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Ghost Stories Can Be Hazardous to Your Relationship

By Claire Hatch

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When my stepdaughter Kristina was in the first grade, she was invited to her first slumber party. Her friend Diane, the social butterfly, invited practically all the girls in the class. For two weeks the hot topic at Singing River Elementary School was, What would it be like to sleep away from home? Who could handle it? Who might crack under the pressure?

When my husband and I picked up Kristina up the morning after, we asked, "Well? Was it fun? Did anyone get scared? Anyone call their parents?"

"The only one who got scared was Diane."

"At her own party? Why?"

"She told us ghost stories. And then SHE was awake all night." Kristina rolled her eyes. "She thinks ghosts are real."

Kids aren't the only ones who tell themselves scary stories—and believe them. When you have a partner, a child, a colleague, or a boss who's driving you crazy, chances are that it's not what they are actually doing that's getting under your skin. It's your story.

One kind of story that can cause a lot of havoc in a relationship is an all or nothing story.

Have you ever felt restless and bored as you looked at your calendar and realized you have no social events planned? And then sighed to yourself, "We live such a boring life. We never do anything fun." Well, it's possible that you are the only couple on the planet who absolutely NEVER does anything fun. But chances are that you are completely forgetting about that movie you went to two weeks ago. It's probably more realistic to say that you're not getting out as much as you would like to. But if you convince yourself that your whole life is boring, you (and your partner) could end up feeling too demoralized to take action to pep up your social life!

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Or, say your husband is mad because while you were tidying up the kitchen, you accidentally buried that important report from work that he's been looking for.

You think, "I'm always causing trouble for him. I must be a real drag to live with. I don't even know why he wants to be with me."

Now you're prepped to see any complaint by your husband as a sign that he doesn't want to be with you. You'll probably react with anger that's out of proportion to the situation. And things will go downhill pretty quickly from there.

In reality, your husband can be absolutely furious with you at this moment and still love you to pieces. In fact, it's the most natural thing in the world. Life isn't black or white; it comes in all shades of grey.

And all or nothing stories are every bit as imaginary as children's ghost stories.

The next time you're upset with your partner, stop and look for those words ALWAYS and NEVER. As in: I'm always the one who does the dishes or She's never on time. That's the tip-off that you're telling an all or nothing story. You may have a problem to solve, but it'll be a lot easier if you get the facts first. And leave the ghost stories to the kids.

P.S. To learn more about how understanding ghost stories can improve all the relationships in your life, check out the seminar below.

My Two Cents

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Two weeks ago, the Iowa state Senate passed a bill that would cut the waiting period for a marriage license from 20 days to 3 days for couples who go to pre-marital counseling. The bill is right in step with a current trend—state initiatives to reduce divorce through pre-marital education and counseling.

Florida and Minnesota have reduced marriage license fees for those who take a pre-marital education course. Arizona created a "marriage handbook," and funds marriage-skills courses for low-income couples. Forty states now fund some kind of marriage-related services.

As a provider of pre-marital counseling, you might expect that I'd be in favor of these measures. After all, recent research evidence shows that pre-marital counseling can strengthen a relationship by 30%. And no doubt many of these programs will do a lot of good. Couples who wouldn't otherwise think about counseling or who couldn't afford it will get some much-needed skills. And they very well could save their marriage.

In spite of these possible benefits, I believe the government should stay out of the pre-marital counseling business. Offering incentives is a slippery slope. The next step could be establishing requirements. And guess what? The government makes mistakes when it makes lifestyle recommendations. It could easily throw its weight behind programs that are a waste of money. Or have unforeseen consequences.

## Ghost Stories Can Be Hazardous to Your Relationship

I applaud the renewed value we are giving to marriage and the increased concern about preventing divorces. And I applaud the growing trend of couples choosing to go to counseling. But I vote that pre-marital counseling remain just that—a completely free choice.

### How to Get Along With Anyone

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If you have a partner, child, colleague, or boss who is driving you crazy, this class is for you. You'll learn how to catch yourself telling stories that sabotage relationships. You'll also get a template for problem-solving, a script for 'hard talks,' and tips for making yourself understood. Getting a grip on your stories is truly the way to get along with anyone and everyone in your life.

Claire Hatch, LICSW, is a counselor who specializes in happier relationships and turning conflict into closeness. She works with clients in her Seattle area office and by phone around the world. She gives presentations on conflict solutions and making your relationship the best it can be. For more

information, visit www.clairehatch.com . Contact Claire at claire@clairehatch.com

ghost worlds

By mark rabusseau

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Hello, My name is Mark Rabusseau. I am also known as "Mark the Printer." My wife, Mary Lou and I have been hunting ghost for about 2 years now. It all started when we took a tour of haunted houses of the north side of Pittsburgh. It was not the kind of houses where someone jumped out to scare you. It was a narrated tour, where you stood in front of the house, a brief history of the house was given, along with what super natural occurrences have been experienced. We never entered the premises. That is until we came to the last house. The house was owned by Mr. DeSantis which he beautifully restored to its original Victorian Splendor. While everyone was dispersed on the first floor, I was drawn to the stair case. While I was looking up the steps, I saw a grayish mist travel across the top of the steps and through a closed door. I didn't tell my wife because she didn't believe in ghosts and would probably rib me for what I saw. After 2 hours I could not contain myself, and I had to tell her. She said that's funny, because she saw the same thing but from a different angle. She said she did not want to tell me because of all the years of saying ghost don't exists, she finally saw one. The next day we went back to Mr. DeSantis' house. Without embellishing he ask us exactly what did we see. After telling him, he said that he never told anyone on the tour about the ghost at the top of the steps. He said he had never seen it but guest in his home have reported to him that the ghost has been seen leaving the closed door and going up the stairs.

Since then Mary Lou and I have been ghost hunting with our digital camera and EMF detector. Our best luck has been on the battlefields of Gettysburg. Most of the pictures we have are of orbs which seem to be semi-translucent balls of energy.

When we ghost hunt we follow a list of guidelines such as no smoking, no rain or adverse weather conditions, it must be a clear day with no dust floating around. We don't see the ghost with our eyes,

but the digital camera picks up the energy they seem to produce. please view my home page at:
<http://hometown.aol.com/mrrab/index.html>

printer, amateur ghost hunter



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