

INTRODUCTION

We all have a story about how we fell in love. Do you remember your story?

Unfortunately, most of us have a story about how we fell *out* of love too. For some couples the impetus was financial stress, a challenging child, the loss of a loved one, an affair, an addiction, an accident, an illness, an obsession, or unresolved issues from the past.

Maybe you can't identify a specific cause but instead are victim to time and life which ate away at the special spark you and your spouse once had.

Whatever your situation, it's likely that your relationship is not what it used to be.

What are you going to do?

Half of married couples call it quits. The other half settle for being roommates. Only a small percentage of couples are in love after a few years of marriage. It's no wonder everyone says "love is a mystery."

Love is NOT a mystery!

There are specific things you can do with your spouse to create love in your marriage and to maintain your love for a lifetime.

Just as there are physical laws of the universe (such as gravity), there are also laws for love. Just as the right diet and exercise program makes you physically healthy, a certain way of life with your spouse will make your marriage strong. It's a direct cause and effect. If you know and apply the laws, the results are predictable—you can "make" love.

MARRIAGE FITNESS offers you a step-by-step system to make and maintain love in your marriage. The program can work for any couple. And the best news is that you don't have to dig into your past, dredge up your problems, or practice communication techniques. This is not marriage therapy; it's *Marriage Fitness*.

A Surprising Solution

The wisdom in MARRIAGE FITNESS is a result of years of study and research, coaching couples, and conducting marriage seminars. But unlike other relationship experts who approach marriage from a clinical perspective, for me the topic of relationship success is also very personal.

Do you remember I said that every couple has a story about how they fell *out* of love? I'd like to share with you the story of my marriage.

My wife and I started out deeply in love—like most couples. We stayed up all night talking, surprised each other with thoughtful gifts, and spoke to each other in code words. You know the feeling of really being connected? That was us.

But then something happened that destroys most marriages. We had a son who died when he was just one week old. And then we had twin daughters, who also died as newborns. In less than two years, we lost three children.

Understandably, my wife became depressed. I tried to cope by immersing myself in work. We ran from each other emotionally, quickly becoming roommates instead of soul mates.

Everything felt different. Instead of talking to each other all night, it became a chore to talk for a few minutes. Instead of using our code words, sometimes we resorted to using curse words.

It wasn't long before we began to think: Is this what it's going to be like for the next fifty years? Is this what we had in mind when we married? Will we ever again anticipate a phone call from the other or fantasize in the middle of the

day? Will we ever resolve the problems we constantly fight about? What about true love?

We didn't want to lose each other so we made a commitment to work on our marriage. We tried the obligatory, "Honey, let me repeat what you said to make sure I understood you correctly." We also learned about gender differences and applied conflict-resolution strategies. We even went to therapy to wrestle with our problems. But guess what? To our deep disappointment, nothing *really* changed.

You might say our marriage improved. We understood each other better, communicated more effectively, and solved a few problems. We became better roommates, but we did not become soul mates again. And our core problems remained unchanged.

Then we had a breakthrough. We decided to *set aside all our problems* and focus on *connecting* with each other. We used a series of "exercises" that created a union—an emotional togetherness—which transformed our marriage. Not only did we resolve our differences, we fell in love again! And we did it—not by dealing with our problems (as serious as they were)—but by establishing healthy habits in our marriage.

This is the solution to most marital situations—to step away from your problems and spend your time and energy building your relationship through positive actions.

It's counter-intuitive, but if you strengthen your relationship, most of your problems will dissipate and what remains of them can be more easily addressed in a safer, softer, and more forgiving marital environment.

Many couples complain that the worst day of their week is the day they go to therapy together. They're not getting along and the one night a week they spend together is spent with their arms folded and their legs crossed in opposite directions immersed in the negativity of their marriage. I remember leaving our sessions feeling hopeless and frustrated.

If your marriage is stressed, it's NOT the time to tackle difficult issues. In fact, if the timing is not right, trying to solve problems with your spouse can damage your marriage

and make it *less likely* that you'll ever find resolution.

If you have back problems, sometimes the solution is to do sit-ups. Strengthening one part of your body can heal another. Your marriage works in a similar way.

How to Simplify Your Situation

The transformation of my marriage and my disappointment with traditional counseling inspired my exploration into the topic of marriage success.

I read virtually every relationship book on the market. I discovered that relationship success literature focuses primarily on conflict-resolution and communication skills. It's surprising how much is written about solving problems and communicating more effectively, and how little is written about how to create love.

MARRIAGE FITNESS is fundamentally different from any other book about relationship success. MARRIAGE FITNESS is not about conflict-resolution or communication skills because these are NOT the keys to a successful marriage.

If a doctor cures your illness, does that mean you're healthy? No! It just means you're not sick. Similarly, solving your marital problems will NOT create love in your relationship. You might get along better and fight less, but you won't necessarily have a healthy marriage. And your problems will probably reappear or new ones will surface.

The irony of the conflict-resolution and communication approaches to love is that the correlation is backwards. Solving problems does not create love. It's love that solves problems. Effective communication does not create love. It's love that creates effective communication. The question to ask is *not* how to solve your problems or communicate effectively. The question is—how do you fall in love again? How do you make that magical connection and how do you make it last? That's the key to a successful marriage and that is what this book is about.

In his essay "The Hedgehog and the Fox," based on an ancient Greek parable, Isaiah Berlin describes how different people approach problems. Some people are like foxes; they know many things. Other people are like hedgehogs; they know one big thing.

A fox is a clever animal who devises many tactics for attacking the hedgehog. Everyday the fox has another brilliant strategy to win his prey.

The hedgehog, on the other hand, is a slow boring creature whose defense is the same no matter how the fox attacks.

Everyday the fox thinks, "Aha, now I've got you." But everyday, no matter how the fox approaches, no matter where he strikes, no matter what time of day he attacks, as soon as the hedgehog senses danger he thinks, "Here we go again," and he rolls up into a little ball, extends his sharp spikes, and spoils the fox's best laid plans.

Berlin explained that some people (foxes) make everything complicated. Their approach changes depending on the circumstances.

Other people (hedgehogs) simplify the complexity of the world into one principle—one basic idea that determines their every move.

Now don't misunderstand. Hedgehogs are not simple-minded. On the contrary, their understanding of the world is so profound that they're able to identify the most fundamental elements. Albert Einstein, Carl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin, and Adam Smith—they were "hedgehogs."

To succeed in your marriage, you must be a hedgehog too!

Every marriage has problems, issues, and challenges. But in every instance the solution is the same. The solution is love!

I know it sounds hokey, but think about when you fell in love? What problems did you have then? Hardly any, right?

Was it difficult to communicate when you fell in love? Of course not. And you didn't need communication techniques either. You barely needed words. You communicated with the wink of an eye and finished each other's sentences.

Love magically transforms everything.

You know the twitch in the corner of your spouse's mouth? Remember when you thought it was cute? Then one day it became annoying, right? Why?

Your spouse used to be thrifty and now your spouse is cheap. What changed?

The love in your marriage changed and that changed everything. And when you rebuild your love, everything will change again.

Don't get bogged down in the negativity of trying to solve your problems. It's not fun and it's not productive. Be a hedgehog. Use this Marriage Fitness program to build positive energy in your relationship. You will transform your marriage and solve your problems.

Two-in-One

MARRIAGE FITNESS offers insights into the inner-workings of love *and* a corresponding four-step action plan.

After you read Chapters 1 through 3, you'll experience a paradigm shift and understand the dynamics of your marriage better than ever before. You'll have a new frame of reference enabling you to pinpoint that magical connection known as love. Chapters 1 through 3 also explain the philosophy underlying Marriage Fitness and answer some crucial questions. What *really* is love? What's the solution to most marital problems? What does it mean to be soul mates?

After you read Chapters 4 through 7, you'll be empowered with a Marriage Fitness program called the MarriageMax™ 4-Step Plan.

The MarriageMax™ 4-Step Plan

1. Put Love First
2. Give Presence
3. Move from Me to We
4. Save Yourself

Chapters 4 through 7 are each devoted to one step of the MarriageMax™ 4-Step Plan. Each chapter explains how and why each step manifests love in your marriage. Most importantly, each chapter offers you exercises to strengthen your marriage and explains exactly how to apply each step.

By the time you turn the last page of MARRIAGE FITNESS, you'll understand the dynamics of your relationship and you'll know exactly how to apply your knowledge to create lasting love in your marriage.

Getting Your Marriage in Shape

Your marriage is the lead domino in your life. Whichever way it falls is the way everything else in your life goes too. That's one reason why it's so important to focus on your marriage. Not only because it's an awesome experience to be in love, but because being in love—having a healthy marriage—makes you a better parent, a more productive professional, and a healthier person spiritually, emotionally, and physically. *Your marriage affects your entire life.*

When you're in love, everything is wonderful. But when you're not, nothing is ever enough. You could dress in the latest fashions, go on every diet, make all the money in the world, and be a leader in your community, but if you're not connected with your spouse—if you're not at peace in your home—nothing will be right.

You may not realize the extent to which your fulfillment in life depends on your marriage. You may think your marriage is one aspect of your life that contributes to your overall happiness. It's not true. Your marriage is the framework—the very bedrock—upon which every aspect of your life is built. It's the pool in which everything swims. If it's healthy, everything thrives. If it's polluted, everything suffers.

Most people don't focus on their marriage until they have problems. But that's like ignoring your body until you're sick. Everyone knows that the key to good health is diet and exercise—a healthy lifestyle. It's the same with your marriage. Just as you need a healthy diet and exercise for

your body, you need Marriage Fitness for your relationship.

This book offers you a straightforward do-it-yourself Marriage Fitness plan complete with everything you need to succeed.

Ideally, you *and* your spouse should read MARRIAGE FITNESS and work on the MarriageMax™ 4-Step Plan together. If your spouse is not interested in reading the book, ask your spouse to participate in the MarriageMax™ 4-Step Plan with your guidance. Even if your spouse does not participate, *you* can still strengthen your marriage using Marriage Fitness.

Consider the profound love you feel for your child. Is it because of everything they do for you? No. *You* created that love. It's a result of everything *you* do. In the same way, *you* control the love you experience in your marriage. Love is a verb. It's something *you* do.

A Tribute to Your Marriage

There's a story about a man; we'll call him Mr. Jones. He was at a dinner party with his wife when he was asked, "If you died, but could come back as anyone, who would it be?" Without hesitation Mr. Jones said, "I'd want to come back as Mrs. Jones' second husband."

What a compliment to his wife! What a tribute to their marriage!

So, how would you answer that question? And what would your spouse say?

Can you imagine you and your spouse answering that question just like Mr. Jones? It can happen. I'm not just offering you an okay marriage; I'm saying that just two short months from now, if you or your spouse had only one wish in another life, you would wish to be with each other.

What I'm offering you . . . is a *phenomenal* marriage—a truly healthy relationship!

No matter what state your marriage is in today, I believe you're 100% entitled to a strong marriage filled with

passion, intimacy, and shared purpose.

You *can* keep up with the Jones'. MARRIAGE FITNESS will show you how.

Feel free to email me your comments and questions about MARRIAGE FITNESS, your experience with the MarriageMax™ 4-Step Plan, and any stories or insights you feel inspired to share. It would be an honor to hear from you.

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