



Ten Commandments for

## A MISERABLE MARRIAGE

(How to NOT Get the Love You Want)

HARVILLE HENDRIX AND HELEN LAKELLY-HUNT

**1. Be as critical as you can!** All criticism, including constructive criticism, is an ideal way to keep your partner's defences on high alert. Being judgmental will ensure that you don't get what you really want from your partner. And disparaging words when angry or frustrated will stimulate their fight or flight response. If you ritually play the "blame and shame game," your marriage will be safe from the anxiety of being happy.

**2. Expect your partner to be just like you.** You and your partner should have the same needs, wants, likes, and dislikes. You should have the same perceptions, feelings, and experiences. When your partner wants something different from you, be swift to show them how being like you is the only way to be. Absolute compatibility is the key to a boring marriage, and insisting on it will bring you unbearable despair.

**3. Avoid intimacy as much as possible by engaging in exits.** Engage in activities that help you escape from the day-to-day intimacy of your relationship. Engage in any activity, thought, or feeling that decreases or avoids emotional or physical involvement with your partner. Increase functional exits (car-pooling, work, taking care of kids), motivated behaviors (watching TV, reading, sports, hobbies), and/or catastrophic actions (emotional or physical affairs, addictions, threats of divorce). This will help magnify the distance between you and your partner.

**4. When upset, use "You" language as much as possible.** Avoid saying "I feel" and express instead what your partner is doing that frustrates you. Engage in language such as, "You always..." and "You never..." to insure that your partner remains defensive and reciprocates with rolling eyes, deep sighs, and reciprocal speech. Remember: your goal is to keep the power struggle active and your intimacy level comfortably low!

**5. Give conditionally and receive cautiously.** Bargaining is the process to ensure minimal growth in your relationship and keeping score will help maximize your frustration level. Make sure you only do things for your partner if s/he will promise to give in exchange. But be wary when your partner comes through with a gift—follow the string and see where it leads. Cut the string if necessary and refuse the gift.

**6. Be unintentional about romance.** Inevitably, the joy that came easy in your romantic days disappears. At all costs, don't try to make sense of this since you risk moving through the stage to a deeper experience of love. Avoid committing to fun activities on a regular basis and embrace the emptiness as proof you are probably married to the wrong person.

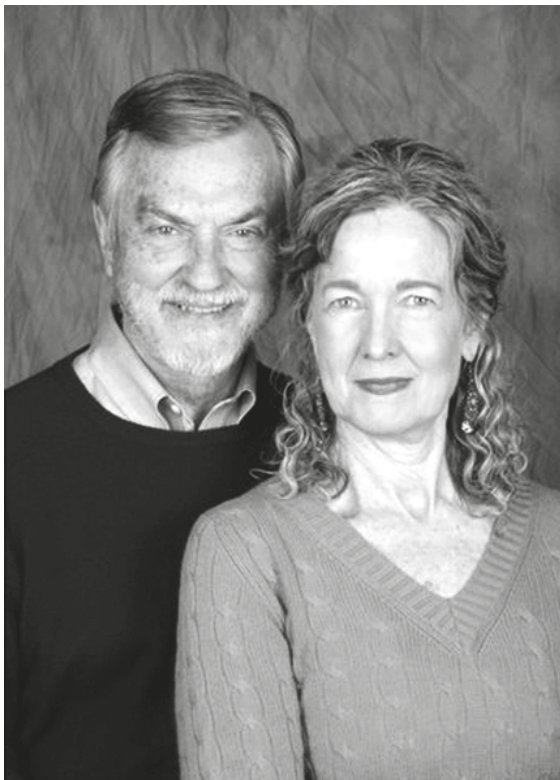
**7. Amplify the negative in your relationship.** When you are away from your partner, think about how s/he has changed (for the worse) since you first met. Focus on what is going wrong in your relationship and all the things your partner is not doing for you. It's not only the words you use, but your thoughts, tones and actions that will help keep you despondent. Live by the motto: "Negativity breeds contempt."

**8. Avoid learning new communication skills.** Basically, keep doing what you are doing and engage in a one-way monologue. Talk to your partner as if all s/he has to do is to listen to you. Make no attempt to listen to your partner. That will make your partner feel invisible and maintain the set point of misery you need to regulate your anxiety about closeness. Insist that the two of you are ONE and that you are the ONE. There just isn't room for two in a dismal marriage.

**9. Be sure not tell your partner what you need or want.** After all, s/he should know by now. Never, ever, tell your partner what you really need or want. Do not drop hints about things that truly touch your heart. Saying what you need could tempt your partner to give you what you actually asked for and then you will have to reject their offering because you had to tell them. By deflecting as much love as possible, you can maintain your narrative of deprivation. Re-read #5 as a review.

**10. Expect your relationship to be a fairytale romance.** Live in the illusion that romantic attraction should be forever. Once the illusion breaks down and your partner is no longer spiking your highs, demand s/he return to your dream (and ignore their reciprocal requests). When s/he fails miserably in sacrificing her/his authentic self for your insatiable longings, you will realize the dream has become a nightmare. Congratulations! You have reached your destination.

*P.S. For Ten Commandments to a Happy Marriage,  
reverse all of the above.*



## HARVILLE HENDRIX, PHD AND HELEN LAKELLY-HUNT, PHD

Creators of Imago Relationship Therapy and co-founders of Imago Relationships International, (a nonprofit organization dedicated to international support and development of Imago Relationship Therapy). Harville is author of two best sellers, *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples* and *Keeping the Love You Find: A Guide for Singles*, and a third best seller, co-authored with Helen, *Giving the Love They Need: A Guide for Parents* plus six other books on intimate relationships. In addition, Helen authored *Faith and Feminism: A Holy Alliance*, which lifts up the dynamic synergy between feminism and progressive faith traditions. Their books have been translated into more than 50 languages and Imago Therapy is practiced in 30 countries by more than 2000 therapists.

HARVILLE is a clinical pastoral counselor with more than 40 years of experience as a therapist, educator, clinical trainer, author, public lecturer. He has received many awards for his work with couples. Harville has made seventeen appearances on the Oprah Winfrey Show, one of which won Ms. Winfrey her first Emmy Award and was ranked by Ms Winfrey in her top twenty shows.

HELEN is an activist within the women's movement. She is founder and president of The Sister Fund, a private women's fund dedicated to the social, political, economic, and spiritual empowerment of women and girls. Helen was instrumental in launching a number of women's funding institutions, including the Dallas Women's Foundation, the New York Women's Foundation, and the National Network of Women's Funds (now the Women's Funding Network.) Among other awards, Helen is an honored inductee in the National Women's Hall of Fame. Last year, she co-chaired a campaign called Women Moving Millions that raised \$180 million for women's funds in the Women's Funding Network.

Helen and Harville live in New York City and New Mexico, and have six remarkable children and five grandchildren.