

CAN ONE SPOUSE SAVE A MARRIAGE?



MarriageHelper

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Type, “Can One Spouse Save a Marriage?” into Google and in less than a quarter of a second it returns over two million links. Some lead to articles, others to “sure fire” products that promise to solve all marriage problems, and others to blogs that say one can and others that say one cannot.

Employing the slightest logic proves that one spouse cannot save a marriage. If a marriage involved only one person, then one person could save it. By its very definition, marriage is a bond between two people. Therefore if one leaves the bonds, the marriage is over—no matter how much the remaining spouse wants their marriage to continue.

Should the spouse wanting to save a marriage then give up all hope?

Absolutely not.

There are times when one spouse can do certain things that will likely lead the other to working out their marriage problems and salvaging the marriage.

THINGS THAT DO NOT WORK

The key to salvaging a marriage, is for the hoping partner to understand that trying to make the abandoning partner stay is the kiss of death. People do not appreciate being forced, manipulated, or controlled. The spouse fighting to save the marriage will be unwise to use sex, money, guilt, cajoling, or anything else to try to keep the other from departing. Actually, the more one tries to force the other to stay, the more the other wants to leave.

Think of it this way, how would you like to be in a marriage where you chain your spouse in the basement so that they will always be there for you? Would you like the way they think about you? Feel about you? What they wish would happen to you? Of course not. Using means other than chains doesn't really change the results.

Additionally, when the abandoning spouse knows that the other is there, waiting and longing, they have little motive to consider more carefully what they're doing. It's almost as if the waiting spouse is a net; if the new course of action doesn't work well, there's always going back to the one who is waiting no matter what.

THINGS THAT DO WORK

Our Marriage Recovery Video Series discusses the four things that cause one person to want to be closer to the other. There are physical attraction, intellectual attraction, emotional attraction, and spiritual attraction. When one spouse is being abandoned, the best thing they can do is to quit clinging and work on the four areas of attractiveness.

Physical Attraction

This attraction has to do with how one looks. It doesn't mean plastic surgery or pretending to be 20 years younger. It does mean doing what it takes to be as physically attractive as one can be at their age and situation in life. That isn't competing with the physical appearance of whoever may be alluring the spouse (interestingly, many people involved in affairs say that the lover isn't as physically attractive as their partner). It is making oneself the best they can be. It says to the abandoning mate, "Leave if you want, but I will survive you and I will attract the attention of others. I may be in another relationship by the time you come to your senses." Making oneself physically attractive as possible reminds the other of the initial attraction that once existed. It also increases the self-confidence of the spouse being abandoned and gives a way to move on with life if the other spouse doesn't come back.

Intellectual Attraction

This attraction means that a person is perceived as mentally equal or better when it comes to matters of life. A person who is intellectually attractive is one that can be talked to in meaningful ways, one who understands important matters of life, and who stimulates the mind of the other. The stereotypical "dumb job" or "dumb blonde" may be attractive physically, but looks aren't all there are to a satisfying life. In the long run, people enjoy conversation on a peer or better level. When a spouse is being abandoned, moping doesn't accomplish anything. Deciding to learn, to grow, and to master matters of life accomplishes in very positive ways. Second, it causes the abandoning spouse to see that the person they are leaving is much deeper and more interesting than once thought. It again demonstrates, "You may leave, but my life won't end. I will continue to grow and new people will come into my life as a result".

Emotional Attraction

This attraction occurs when a person evokes emotions in another that he or she enjoys feeling. That might range from laughter to feeling important to feeling safe and more. When one evokes emotions that the other does NOT enjoy (guilt, shame, rebellion), the result is just the opposite of attraction—it is repulsion. Being strong, having friends, going on with life, laughing, and sincere joy are always attractive in another. The abandoned spouse would do far better for self and for the possibility of reconciliation if they found a way to enjoy life rather than clinging to the hope that the other may come back.

Spiritual Attraction

This attraction refers to how one perceives the other's beliefs and values. Too often, a person being left, resorts to behavior inconsistent with (or directly contrary to) their beliefs and values. Some start drinking heavily. Others act out sexually. Some become quite mean. Whatever the behavior, if a person lets go of those things that they hold dear, they become a different person. More attractive? Yes, if they abandon unseemly behavior and become a better person. Not if they abandon lofty ideas and move in a downward spiral.

Each area of attraction works for the benefit of the person who's focusing on them. At the same time, they may well stop the leaving spouse in their tracks as they see their spouse in a new light. When one knows that the other will move on, succeed, and have a good life without them, that person naturally becomes more attractive.

Perhaps more attractive than what the departing spouse was moving toward.

To learn more about saving your marriage, check out our resources and get more information on our [Save My Marriage Online Course](#) here.