

DANGER SIGNALS OF A MARRIAGE IN TROUBLE*

Name _____ Information provided by: **Self** **Wife** **Husband** **Partner**

Every couple experiences stresses and struggles in sharing a life together. These stresses and struggles eventually become serious problems if both partners do not acknowledge and own the dilemmas they confront in their life together, address them together, and manage them well. When these stresses and struggles are ignored, not addressed, consistently blamed on the partner, and/or wished away by the couple, these "seeds of growth" eventually become serious "seeds of alienation" that can and do lead to the dissolution of many marriages.

Robert Counts states, "If we take into account the fact that the divorce rate remained very high through 1984, the flood of 2nd and 3rd divorces will continue through the year 2008.... It seems unlikely that the divorce rate will decline and, in fact, may go even higher during the next 20 years." [*Second and Third Divorces: The Flood to Come*, **Journal of Divorce and Remarriage**. Vol. 17, 1991] When divorce is the case, the personal and relationship growth pregnant within and waiting to be gained from these stresses and struggles is forfeited and deferred to another relationship.

Listed below are the more important danger signals that indicate serious trouble areas for many marriages. This screening assessment is designed to aid couples to identify from each person's observation their perceptions about their relationship.

Instructions: Check the boxes that represent your marriage at different times since your marriage began. Check only those boxes that apply to your marriage as you have experienced it and observed it.

<u>After 1 yr.</u>	<u>After 5 yrs.</u>	<u>After 10 yrs.</u>	<u>Now</u>	<u>Symptoms</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Boredom There is no meaningful life left in the relationship to give one's daily routine hope and joy.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of sharing The partners are not interested in one another's feelings or work activities. Their lives have become separate even though they continue to live together.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of intimacy Tuning out. There is no listening within the relationship. One spouse may feel lonely or emotionally disconnected even while having sexual relations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Substance Abuse One spouse may suddenly begin with drawing emotionally and/or physically, such, as by drinking or returning home late, indicating un happiness with the relationship.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Anger & Irritability A high level of frustration occurs with frequent and open expressions of disappointments and one's frustrations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fear & Anxiety If one is afraid to tell his or her partner how he or she feels, or withholds important information, something is usually seriously wrong.

* This questionnaire is provided compliments of **Chaplain Roy B. Nash, M. Div., LMFT, LCPC**, a Marriage and Family Therapist and certified Pastoral Psychotherapist, serving in a specialized endorsed United Methodist ministry by the , called **BELIEF-FOCUSED CARE & HEALING**, 5004 Eagle Ridge, Springfield, IL 62711-7830. www.roynash.com.

<u>After 1 yr.</u>	<u>After 5 yrs.</u>	<u>After 10 yrs.</u>	<u>Now</u>	<u>Symptoms</u>
				Sleep Sleeping noticeably beyond 8 or 9 hours a night may be an unconscious device to avoid confronting the poor marital relationship as well as sleeping intermittently throughout the night and getting poor rest.
				Minimal expression of feelings One spouse does not verbalize his or her feelings, although he or she may genuinely feel them. One can never assume the other knows how one feels.
				Physio-biological symptoms Somatic symptoms, such as frequent headaches, backaches, or intestinal problems, may indicate that the body is suffering from emotional stress.
				Extra-marital affair If one spouse is emotionally, spiritually, and / or sexually involved with another person, some thing important is lacking within the marriage relationship.

One study conducted by the Marriage Research Center reported that marital difficulties are caused by disillusionment, misguided optimism, self-deception, embarrassment and fear. It reported that couples too often hope their problems will go away with time — if they are ignored — but then find the problems do not go away.

When the problems are recognized, it is often too embarrassing to seek help and couples are afraid family or friends will discover their marital casualty. When the problems are not addressed, and therefore not resolved, the couple is then on a collision course with marital disaster, forfeiting the seeds for marital growth, and setting themselves up for even more personal disappointment, pain and hurt.

Such disasters need not happen if even one of the partners will heed the danger signals of a marriage in trouble and seek professional help from a clinically trained and licensed therapist. However, some persons — even when aware of serious problems — fail to get help, fearing the economic costs of therapy. However, a more serious question is: what is it going to cost them — and their children if they have them — economically, emotionally as well as growth-wise not to get professional help?

If your responses to the above danger signals suggest your marriage and home are threatened, then you are urged to claim help from a professional counselor and therapist. There are plenty such therapist available, and for some persons even their insurance policies can be helpful with the economic expenses. Insurance companies will not cover for a diagnosed "marriage or relationship problem" per se, however, they usually will cover "anxiety," "depression" and "substance use" disorders.

Do not let our world's five biggest epidemic disorders, namely **"denial," "fear," "greed," "revenge,"** and **"apathy"** deprive you of growth and a stable home. Instead, choose to:

- (1) **lean into your struggles,**
- (2) **allow the seeds within this pregnant moment of your life to grow,** and thus,
- (3) **emerge beyond those struggles into new meaning and joy in your relationship.**