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The
ANATOMY
OF AN
AFFAIR

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A Sample Chapter from “The Anatomy of An Affair”



RELATIONSHIP TOXINS

In the almost twenty years of working with couples in conflict, I discovered there are three factors that consistently emerge as the “kiss of death” for relationships – if not corrected. I call these factors, “relationship toxins” because they act as poison in what could otherwise be a healthy relationship.

These toxins are: distrust, jealousy and fear.

Generally, these three toxins cluster together. In fact, rarely will you find one without the other. Although they appear quite different, there is still considerable overlap among them. To figure out why they manifest themselves in relationships (and destroying them in the process) you must first determine how they came to be.

Many people who have personally witnessed the disastrous role of these toxins in their relationships are often at a loss to explain how they developed. However, based on my experience - in most cases, distrust, jealousy and fear existed long before the relationship in question. This makes it all the more damaging and painful for someone who is the undeserving recipient of their partner's "old baggage" that is being unreasonably imposed upon them.

I'll expand on this issue more deeply later on.

Distrust

The interesting thing about distrust is that it often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Think about it! If your spouse distrusts you and is constantly monitoring and questioning what you are doing, what do you think your reaction will likely be? If you are like almost all of my clients caught in this situation, your reactions are likely:

1. to withhold information – for fear of being criticized, grilled or doubted
2. to do things behind a spouse's back

Do you have a sense where this might be leading? Once the distrust-sneaking cycle begins, it is difficult to stop. At some point the distrustful spouse stumbles upon something that the other spouse has withheld or done with his or her knowing. You guessed it! This discovery now just confirms the distrustful spouse's suspicions and reinforces their tendency to criticize and doubt. And so the cycle continues.

While this dysfunctional pattern takes hold, some very destructive things start happening in the relationship. To begin, the person who is distrusted becomes resentful of their spouse and his or her questioning, accusations and monitoring. Without prompt intervention, the relationship can only go in one direction – down hill. You can see how this type of dynamic can easily escalate and pull a once loving couple apart.

I can't think of a better way to push a spouse toward an affair than to wrongly distrust them. Because the foundation of a relationship is built on trust, to question it without cause or to wrongly attribute distrust is to destroy its basic underpinnings.

Being the object of wrongful distrust is an untenable situation. It's a no-win situation because rational thought and logic do not factor into the distrusting spouse's thinking. Although not particularly advantageous, the available choices are:

1. to succumb to the ongoing litany of accusations and monitoring, and in so doing, sacrifice one's integrity, self esteem and self concept
2. to emotionally pull out of the relationship to protect oneself from the fallout of a distrusting spouse and in so doing, live in an unsatisfying and unfulfilling empty shell of a relationship
3. to protest and challenge the wrongful accusations and monitoring and in so doing, escalate the conflict, frustration and existing insecurities.

Distrust presents itself in different ways depending on the people involved and the circumstances they find themselves in. The story that follows is a perfect example of how wrongful distrust is impossible to counteract even by a most understanding and loving spouse.

A Case in Point

A husband who previously had been married to a woman who cheated on him is now married for the second time. Unfortunately, he has now transferred his distrust and insecurity onto his new wife. While the husband adores his very attractive second wife, he is unable to let go of his belief that good looking women cheat on their husbands. This belief is so ingrained that he is unable to stop himself from grilling his wife about her whereabouts and her activities. In spite of his wife's attempts to allay his concerns, there is no amount of reassurance on her part that can lessen his distrust in her.

Over time, the pattern of accusations, explanations and reassurances continued without abate. In fact, as time went on the husband became so overcome by his feelings of distrust that he became preoccupied with checking his wife's cell phone records, her credit card receipts and the mileage on her vehicle. He also called her incessantly on her phone throughout the day with such frequency as that it began to interfere with her ability to function within her workplace.

Apart from the intrusiveness of the husband's monitoring behavior, the wife became increasingly frustrated and then resentful of her husband's misplaced lack of trust in her and regard for her feelings. Whatever intimacy that once existed in the marriage eroded. To protect herself emotionally, the wife withdrew from the relationship and not surprisingly, she found an emotional connection with a co-worker. The rest is history....

An unfortunate consequence of this situation was the tremendous toll the wrongfully placed distrust took on the wife. Although she eventually recognized that there was little she could do to ease her husband's feelings of insecurity, it did not come without years of self doubting and efforts on her part to modify her behavior and lifestyle. To make matters worse, all of her efforts and suffering had no impact in addressing the source of the problem which was her husband's insecurities.

The regrettable irony in this story is the very thing the husband dreaded – his wife cheating on him – was in fact something that eventually came to pass.

As you can see, the picture does not look optimistic for relationships plagued by distrust. The key to any success in overcoming this problem lies in the distrusting spouse's sincere efforts to acknowledge the destructiveness of his or her behavior, the motivation to change and the assistance of a competent and experienced therapist.

Jealousy

Of the relationship toxins, jealousy has to be the worst because it resembles a cancer that spreads out of control. Once jealousy takes hold, it develops, spreads into all areas of the relationship and actually takes on a life of its own. And like a cancer that robs a body of all the nutrients that sustain it, jealousy similarly robs a relationship of the love, respect, and caring that is required to nourish it.

Like the other relationship toxins, rational thought and logic do not guide the thinking of a jealous person. In fact, when you carefully examine the concerns of a jealous person, you will soon find that the link between the source of their jealousy and what actually occurred to be so weak that it is hard to imagine what they are upset about. This is because one of the dynamics of jealousy is drawing linkages where non actually exist.

A Case in Point

A wife was convinced that her husband was cheating on her because he and a few of his buddies went to the bar for a drink once a week after work. Her rationale for her belief was what she explained as her single piece of evidence - that one of her husband's buddies, who was married and had two young children, enjoyed flirting with the female servers at the bar.

This case in point is a perfect example of “jealousy thinking” and the weak irrational links and over-generalizations that often occur. In this case, the wife deduced that the friend's flirting meant that her husband was cheating on her. How can that make any sense?

In speaking with the couple, the wife acknowledged that her husband has actually never cheated on her nor did she believe that his friend had either. But nevertheless, she still could not get past her very strong belief that her husband would stray had she not been vigilantly monitoring his behavior. In this instance, I believe that the wife maintained a very weak rationalization to serve the purpose of sustaining her jealous feelings.

In trying to make sense of this interesting phenomenon, two questions came to mind:

1. What purpose do these weak links serve?
2. Why is logic overridden by irrational thought?

Remember, earlier on I indicated that relationship toxins usually had their roots long before the relationship in question. This was definitely the case in this situation. Further delving into the

wife's early life showed that as a child she never felt special or important. In fact, she was frequently criticized. As a consequence, she grew up feeling insignificant, resentful and wondering why her needs were usually dismissed. It doesn't take a lot of insight to figure out now that the wife came into adulthood feeling extremely needy and vulnerable, and worrying that she wasn't good enough for her husband.

As painful as it must be for the wife to experience this impoverished sense of self, her continued jealousy and related responses only make matters worse. As you can well imagine, her jealousy has caused considerable resentment in her husband – so much so that he has emotionally distanced himself.

One of the strategies the husband has adopted to avoid the fallout of his wife's jealousy is to withhold information from her. This strategy provides only short-term relief from her criticism and monitoring. As I described in the section on distrust, it was only a matter of time before the wife inadvertently discovered that her husband did something she was not aware of.

Beyond the obvious consequences of this pattern of behavior, the resentful feelings that each spouse holds as well as the inability to share information freely with each other represent the seeds of emotional disconnection. As you have already learned in this e-book, being emotionally disconnected from your spouse or partner is what often places people at risk for affairs to develop.

Fear

Fear is a less obvious toxin. But don't be fooled, it's just as potent and as damaging to a relationship. Since fear is not as readily identified, it can easily be disguised as other things like anger, resentment, arrogance, snobbishness, laziness and disinterest – just to name a few. It is unlikely that the average person would even suspect that someone appearing as arrogant, selfish or critical could be remotely overtaken by fear. The interesting thing about this is that sometimes the person with the underlying fears is also unaware of it as well.

Because fear is so readily disguised, it is also easy to get the wrong impression of a fearful person. More importantly, because fear is most often so overwhelming and paralyzing, the fearful

person tends to be extremely emotionally well defended and usually resists anyone who attempts to become close to them. This makes the problem that much more challenging especially for the spouse or partner of someone like this. In fact, a fearful partner may become very hostile if he or she suspects that a loved one is trying to assist them or reach out to them. The real issue for many people with these backgrounds is that their fear is most often related to intimacy and being connected to someone else.

Coping with a fearful person is difficult because as with any fear (fear of heights, dogs, open spaces, etc.), it is a learned behavior that is very often quite resistant to treatment and change. The greatest chance of success when working with a fearful person is:

1. their own motivation for change
2. their willingness to do what it takes to change
3. a supportive, patience and trusting relationship with an experienced therapist, counselor or coach.

A Case in Point

A young woman who was engaged to be married to a man she described as a “perfect guy”, expressed having reservations about going ahead with the wedding. Although she had trouble describing exactly what her apprehensiveness was all about, she later acknowledged that the relationship seemed too perfect and because of that she felt that something bad was sure to happen.

Apparently, there was a connection between two significant events in her life and her current apprehensiveness about getting married.. In particular, the death of her mother when she was only 11 years old had a profound effect on her fear to allow herself to love and be loved by anyone else. The second significant event in her life was the discovery that her former partner whom she finally allowed herself to deeply love had been cheating on her.

Her fear of loving someone was so overwhelming that she developed a very cold, harsh and critical exterior that kept people from getting to close to her. In this way, she could protect herself from further hurt. Although she lowered her guard enough to become involved in her current relationship, she manages to inject doubt and acrimony by starting arguments over seemingly unimportant issues.

To an unaware observer, it would appear that the woman's fiancé would be better off in leaving the relationship because of the way he was being treated. In this situation, the woman recognized that she was the one sabotaging what could be a very good relationship and was motivated to find ways to overcome her fear and allow herself to love and be loved.

Wrapping Up

There is a lot more that can be said about relationship toxins and how they impact on relationships. If you gain nothing else from what I have said, please understand that distrust, jealousy and fear will over take any relationship by injecting its lethal poison into it. Just as some toxins found in the environment are slow acting while others are fast acting, relationships toxins operate in a similar fashion impairing its victims in one form or another.

I would like to offer these concluding thoughts...

To ignore the presence of any of these factors is to compromise yourself and your happiness. Without intervention or at least action on your part, the situation will not rectify itself and will likely worsen. Your relationship will continue to deteriorate. Overtime, distrust, jealousy and fear have the potential to destroy your relationship.

Here is What Chicago Divorce Attorney
– **Richard Kulerski**
Had to Say After Reading

”The Anatomy of An Affair”

Talk about saving marriages! This book doesn't just give lip service. It identifies the "feeling" needed to keep a marriage from going sour. No book has ever done that before.

Dr Sommer "hit the nail on the head". I've been a practicing divorce lawyer for 40 years and I've never seen adultery explained better.

***"The Anatomy of An Affair"** teaches exactly what sitting on the lawyer's side of the desk has taught me. And I realize its not an easy pill to swallow but, time after time, we see infidelity as more of a symptom of a shaky marriage than as the cause.*

It's easy to just blast away at the adulterer, but it takes a lot of savvy and insight to see the reality of things as Dr Sommer has.

Since first reading "Anatomy", I have mentioned Dr Reena's intimacy "connection" to several clients. Without exception each knew exactly what I meant and all acknowledged that they " had it" once. All reported that it was now gone.

Remarkably, clients that have experienced the "intimacy" connection, always know if its still there or if it isn't. But not one client could say when the feeling left. Unfortunately, that's because they didn't have the advantage of identifying "the feeling" when it still existed.

Dr Sommer is going to save a ton of marriages on that count alone. If you really know what you have (as she explains that "feeling"), you will not risk losing it. And, if your spouse still feels the connection, he or she will have already reciprocated in kind to avoid any risk of your taking such a risk - and the two of you will keep what you have.

J. Richard Kulerski, P.C.

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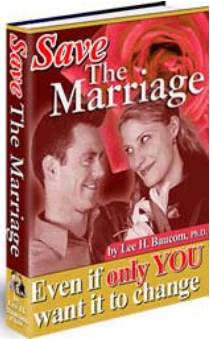
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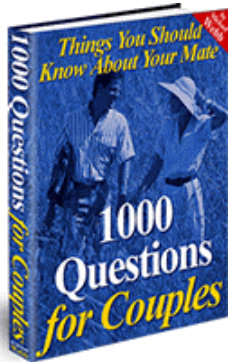


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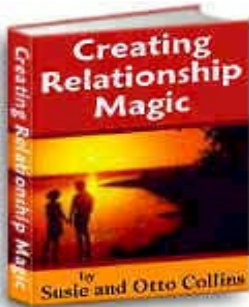




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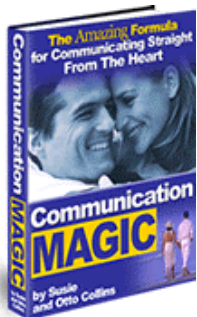
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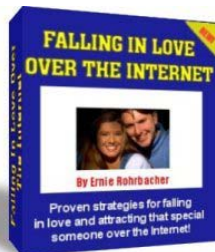
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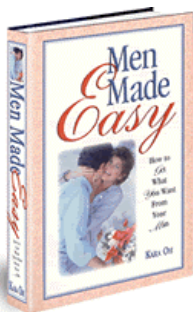
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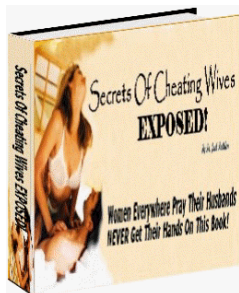
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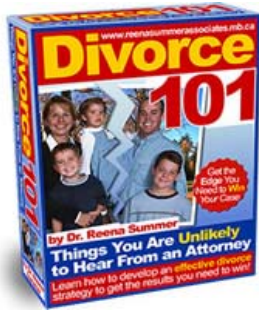
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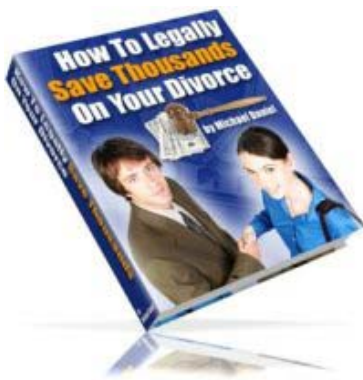
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