

# Marriages That Last Newsletter

*A newsletter from Hope Family Services Marriage & Family Learning Center committed to helping couples avoid divorce and to experience the best relationship possible.*

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**Ron & Shelia**

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## 1. Adventure, Journey, Teamwork

**Power struggles** are common in marriages. Many times they are obvious. They can assume forms that look more like an open battle, including such things as yelling, name-calling, sarcasm and debating. Or, they can be more of a "cold war," with withdrawal and other more subtle forms of manipulation and control. However, power struggles can also be less obvious and much more difficult to detect. They can be as simple as having to "make a point" with your spouse. The problem is that they involve assuming an adversarial posture. The goal for each spouse is to win (or not lose).

Due to the reality that husbands and wives are meant to be partners (teammates), not adversaries, assuming an adversarial posture with your partner sets up a hopeless situation. When on a team you either win as a team or lose as a team. So as teammates, married partners either **both** win or **both** lose in any given conflict. **There is no such thing as a win-lose outcome in marriage.**

Therefore, we want to encourage couples to adopt a **“NO LOSERS”** policy. A “no losers” policy understands that either both spouses win, or no one wins. In a “no losers” marriage it becomes completely unacceptable for either partner to walk away ever feeling as if they lost. If either loses the whole team loses.

Now, winning can not be about getting “your way”, because if the goal is to get “your way” it sets up the adversarial situation; “my way” versus “your way”. Therefore, winning has to be redefined as: **finding a solution that both can feel good about**. In the end it can be “my way”, “your way”, some combination of the two, or some completely creative alternative. As long as both spouses feel good about the solution and neither feel compromised or as if they are losing, the outcome is a win for the team. (adapted from Gary Smalley Marriage 911)

## **2. Seven Steps for Becoming a Winning Team.**

1. Adopt a “no losers” policy
2. Listen and understand each others thoughts and feelings
3. Summarize what your partner would like to see happen
4. State what you would like to see happen
5. Create together a list of alternatives
6. Select a course of action
7. Plan a time to decide if the plan is working, and rework if necessary.

## **3. “Unhappily Wed? Put off getting that divorce Study finds that waiting, working it out can pay off”** (Karen S. Peterson 07/11/2002 USA Today)

Divorce doesn't necessarily make adults happy. But toughing it out in an unhappy marriage until it turns around just might, a new study says. The research identified happy and unhappy spouses, culled from a national database. Of the unhappy partners who divorced, about half were happy five years later. But unhappy spouses who stuck it out often did better. About two-thirds were happy five years later.

Study results contradict what seems to be common sense, says David Blankenhorn of the Institute for American Values, a think tank on the family. The institute helped sponsor the research team, based at the University of Chicago.

"In popular discussion, in scholarly literature, the assumption has always been that if a marriage is unhappy, if you get a divorce, it is likely

you will be happier than if you stayed married," Blankenhorn says. "This is the first time this has been tested empirically, and there is no evidence to support this assumption."

About 19% of the divorced had happily remarried within five years.

The most troubled marriages reported the biggest turn-arounds. Of the most discontented, about 80% were happy five years later, says Linda Waite, a University of Chicago sociologist who headed the research team.

The study looked at data on 5,232 married adults from the National Survey of Families and Households. It included 645 who were unhappy. The adults in the national sample were analyzed through 13 measures of psychological well-being. Within the five years, 167 of the unhappy were divorced or separated and 478 stayed married.

Divorce didn't reduce symptoms of depression, raise self-esteem or increase a sense of mastery compared with those who stayed married, the report says. Results were controlled for factors including race, age, gender and income.

Staying married did not tend to trap unhappy spouses in violent relationships. What helped the unhappy marrieds turn things around? To supplement the formal study data, the research team asked professional firms to recruit focus groups totaling 55 adults who were "marriage survivors." All had moved from unhappy to happy marriages. These 55 once-discontented marrieds felt their unions got better via one of three routes, the report says:

- \* Marital endurance. "With time, job situations improved, children got older or better, or chronic ongoing problems got put into new perspective." Partners did not work on their marriages.

- \* Marital work. Spouses actively worked "to solve problems, change behavior or improve communication."

- \* Personal change. Partners found "alternative ways to improve their own happiness and build a good and happy life despite a mediocre marriage." In effect, the unhappy partner changed.

Those who worked on their marriages rarely turned to counselors. When they did, they went to faith-based ones committed to marriage, Waite says. Men, particularly, were "very suspicious of anyone who wanted money to solve personal problems."

Those who stayed married also generally disapproved of divorce, Waite

says. They cited concerns about children, religious beliefs and a fear that divorce would bring its own set of problems.

4. **E-Course** A new E-Course is available from [pathwaycoaching](http://www.pathwaycoaching.com). The Course is entitled: “**Saving Your Marriage from Destruction**”-- the **PREP Approach**. Here is an excerpt:

\*\*\***The Foundation, the Road to a Healthy Relationship**\*\*\* Healthy Relationships are not just stumbled upon--they take hard work. “And they lived happily ever after...” gives the impression that happy couples don’t have any problems. This may work in fairytales, but not in reality. If you’re married you’re going to have problems, difficulties and some downright struggles. The good news is that you can learn marriage skills, which will help you maintain satisfaction and communicate more effectively– isn’t that what we really want in relationships?

In this E-Course we will explore the **Conflict Styles** that are common in all relationships, but cause great harm to the couple. For a quick self study communication course go to [www.pathwaycoaching.com](http://www.pathwaycoaching.com) and download this exciting new e-course.

5. **Prevention and Relationship Enhancement (CPREP) Workshops** are one-day courses where premarital and marital couples explore their relationship in a safe environment. Topics explored include: Relationship Danger Signs, Communication, Commitment, Forgiveness, Spirituality, Fun, Friendship and Sensuality. The workshop is presented in an educational format.

NEXT Workshop: Saturday, October 19, 2002 8:30am– 4:30pm  
Portland, OR. Couples can register 503-667-1435, or online at [www.hopefamilyservices.org](http://www.hopefamilyservices.org). For more information email [counselor@hopefamilyservices.org](mailto:counselor@hopefamilyservices.org).

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