

# *Making Your Relationship Work*

This booklet was developed by the  
Macomb County Youth Council,  
A subcommittee of the  
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*A guide to help you examine your relationship*

## RELATIONSHIP BILL OF RIGHTS

1. I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
2. I have the right to be free from psychological or physical abuse.
3. I have the right to proper notice and negotiation prior to the relationship being terminated.
4. I have the right to experience my own thoughts and feelings.
5. I have the right to tell my partner honestly and responsibly what I am thinking and feeling, even if my partner does not agree, without being condemned for it.
6. I have the right to have my own life outside of the relationship.
7. I have the right to continue to learn and grow.
8. I have the right to openly talk about and seek to resolve relationship problems.
9. I have the right to end the relationship if it is not meeting my needs.
10. I recognize that my partner has the same rights I do.

*Terence Gorski*

## BOOKS

***Are You The One For Me?***  
by Dr. Barbara DeAngelis

***Getting the Love You Want***  
by Dr. Harville Hendrix

***Getting Free***  
by Ginny Nicorthy

***Is It Love or Is It Addiction?***  
by Brenda Schaeffer

***Lethal Lovers and Poisonous People***  
by Dr. Harriet B. Braiker

***Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus***  
by John Gray PhD

***Relationship Rescue: A Seven-Step Strategy for Reconnecting with Your Partner***  
by Phillip C. McGraw PhD

***Your Perfect Right***  
by Robert E. Alberti and Michael L. Emmons



## INTRODUCTION

Terence Gorski, in his book ***Getting Love Right***, states that many people experience problems in relationships because they hold mistaken beliefs about the fundamental nature of love. "Before you can begin to build a healthy relationship and get love right," he states, "you need to understand the nature of dysfunctional relationships so that you can recognize and avoid them or transform them into healthy relationships; understand the nature of a healthy relationship and how to build one; and know that you have a choice, to say 'no' to dysfunctional relationships and to say 'yes' to healthy relationships, so you are no longer driven to begin or stay healthy.

This booklet is designed to help you examine some of the issues everyone faces in a relationship. It also provides you with additional resources.

If you find that this booklet raises questions about your relationship, you are encouraged to talk to a professional. Asking for help or information in dealing with problems is a normal and natural part of life. You are also encouraged to keep learning all you can about how to create a healthy, happy and loving relationship.

## ARE YOU IN A SANE RELATIONSHIP?

Harriet Braiker, in her book *Lethal Lovers and Poisonous People*, lists these dangerous personality types:

### THE SELF-CENTERED PERSONALITY

Self-centered personalities exaggerate their talents or things they have done to receive attention for being a "special" person. They mask their low self-esteem and feelings of unworthiness with overstated behavior and fantasies. They do not respond well to criticism and are overly sensitive to what others think of them. When criticized, they respond with cool indifference or terrible rage.

Their love relationships are troubled because of their overall lack of sensitivity. They do not recognize how other people feel. In romantic relationships, their partner is not treated as a person with his or her feelings and needs. He/she is treated as an object who is supposed to strengthen their self-esteem. The self-centered person relates to almost everyone in terms of how their own personal needs may be served.

### THE UNSTABLE PERSONALITY

People with an unstable personality have relationships that are very intense, and swing between thinking the best of you to thinking the worst of you. They find it hard to be alone and go to frantic lengths to avoid real or imagined abandonment. They have a problem in their sense of identity. This makes them uncertain about their self-image, long-term goals or choice of careers, which type of friends to have, etc. Their mood may change in a moment and may last for a few hours. They tend to have fits of intense anger over which they pretend to have no control. Sometimes they threaten suicide to manipulate others or to express intense anger.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### AUDIOTAPES

#### *Getting Love Right*

by Terence T. Gorski

Herald Publishing House 1 (800) 767-8181

#### *Secrets of Successful Relationships*

by Dr. John Gray PhD

### VIDEOTAPES

#### *Fighting for Your Marriage*

Drs. Markman, Stanley and Blumberg

Prevention, Relationship Enhancement Program

1 (800) 366-0166

#### *Getting Love Right*

by Terence Gorski

Herald Publishing House 1 (800) 767-8181

#### *Improving Personal Relationships, part 1*

*Repressed Anger and Relationships, part 2*

*Secrets of Successful Relationships*

by Earnie Larsen

1 (800) 635-4780

## HOW DO I CHOOSE A MARRIAGE AND FAMILY COUNSELOR?

First, get the names of several marriage and family counselors. Ask your family doctor, clergy or friends for recommendations. Or, look in the yellow pages under "Marriage, Family, Child and Individual Counselors." You may also contact the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy at [www.aamft.org](http://www.aamft.org).

### QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN INTERVIEWING POTENTIAL COUNSELORS ARE:

- **What is your educational and training background?**  
(In most cases, the counselor will answer with his/her graduate education. If their degree is not in marriage and family counseling, ask about any additional post-graduate training they have completed in this area.)
- **Do you have experience treating my kind of problem** (for example, marital stress, intimacy, sexual problems, alcohol or drug abuse)?
- **How much do you charge? Are fees negotiable?**
- **Are your services covered by health insurance?** (Call your insurance company before going.)
- **Where are the marriage and family sessions held, and what are the office hours?**
- **How long are the sessions?**
- **How often are sessions scheduled?**
- **What is the average length of marriage and family therapy?**
- **What is your appointment cancellation policy?**
- **Will you be available for counseling in times of crisis?**

**If there is violence or battering in your relationship, marriage or family counseling will not work. You need special help. Call the Turning Point Domestic Violence Shelter at (586) 463-4430.**

There are two particular things about unstable personalities that need special attention. The first is that they use emotional blackmail with their partners ("Do this or I'll kill myself," etc). The second thing is the continual frustration that is created by the unstable personality's erratic mood and behavior that sets the stage for constant fighting.

### THE PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE PERSONALITY

The passive-aggressive person is hostile, which is why they elicit so much hostility and frustration from others. Their anger is communicated behind a mask of passivity - they make people mad by not doing what the other person wants. The most common methods used are postponing, delaying, forgetfulness, stubbornness and intentional carelessness.

### THE ADDICTIVE PERSONALITY

Addiction, by definition, makes its object (e.g., alcohol, gambling, etc.) the number one priority. Everything else takes a backseat. One exception is when the other person is the addiction. Then the partner is needed in a way that becomes depersonalizing. Addicts lie, deny, exploit others, and cause problems with their families, work and social relationships. Partners suffer shame, depression, frustration, hostility, lowered self-esteem, and other emotions. People who are involved with addicts try nearly everything to get their partners to stop drinking, using drugs, gambling, and so forth. Until the addict decides to change, nothing anyone else does will make a difference.

### TRYING TO CHANGE A FATAL PERSONALITY

These are not the only types of problem persons there are, but the four described above are the most difficult. If you find yourself in a relationship with one of these types of people, make an appointment to see a trained counselor who can help you sort out the issues.

## ARE YOU IN A SAFE RELATIONSHIP?

Many of the behaviors that people see as caring, attentive, and romantic in relationships are early warning signs for abuse.

### **Intrusion**

Your partner constantly wants to know your whereabouts, who you are with, where you are going, when you are coming home, etc.

Examples - constant phone calls, showing up at a friend's house unexpectedly, using jealousy to control you. At first, this may make you feel missed and cared for, but, in actuality, these are signs of suspicion and distrust.

### **Isolation**

Your partner insists that you spend all or the majority of your time together, cutting you off from friends and family, making fun of your activities, books, clubs, or interests.

Examples - calling your friends "stupid," or other derogatory names, discouraging you from keeping in touch with family, discouraging you from being involved in separate activities. This may make you feel wanted and needed, but this cuts down on your resources (friends, family), so when you really need them, they may not be there for you.

### **Possession & Jealousy**

Your partner constantly accuses you of having sex with others (teachers, bosses, counselors, friends, etc.), accuses you of flirting, monitoring what you wear, how you wear it, how much makeup to put on.

Examples: "I want you to be all mine." "You look like a whore with all that makeup on." This is treating you like an object, not a human being.

## FINANCES

*Tips from the Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Oregon, Inc., on how couples can handle finances:*

- Work out a budget that is acceptable to both of you.
- Share the decisions. No matter who earns the money, you must agree to have fair control over how it is spent.
- Talk about family finances at least once a month. Use this time to go over the budget, plan purchases or discuss your financial goals.
- Decide that no purchase above a figure - perhaps \$50 - will be made without the approval of both spouses.
- Do not discuss money matters when you are tired or upset. Be calm.
- Be direct. You and your spouse may have different spending styles. If you are annoyed with your spouse's spending, make clear exactly how you feel.
- Do not compare your financial situation with anyone else's. It won't solve your problem and can cause resentment.
- Share the bill-paying, so both of you know exactly where the money is going.
- When discussing finances, stick to the subject - and do not drag in other marital problems.

**FOR HELP IN CREDIT AND DEBT COUNSELING  
Macomb County, call the Michigan Credit Adjustors  
at (586) 468-4591.**

## LEGAL ISSUES

### PREMARITAL CONTRACTS

If you have children from a previous relationship, or are coming into a marriage with some property, you may benefit from a prenuptial contract. This contract is designed so the children and/or property each person had before this marriage will be treated separately in the new marriage. It also ensures that assets accumulated by the new spouses together can go to the surviving spouse if and when one of you dies.

### WILLS AND TRUSTS

A trust is an agreement that a person selected by you acts as guardian of your assets for someone else's benefit. Often a trust is created so assets will not have to go through probate court after your death. This allows the money to be distributed to your survivors immediately and avoids a fight about a will. A trust can be important in a remarriage. If you die without a will, all of your estate will go to your spouse unless there are children or parents still living. Then, if your estate is large enough, \$60,000 will go to your spouse plus one half of the rest of the estate. A will or trust ensures that the money will go to only who you want it to go, in amounts you choose. If you want to write a will, call your state representative for a copy of the Michigan Statutory Will. It's easy to complete and it's free!

### FAMILY AND DIVORCE MEDIATION

Mediation may be a better choice than going to court. Mediation is a process in which two or more people agree to meet in a private, confidential place with the help of a neutral person (a mediator), to work out a solution to a problem. Call the Resolution Center: (800) 8RESOLVE. Mediation has been shown to be ineffective in relationships where battering, violence, or mental or emotional terrorizing has occurred.

*Reference: Michigan Law for Everyone by Sherry A. Wells*

### Prone to Anger

Your partner is easily angered, experiences quick mood changes, and unpredictable behavior. Anger is out of proportion to the incident.

Examples: Kicking the dog, tearing up your pictures, being 5 minutes late and your partner is overly angry. It is important not to ignore what may seem like small over-reactions. It is not acceptable for anyone to use aggression to get his/her point across.

### Unknown Past & Disrespect for the Opposite Sex

Do you know about your partner's past partners, family upbringing, relationship with parents, and other people? How does your partner refer to members of the opposite sex? Does your partner show respect for others or lower them with sexist remarks? Does your partner put down or accuse their former partner(s) for all the problems in their relationships? If your partner puts down persons of the opposite sex in general, then you are also being put down.

### RESOURCES AVAILABLE

**FOR VICTIMS OF ABUSE: Turning Point, (586) 463-4430.**

**PREVENTATIVE SERVICES FOR MEN: Alternatives to Domestic Aggression. Referrals may be made by calling the Macomb County Crisis Center at (586) 307-9100.**

## POWER AND CONTROL IN RELATIONSHIPS

Brenda Schaeffer, in her book *Is It Love Or Is It Addiction?* lists some power plays that sabotage adult love relationships:

- Giving advice but not accepting it
- Having difficulty in reaching out, and in asking, for support and love
- Giving orders; demanding and expecting too much from others
- Trying to "get even" or to diminish the self-esteem or power of others
- Being judgmental; put downs that sabotage others' success; fault finding; persecuting; punishing
- Holding out on others; not giving what others want or need
- Making, then breaking, promises; causing others to trust us and then betraying that trust
- Smothering, over-nurturing the other
- Patronizing, condescending treatment of the other that sets one partner up as superior and the other as inferior
- Making decisions for the other; discounting the other's ability to solve problems
- Putting the other in "no-win" situations.
- Attempting to change the other (and unwillingness to change the self).
- Attacking the other when he or she is most vulnerable
- Showing an anti-dependent attitude "I don't need you"

## STEPCHILDREN

Many marriages bring ready-made families. It is important to set realistic expectations in order for these families to succeed. Realistic expectations are:

- Love may or may not develop among family members; what is important is to accept and respect each other.
- This new family will be neither better nor worse than other families - it will simply be different. Don't compare them.
- All stepfamilies have difficulties and differences to work through. Presenting a polished picture to outsiders is not important.
- Becoming a stepfamily takes time; satisfaction comes from working together to build that family.
- Children will feel confused - both happy and angry - about the remarriage; they had no choice either in the ending of the family or in the forming of this new one.
- Many children, especially teenagers, will be unwilling to accept authority from stepparents. Adults won't automatically agree about how to discipline.

### FOR FURTHER READING:

***STRENGTHENING YOUR STEPFAMILY***  
by Elizabeth Einstein and Linda Albert

### FOR MORE HELP

**Call: Stepfamily Association of America**  
**1(800) 735-0329**



## HAVING CHILDREN

The decision to become a parent is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. It is one that you will live with for the rest of your life.

### SOME GOOD REASONS TO HAVE A CHILD

- You and your partner have a strong relationship; you both want a child and can provide a good home.
- You have completed your education and have a good job that will support you and your family.
- You won't mind giving up some of your freedom and most of your time to love and care for your baby.
- Having a baby will fit into you and your partner's life and future plans.
- You are ready, willing and able.

### SOME NOT-SO-GOOD REASONS TO HAVE A CHILD

- To be cool because "everyone is doing it."
- To have someone to love - to possess, or someone who will love you.
- So that you are not alone, now or in your old age.
- To save a shaky relationship.
- To carry on the family name.
- To give your parents a grandchild.
- To be "fulfilled" as a woman or "prove" you are a man.

- Using bullying, bribing behavior; using threats
- Showing bitterness, grudge-holding, or self-righteous anger
- Abusing others verbally or physically
- Being aggressive and defining it as assertiveness
- Needing to win or to be right
- Resisting stubbornly or being set in one's own way
- Having difficulty admitting mistakes or saying "I'm sorry"
- Giving indirect, evasive answers to questions
- Defending any of the above behaviors

If power plays are a problem in your relationship, try the communication formula on page 8: "When you (*behavior*), I feel (*Your Feeling*)."

*If this does not work, then you may need to find a counselor who can help you sort through the issues.*

*If your relationship has violence in it, communication will not work with a batterer and you may be placing yourself in danger if you attempt to resolve conflicts by yourself. In this case, call Turning Point Domestic Violence Shelter at (586) 469-4430 for help.*

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In learning to resolve conflicts, it helps to look at your conflict styles. This not only makes you more aware of the effectiveness of your own style, but shows other approaches to conflict. Conflict styles fall into three general categories:

**Avoidance:** This response says that conflict is bad and disruptive. Those who want to be seen as "good" avoid it. Two ways of avoiding conflict are **denial** and accommodation. Denial is when angry or hurt feelings are pushed down instead of expressed. **Accommodation** is when someone smooths over a possible conflict by apologizing, making excuses, or changing their behavior to fit someone else's expectations.

**Confrontation:** This aggressive response reflects the belief that in every conflict there must be a winner and a loser. Confronters are happy to hurl insults or threats. People whose conflict style is confrontational often base their threats on the **authority or sense of power** they consider rightfully theirs.

**Problem-solving:** Unlike those who avoid conflict at all costs, advocates of this response see conflict as something that happens in the natural scheme of human relationships. Their concern is to arrive at a solution that both parties can live with. Problem-solvers may use **compromise**, where each person gives up what is less important to keep what is most important, or **collaboration**, in which you work together and both your needs are met.

Communication is the key to peaceful conflict resolution. One of the most effective ways to start and keep good communication with your partner is through the use of "I" - messages.

- Have we been open with each other about sexuality?
- Do we really know each other, including our habits, faults and qualities?
- Do we have personality differences that may cause difficulties?
- Are we flexible?
- Do we communicate positively and effectively?
- Do we enjoy being together and are we good friends?
- How well do we manage conflict?

*Reference: **Positive Relationships Don't Just Happen**  
by Sharon L. Hanna*

## WARNING SIGNS THAT YOUR RELATIONSHIP MAY NOT WORK

*(These warning signs should be discussed with a counselor. See page 17 on how to select a qualified counselor)*

- Controlling behaviors
- Constant arguing
- Repeatedly breaking up
- Excessive dependence on family for decision-making or monetary support
- Physical Abuse
- Verbal Abuse
- Marrying to escape unhappiness at home or marrying to avoid responsibilities

## MARITAL SUCCESS CONSIDERATIONS

- Have we known each other (well) for a long enough period?
- Why do I want to marry?
- What do I expect from marriage?
- Are we both going to pursue careers, and, if so, how will we handle such aspects as work scheduled, relocation, and conflict between career and relationship?
- What type of marriage do we want and how will we achieve it? What obstacles can get in the way?
- Have we explored our financial situation? Do we know each other's present income and potential, debts, and past history? Will we budget? How will we manage our finances? What are our feelings and attitudes about money?
- What are our career and personal goals? Are we compatible?
- How similar are our values? Religious beliefs? How will we handle conflict in these areas?
- Do we have common interests? How do we like to spend vacations? How will we use leisure time? How important are our hobbies? How will we spend holidays, in general?
- Are our life styles compatible? Do we have some of the same friends? Do we like each other's friends?
- Are we independent of our families? What role will our families play in our lives?
- Do we want children? If we do, have we talked about the possibilities related to how many, when, child raising, and birth control? Have we agreed about responsibilities for child care?

## "I"- MESSAGES

Voice your concerns about each other's behavior by using "I" messages and the appropriate tone of voice to express your wants and needs. Both of you will be less likely to feel judged or blamed. You can then more easily work together on the problem between you.

There are four parts to "I"- messages:

1. **"I feel . . ."**  
(Express the feeling: "I feel sad . . . ")
2. **"when you . . ."**  
(Describe the other person's behavior: "when you shout at me . . . ")
3. **"because . . ."**  
(explain the behavior's effect on you: "because it makes me feel like a child")
4. **"I need . . ."**  
(State what you want to happen: "I need you to lower your voice.")

"I" - messages need not always have a negative outlook. It's important to send positive "I" messages too: "It makes me feel better knowing you can appreciate my point of view."

Don't confuse "I" - messages with "you" - messages: "I feel you treat me unfairly."

**FOR FURTHER READING: *YOUR PERFECT RIGHT*  
by Robert E. Alberti and Michael L. Emmons**

## ADDICTIONS

### ALCOHOL

Alcoholics are not necessarily skid-row bums. Alcoholics are people who have lost control of their ability to stop drinking once they start. That means any kind of alcohol, whether it is beer, wine, wine cooler, or hard liquor, is dangerous.

Dr. Barbara DeAngelis, in her book *Are You The One For Me?*, describes what life with an alcoholic is like:

- inconsistent and unpredictable behavior
- outbursts of anger and violence
- consistent depression
- irresponsibility
- emotional deadness
- emotional unavailability
- lack of sexual desire or inability to perform properly
- fighting and bickering
- frequent "bad moods"
- lots of ups and downs in the relationship

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Dr. DeAngelis suggests that when you start to date someone, find out what his/her values and habits are regarding alcohol from the very first date. Watch his/her behavior carefully and do not delude yourself or make excuses for that person. Do not compromise your beliefs or values to fit your partner's use.

### STREET DRUGS

Street drugs bring additional problems to a relationship. Street drugs are illegal and expensive. The consistent use of street drugs will severely drain your family finances.

## ADDICTION TO PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Drugs that are prescribed, while legal, can be very addicting. Some people are addicted and don't even know it. If you are in a relationship with someone who takes many pills, ask questions!

### BIRTH DEFECTS

If a woman drinks alcohol or uses drugs while pregnant, she risks delivering an infant who will suffer drug withdrawal symptoms or who has fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) or fetal alcohol effects (FAE). FAS and FAE are birth defects caused when a woman drinks alcohol while pregnant. The baby may have mental retardation or learning problems throughout life.

**Women who are pregnant or who are thinking about getting pregnant should not drink any alcohol.**

The effects of the father's use of alcohol and/or other drugs before conception has also been linked to some birth defects.

### WHAT TO DO

Even if your loved one will not go for help, you have the power to get help for yourself. Individual counseling and support groups, such as Al-Anon have helped many people with some of the same problems you may be having.

### WHERE TO GO

**For a confidential interview and referral for counseling in Macomb County, call the CARE/Substance Abuse Central Assessment and Referral Program at (586) 541-2273.**

**For a referral to a free Al-Anon support group in your area, call Al-Anon at (248) 888-8586.**