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**Give-And-Take: Recipe for Success in Marriage?**

**By Azriel Winnett**

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A woman once visited a counselor to ask a question about her marriage. I have a funny feeling that you might not be especially impressed with the answer she was given.

All the same, I'll take my chances. I think my shoulders are broad enough.

I stand by the counselor's response 100%.

The questioner (let's call her Jane) was married to a divorcee. Her husband (John) had to pay a certain sum of money every month to his previous wife as alimony, or whatever. He had just started a new business and was passing through a financial sticky patch. The obligation to his ex-wife, on top of everything else, was putting John under a lot of pressure.

Jane was a working person and gladly helped to pay the family debts. She never thought twice about it. But could she be expected to contribute in this case?

Surely, reasoned Jane, her husband's financial commitment to somebody to whom he had been married previously had nothing to do with her? Yes, she and John were life partners and she was happy to share all his burdens. But even for what happened in a previous life, so to speak? Wasn't that going too far?

"I must confess I don't really understand your question," the counselor gently told Jane after listening intently to her dilemma.

"You and John are husband and wife. John has a debt. He's struggling to pay it. What difference does it make what the debt is for? It's a debt, period!"

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The counselor smiled warmly at Jane before she continued. "His problems are your problems. You're in this together. Why on earth shouldn't you help pay the debt? If, after all, it's difficult for you to accept this, it must be that there's some deeper problem in your marriage..."

And that's it.

Now, it's important not to misunderstand the counselor, or me. I don't want your blood pressure to hit the roof! We have to keep cool heads and put everything in the proper perspective.

First of all, she wasn't implying, of course, that John now had a licence to sit back, put his legs up, and meditate blissfully about the higher meaning of life, while his dear and ever obliging spouse worked like a donkey to pay the price of his past.

Not at all. I should think that's pretty obvious, but I have to stress it just in case.

Secondly, when we talk about husband and wife being full partners in the business of living, about sharing each other's burdens – financial or otherwise – no less than each other's joys, we are not saying for one moment that either party must contribute more than is reasonable.

In the case of our story, Jane was a high-earning professional. In other instances, a wife may bring in little or no income, for any of a number of reasons. It may not be desirable that she be working at all.

But that's hardly the point. We're talking of quality, rather than quantity. One can only do what one can, but it's the real desire to help that counts. And contributing doesn't only mean money.

I'll let you in on a little secret. I don't really like the use of the word PARTNER in connection with marriage.

True, we've used it up to now, for want of a better term. It does come in handy to describe a good marriage relationship, up to a point.

Yet, I hardly think that an ideal marriage relationship is a "partnership" in the same sense that we talk about a business partnership, for example. Not at all. When we think of a partnership, we usually think about a contract between two parties. A 50-50 sharing of responsibilities, or the like.

A little confused? Well, let me explain!

Do you have children? Good! Do you love them?

"What a question!" you exclaim, "Gee, how I love them!"

"Don't you know the sacrifices we made for them? From the moment they came into this world, when they depended on us for their very survival, my spouse and I gave them our all. Just as much as a whimper from them in the middle of the night, and we were there to attend to their needs. Even now, they may disappoint us, anger us or hurt us, but we continue to cater to their every whim...Do you need

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any greater proof that we love them!"

So...is that why you've done so much for them – because you love them so much?

Could be. But even more, I'd say it's the other way round: You love them so intensely BECAUSE you've done so much for them!

This is nothing more or less than human nature, and I think there's a great lesson for us here. We need to think about this very carefully.

Sometimes, when two people begin to think about marrying each other, they think in terms of some business arrangement. Whether they verbally express it that way or not, their minds work something along these lines:

"You have needs and I have needs. Maybe, if I satisfy yours, you will satisfy mine. You wash the dishes and I'll pay the rent. Sundays to Tuesdays I'll take out the garbage, and for the remainder of the week you will. Other duties will be divided by mutual consent. For every suit I buy, you can buy two pairs of shoes..."

If this is the marriage you want, good luck to you! It's a free world. But will you be happy? I mean, really happy? I wonder.

Many people will tell you that for a happy marriage, you need what they describe as "give-and-take".

Give and take? Nonsense! Forget about it!

What you need is "give and give." And give again. And again.

That's the royal road to happiness.

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and the professions, in the family unit and on the social scene.

## **The Basics Of Marriage Counseling**

**By Stephen Kreutzer**

Almost half of all marriages end in divorce. That is why there is an increase in couples seeking marriage counseling. Nobody wants to think that the marriage they are in will end. Marriage counseling offers a way for couples to work thorough problems with an outside influence. Marriage counseling can help couples to rebuild a marriage that was on the way to divorce.

Marriage counseling is a type of therapy that helps married couples resolve problems they may be having in their marriage. Most often counseling is conducted with both partners present. However, sometimes there will be individual sessions depending on the couples needs. The basis for marriage counseling is research that has shown problems in a marriage are best solved through communication and working together. Marriage counseling usually lasts a short period of time, until the problems are resolved and the marriage is back on track and the couple can handle problems on their own. In a session the counselor will ask questions, listen and analyze problems. The counseling usually starts with an analysis of the marriage and its problems. Then the problems are worked through to an amicable conclusion.

Marriage counselors are trained in psychotherapy. They also have an understanding about families, how to understand client's needs and problems. They also have training that allows them to help clients work through the problems to reach conclusions. All of this training lets them be able to identify underlying problems. A good marriage counselor will not make a client feel guilty or blame. They will teach clients to work through problems and get over bad feelings.

Marriage counseling can help couples open the lines of communication. Communication has been shown to be the key to a healthy and happy relationship. Couples with problems seek marriage counseling o get a better understanding of what has went wrong in their marriage, so they can once again have a string marriage.

Stephen Kreutzer is a freelance publisher based in Cupertino, California. He publishes articles and reports in various ezines and provides information on marriage counseling at CyberTopics!

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