face by giving them an example that events do not create feelings.

### **THE BIG QUESTION: "WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?"**

If you are in the first stage (denial), and you are feeling pain but do not dare express it, ask yourself, "What difference does it make for me, in this present situation, to be in the presence of the grace of God?" You do not have to feel pain every time your former partner lets you down. You can be in the peace and talk out of compassion and understanding about what you see in your present relationship.

If you are in the second stage (anger), ask yourself, "What difference does it make whether or not I am in the presence of grace if my former partner lets me down?" Then you can ask yourself, "How can I switch from trying to fix the other person, to being grateful for them?"

If you are in the third stage (bargaining and guilt) because of unexpressed anger and denial of pain, wonder to yourself, "What difference does it make whether or not I am in the presence of grace, if the other person blames me for letting them down?"

If you are in the fourth stage (depression), realize it would be possible to be in the peace and still go through this difficult time while being in a low mood and when nothing seems to be working out for you. Ask the question, "What difference does it make whether or not you are in the presence of grace while being in a low mood?"

Dr. George Pransky describes depression like an apartment building. There is a basement and there is a penthouse. WHICH ONE ARE YOU FURNISHING? Do you live in the basement or at the top with great views?

Picture an elevator. If you want, you can take your belongings from the cellar, put them on the elevator, and start making your home in the penthouse. You might visit the basement occasionally, but you don't have to live in it. If you are in the last stage (acceptance), take time out each day and work through your grief. As you are doing this practice forgiving your partner.

Remember, though, forgiveness means **STOP BLAMING YOUR EX-PARTNER FOR YOUR PAIN**. As long as you feel that he or she is responsible for your pain, they will own you, and you cannot be who you are meant to be. If you release them, you free yourself. Remember, there may be others involved who need help, especially if there are children. Children need to be taught about being in the peace by their parents, whether their parents are divorced or not, and the only way to teach something is to have learned it yourself.

Now check your answers and see if you have any change of heart.

#### **SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE INVENTORY RESPONSES**

(1) Loss of communication causes divorce.

False. A couple never loses their ability to communicate. They may have misplaced it, but it is always there. When couples try to communicate in order to experience Peace in their relationship, it generally fails. When couples get into the Peace in order to communicate, it generally succeeds.

(2) Lack of compatibility causes divorce.

False.. We are born incompatible into this world. It is nothing new. No couple is compatible when they get married, although some are more or less incompatible than others. Couples are able to overlook their incompatibility as long as they are in the peace.

(3) Lack of commitment causes divorce.

False.. Commitment is a fruit of intimacy; it is a symptom not a cause. We don't work on our commitment to get intimacy. Our commitment comes naturally from our intimacy.

(4) Lack of intimacy causes divorce.

TRUE. When people lose a sense of self, they lose the sense of being intimate with others. This causes negative symptoms - lack of communication, compatibility and commitment.

(5) Sooner or later everyone gets over the pain of divorce.

False. Some people never get over it, especially children of divorced parents. People just do not realize the pain and suffering it will cause, especially to children. If people would remember the innocent child at birth before they start on the path of divorce, **MAYBE** they would let go of the idea of ending the marriage.

(6) Most people learn from their divorce.

False. People who have been divorced have less chance of a happy relationship the second time, than they did the first time. The reason is that they carry more baggage with them into the next marriage.

(7) If you are in a difficult marriage, the best time to work on yourself is after you are divorced.

False. The best time to work on yourself is while you are still in the relationship. You cannot significantly work on your ability to relate to your marriage partner unless you are in the marriage. In marriage counseling, I do not try to counsel people to get them together, I try to bring them individually into health. If both are healthy they will want to stay married.

(8) Problems and adversities are the main cause for marital discord.

False. All couples face adversity and problems. Partners in a healthy marriage don't cope with problems, they utilize their ability to keep their sense of self in order to remain intimate and not become overwhelmed by the adversity.