



## Marriage

### **1. Marriage doesn't complete you.**

Contrary to Jerry Maguire and the implicit messages embedded in statements like *finding the One* or *your other half*, a healthy marriage consists of two whole people who partner to create a third body: their marriage. In other words, one plus one doesn't make one or even two; it makes three. You are responsible for your own aliveness and wholeness, and your partner is responsible for his or hers.

### **2. You won't always feel attracted to your partner.**

Even if we know this intellectually, when lack of attraction hits in marriage, most people panic. We're a profoundly image-based culture, and we're taught through mainstream media that if you're not wildly attracted to your partner, you're with the wrong person. That simply is not reality.

We see our partners in many different lights—from elegantly dressed for a special event to retching over the toilet bowl. Even over the course of a day or an hour, attraction can fluctuate, and that's completely normal. Knowing this can alleviate much needless anxiety so that you don't fall down the rabbit hole of *What's wrong?*

### **3. You won't always like your partner.**

His jokes will drive you crazy. Her laugh sounds like fingernails on a chalkboard. That's simply the way it is when you spend that much time with one human being. We allow for this when it comes to friendships and family, but with partners, we absorb a fantasy that we're supposed to like everything about each other all the time.

### **4. Being in love is a stage of relationship that doesn't last forever.**

The romantic model says: *You meet, fall in love, and live happily ever after.* We skip over an essential stage: falling out of love. As one of my clients shared: *I had to fall out of love before I learned what real love is all about.* This is something rarely talked about in the mainstream.

And if you didn't have an infatuation stage, it doesn't mean your relationship is doomed! Some people have it, and others don't, and there is absolutely no correlation between having an infatuation stage and the success of a marriage.

### **5. Love can grow with time and effort.**

We also grow up believing that you're either in love or out of love; there's nothing in between. And we believe that love is quantifiable and a fixed amount, meaning that you can measure it.

The truth is that real love grows over time. Love begins as an empty garden that requires attention and care, and when it's thoroughly watered and the weeds are pulled, the flowers will blossom over a lifetime.

#### **6. You don't have to feel love to give it.**

In our culture that says that love is only a feeling, it's easy to feel confused when the loving feelings fade. Then we balk against advice that says, *Fake it till you make it*. But sometimes, you have to act as-if in a long-term relationship, meaning that even if you don't feel like giving your partner a good morning kiss, you do it anyway.

#### **7. Sex is a sacred act of giving and receiving.**

It's sad and often detrimental that we're offered zero guidance about one of the most complicated aspects of being human: our sexuality. We learn from pop culture, peers, and now, increasingly, from pornography that sex is something you use to gain approval, validation, or security. Healthy sex is none of those things. Loving sex is an expression of love, an act of connection where you practice the arts and skill of giving and receiving.

#### **8. Marriage is a crucible designed to help you grow.**

Marriage isn't *happily ever after*. It isn't the end of the road, the resting spot for eternal happiness. Marriage is one of the most challenging and rewarding paths we can commit to as human beings.

As such, it will activate every element of unshed grief, unattended fear, unfinished transition, and it will bring to light the fear and false beliefs you've absorbed from your first blueprint and the culture about love. Knowing that the going is supposed to get rough can give you fortitude when you want to walk out the door.

#### **9. Your first blueprint for intimate partnership informs how you approach your marriage.**

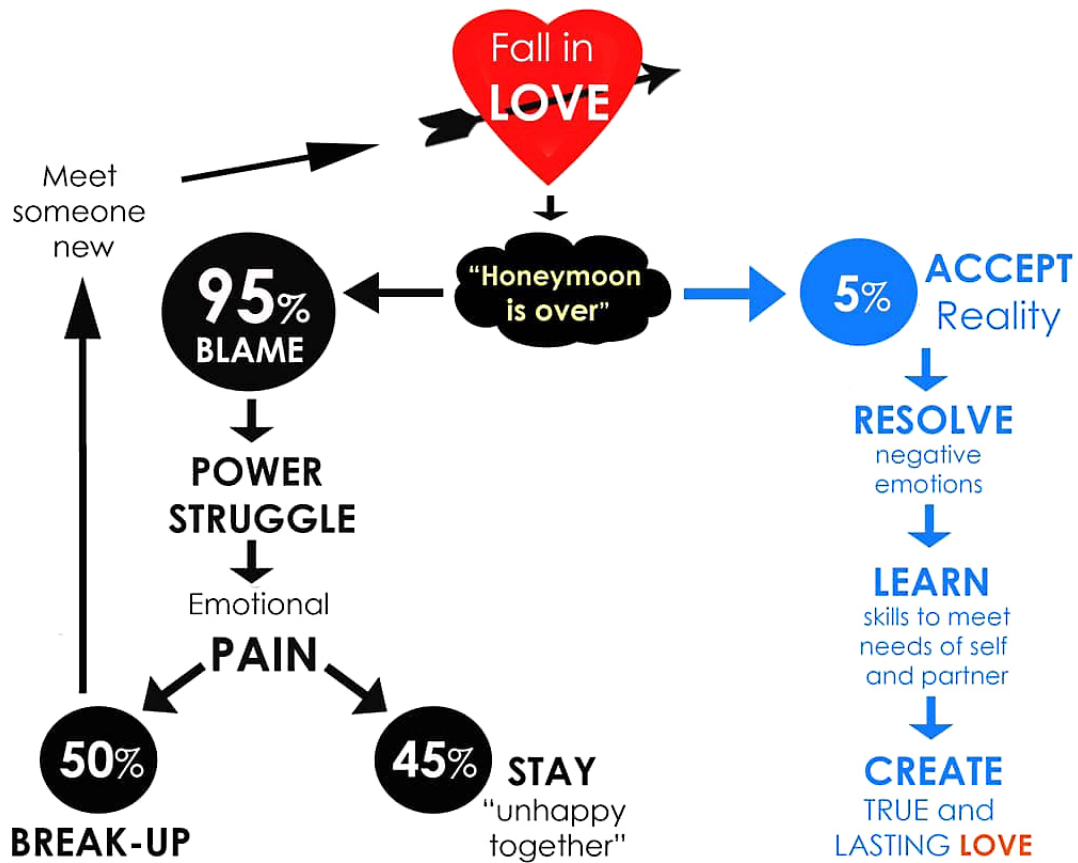
If you witnessed a healthy marriage growing up, you're much more likely to naturally implement the principles and actions required for marriage success. On the other hand, if you witnessed a marriage characterized by criticism, nagging, distance, arguing, or abuse, you'll have to fight your template at every turn.

It's not easy work, but just because it's work doesn't mean you're with the wrong person. If you're with a loving partner, the work is a sign that you're pushing up against your dysfunctional or limited blueprint, and it's an invitation to create a new legacy of healthy partnership.

#### **10. Life with young children is stressful.**

That's it: It's stressful, overwhelming, rich, and beautiful, and it will put a strain on even the best of marriages. I often think it's a small miracle that any couple survives parenting intact, as there's such a demand on time and filling needs other than your own that the marriage is sure to suffer. Knowing this can help you weather these challenging years, while remembering how important it is to find time to nurture both yourself and the marriage, no matter how small.

# The **RELATIONSHIP** Flow Chart



Which choice are you making next...?