



GETTING THE MAGIC BACK *INTO YOUR* MARRIAGE

How to Reset Your Marriage, and Recreate the Feeling of Connection and Shared Purpose, Even if You Think that All is Lost

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Shared Purpose, Even if You Think That All is Lost!**



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Introduction

Being in a romantic relationship with a passive aggressive person can be very difficult. Loving relationships require honesty, openness and trust to work in the long-term.

If you got married expecting this kind of relationship, and found instead that your partner behaves in some of these ways:

- unreasonably scared of rejection or abandonment
- cold, defensive and unresponsive to your requests for intimacy
- secretive and withholding his thoughts or feelings
- mistrustful and suspicious of other people around you
- grumpy, on edge and easily aggravated by simple life situations.

So, you had some perceptions about odd behaviors from your husband, you did a bit of online research and found the power of pervasive passive aggression...and now you came to the conclusion that it is the hidden third party in your marriage? as in the case of the wife that said: **“My husband, me and our non-invited passive aggressive element”?**

You can be looking at a passive aggressive person dealing with an intimate relationship....which is very trying for him. Up to this moment, perhaps, keeping some distance from his loved ones allowed him to manage this protective shield. Getting married cancels the distance, and forces the person to react in a way that doesn't produce intimacy, but growing distancing and isolation.

As we now know, these behaviors are indicative of underlying insecurities and fears that can't be expressed properly. This package of twisted feelings is coming from way back, his past childhood.

Dealing with this kind of behaviour takes a lot of understanding and patience and can be very tiring for a romantic partner. There is no one way to deal with passive aggressive people because everyone is different and every different situation requires a different approach. Passive aggression is not like a disease, there is no one 'cure'.

Probably, you are familiar with several sites, including our community page: <http://passiveaggressivehusband.com/AskNora>

There, by reading some of our readers' postings, we gathered some real life descriptions about what is it like to live with a passive aggressive husband...do you want to hear them telling their stories?

"My husband seems to spend his entire life sulking and has a face that looks terribly sad and unhappy with everything. He avoids getting involved in family activities then sulks and pouts for days when I arrange to do things without him. Vacations are always ruined because he never seems to enjoy anything. Its almost as if he has to be the centre of my world, given 110% attention or he behaves very negatively to bring the focus back onto him. Almost as if negative attention is the only attention he knows how to get? the only attention he wants! He runs from positive attention which I find very very sad indeed."

"I have seen the movie "Big" with Tom Hanks and this movie about the boy in a man's body does seem to resonate with my husband's behaviour. He doesn't like taking responsibility and would rather sit watching tv, playing online fantasy games and doing anything that takes him away from real life. He is also a compulsive eater and has gained lots of weight over the years which has caused him to develop diabetes! Of course this is my fault because of the meals i cook! Nothing at all to do with the pounds of chocolate he consumes or the packets of biscuits he sits and eats every day.

Thanks again for your post. I hope my therapy which starts today will help me change the way i deal with things regarding him because half of the time he has me questioning whether i am going crazy and have too many expectations."

I'm so glad to have found this page, and just finished, " Silent marriage." I am so eager to start implementing what I've learned.I feel like I've hit a wall in my marriage, and day by day, I'm losing more of myself.

"My husband's past? He will not speak about it and avoids most conversations about childhood. I have only ever heard him mention two good memories during his growing up and it's the same two that keep being mentioned. From what i have seen myself his father was a very quiet, withdrawn and also very grumpy, miserable man that immersed himself into working and the tv.

He didn't have a social life and could be verbally abusive at times especially towards women, quite derogatory, in fact and was always heard calling women "stupid" "thick" and "waste of time". His mother on the other hand was and still is very demanding and self centred but also plays a very good victim and often seen taking to her bed for days on end if she doesn't get her own way. She uses underhanded sarcasm as a way to express her anger and often lights the firework and runs. When confronted the tears are turned on and the family end up apologising for upsetting her."

"We have been together 11 years, married for nine years. From the beginning, I know we were drawn to each other to meet unmet childhood needs through each other (unhealthy set-up), but we also had a great friendship together. One of the initial things that drew me to him was that he was so quiet, not at all like the raging alcoholic father I had feared as a child. I noticed he appeared almost too quiet at times, and sometimes, would not respond to basic questions. I thought it odd, but at the time, he didn't seem unkind about it.

As our dating relationship progressed, I became witness to his mother's behavior around him, as well as his family, in general. I never once saw her hug him. I would eventually learn that, through his entire childhood, she yelled and controlled him using her anger, and his father was absent. Still, our relationship progressed, and things seemed fine. He wanted to be in a relationship with me, that is until we got married."

So, you can have some personal experiences described here. What about your own experiences? do they match?

What do we know now about the passive aggressive game? we are going to walk you through, help you analyze your options and offer you the magical way out...at the end.

Keep reading!

1. How to know you are married to a passive aggressive husband

What is Passive Aggressive Behavior?

First, the passive aggressive behavior definition we use at Creative Conflict Resolutions:

“The lifelong defense against feelings of abandonment generated by insecure connection with the first care giver. The first attachment to significant figures of our childhood determines a mental model of relationships. The effects of being born to an insecure (ambivalent mother) or avoidant (rejecting mother), instead of a secure, (stable mother) shapes the relationship pattern as basically secure and trustable, or insecure and risky. This model of relationship will be reproduced later with adult partners.”

Is hard to get a look at the emotional misery produced by an attachment that allowed survival but not the development of an emotional core where from to experience the feelings and emotions produced from loving and being loved by others...In life's lottery, this means that you were dealt with the worst cards...

Of course, the fact of having an insecure view of life where others can frustrate, abandon and in general not be trusted to provide emotional support is not so obvious for the person that has this mindset. Defense mechanisms in his reasoning will attribute this situation of “relationships failure,” to others' lack of warmth and support, never to his own way of experiencing relationships. He can say that others are provoking this defensive behavior, over and over again...finally, it's a way of not taking responsibility for his own actions, in one level, and at the deeper level, not acknowledging the pain of the insecure attachment life gave him. The sad aspect of denial is that this wound of lack of maternal loving connection will never be healed if it is covered up by denial...

The insecure attachment, (as the only one the person knows to relate to others), will produce a style of connection that is not nurturing or satisfactory of human needs as the real, secure attachment does.

This is to say, that it will become a serious problem in intimate relationships, where connecting to satisfy human needs for love and deep intimacy is the basic need to be addressed. And the impact of this lack of warmth and trust in the connection will be experienced by the spouse.

At the perception of a failure in connecting with core emotions, it is added the isolation and denial of the humanity of the spouse. Probably there is a cycle of long silences, secrecy and no communication at a personal level, followed by some desperate attempt by the wife to elicit some response, which forces the husband to retreat into more silence and rejection of her advances. For the husband, it is the only way of relating he knows...so for him is "natural," while for the wife, expecting emotional closeness and finding mistrust and defensiveness, is a painful situation where she receives the opposite of what she was promised.

Passive aggressive behavior is used when a man is feeling frustration, but has never learned to express his feelings like: *"I am frustrated by what you are asking of me, "I am mad at you, but don't want to talk about it," or "I am afraid of what might happen if I confront you with my angry feelings."*

These behaviors protect the person from not only having to open himself up to someone, but also from having to own the feelings. If he doesn't say it, he can deny that his own feelings exist. And if he doesn't share feelings with his wife, he will avoid one more humiliation, or perceived humiliation in his life. In the background, the fact of having been raised by an ambivalent or absent mother is still hurting,(in feelings of "I'm never good enough") and only constant denial can avoid those feelings to display. The price, of course, is a lot of repression of good feelings of love and connection...but he is pushing grief and anger back again.

How do you learn to identify and manage this behavior?

There is a steady progression in your process of realizing the main cause of some behaviors from your husband. In this progression, you go slowly discovering what's wrong in your marriage. First you feel that something is odd, because you have some feelings of hurt that don't correspond with the objective situation. You are happily married, and then some response from your spouse makes the whole perception shake, and you are not so sure who you are.

The most hurtful situation can be when you show affection and your sexual feelings to him, which should be reciprocated, but he is on guard...what happens if you decide that he is not good enough? he would feel rejected again....so he freezes now and avoids intimacy saying that he is tired, busy or sick...

The wife can be really hurt, and not understanding what is the hidden reason, blame herself in any characteristic: she is too fat, or too whatever. He has managed to hurt her in her most vulnerable aspect, without opening himself up to show vulnerability.

What Does Passive Aggression Look Like?

As one woman at the end of her rope described this constant passive aggression as a situation where she would receive either punishment or love, in a sequence without any logic.

Mental torture followed by a bit of love, then disappointment then promises and apologies then heartache again, in an endless roller coaster. She never was sure of his affection and began doubting herself. Was she the cause of this treatment? Perhaps if she loved him more, if she could be more patient, things would be more stable?

Eventually she figured out the pattern of interaction when there was less and less respect and more and more empty apologies and abuse. In this emotional emptiness, it's easy to feel lost, bereft of personal goals and motivations and ready to detach from life.

What is this emptiness creeping in? In passive aggressive relationships, there is a failure of the basic covenant of caring for each other in a very personal way. We all have needs, and those basic needs are to be solved by the people we love and share life with.

What happens in this situation? *"I found that the more I asked him for what I needed from him (honesty, communication, stability), the more he would find a way not to give it to me. He would leave it dangling and hovering over me, but would never quite let me grab a hold of it. It is mental torture of the worst kind."*

The frustration of basic needs satisfaction, such as the need for love and connection, and the need for recognition, makes the situation intolerable:

“I would become almost hysterical with him. I would cry, yell, belittle, beg, ignore, baby, apologize, sleep in another bedroom, analyze, read, threaten, ANYTHING that I thought might make him “see the light...” but he remained emotionally unavailable to my needs.

As long as she is showing her vulnerability and her unsolved needs to him, she is giving him control of the couple’s power, and it seals the deal.

There is no way of changing a passive aggressive person when he can manipulate his marriage to fit his own style of communication, regardless of her needs.

But let’s look more specifically at the some of typical behaviors of a passive aggressive husband. Passive aggressive behavior commonly appears in 4 forms:

1. Not following through on a task or promise;
2. Spinning the responsibility or blame onto the target;
3. Using sarcasm when confronted with critical comments or behaviors;
4. Sabotaging a threatening project or action by creating “diversions”.

1.- No follow-through

David is upset with Julie for being too tired to have sex the night before, but he doesn’t tell her he is upset. Julie is running late for work, but there are still dishes to be done from last night’s dinner and she hates coming home to a dirty house. David tells Julie he will take care of the dishes so she is not late to work. He doesn’t do the dishes, so Julie arrives home to the undone task after all, and David comes homes late making up an excuse for not following through on his promise.

2.-Spinning the blame

Jack is feeling insecure about Wendy’s new promotion that requires her to spend more time networking lately. Jack and Wendy have plans to order pizza and watch movies

every Tuesday. This Tuesday Wendy has to go to a Happy Hour networking function after work and will be home one hour late. Jack picks up Chinese on his way home from work and has already eaten by the time Wendy comes home. When Wendy tells Jack she is upset that he didn't wait, Jack calmly tells her he thought she would be eating with her work crew. Wendy is hurt and gets more upset saying Jack spoiled their date. He gets quiet and tells Wendy he was just trying to be supportive of her new job and not make her worry about getting home, that he "was trying to help." Wendy is now not only disappointed and hurt, she now feels guilty that she yelled at Jack when he was trying to be nice. Jack feels better now that not only does Wendy feel bad tonight, she will be less happy with her networking functions after this.

3.-Sarcasm

Elissa and Sam are out with friends for a night of bowling. Elissa is having a lucky night and is beating Sam, who is very competitive. Sam begins to make snide comments about how he is letting Elissa win, how it's good that she can win at least once a year, even commenting sarcastically how cute her bowling shoes look with her favorite jeans. Elissa looks hurt and loses some of her laughter and Sam just laughs and asks "Why can't you take a joke, aren't we all just having fun?"

4.-Sabotage

Mark is feeling stressed at work lately and it is getting him down. He feels he needs more time with his supportive wife, Andy, because she always makes him feel better. He doesn't tell her this. Andi tells Mark she is thinking of starting a new yoga class 2 nights a week, but isn't sure because she doesn't know much about the yoga center. Mark tells Andi he has heard negative reviews of the center – the teachers are unreliable and that the building has been having problems so the temperature and lights are never quite right. Mark suggests she wait to see if she can learn more or if the kinks get worked out, knowing this will give him more time with her until he is feeling better about work.

Summary and Main Points

The main problem many people face when dealing with passive aggressive behavior is how to identify the behavior itself. The same mind that needs to observe and evaluate (yours) is being barraged and clouded by mixed emotional messages. It is extremely important that whenever you feel stressed or anxious about your partner's behavior, you slow down and think about why you're upset. Asking "Why?" is vital to unraveling the mental chaos that passive aggressive partners create.

Immediately after that, we need to accept that confusion and emotional pain are indicators of being with a passive aggressive (PA) person. After you realize this, it is much easier to see that you are not at fault – your partner is just spinning you in circles!

Recognizing the behaviors is a crucial initial step to protecting yourself from the consequences of passive aggression, to you, and your relationship. An awareness of these behaviors and what they may represent is important, but can take some time. Let's begin to watch if you have developed a need to be the controlling or domineering party here. Watch for examples like these and see if they translate to your relationship. For more information and helpful advice and coaching on what to do once you recognize the behaviors, [go to our blog](#). Remember that you can always ask questions here!

2. The emotional impact on your mental state

A. Emotional Impacts of Passive Aggression

The passive aggressive impact can damage everything it touches: the passive aggressive man himself, his partner and family, and their relationship. It is psychological warfare conducted both on himself and everyone around him, an incomplete coping mechanism that tries to make up for the life lessons never learned.

Remember that a person who displays PA traits is a person who never learned how to accept and manage his own emotions. Instead, like a child, he continues using twisted behavior to project his responsibility onto others (“you made me angry”). Deep inside, he is emotionally unavailable and can’t allow anybody to get close; displaying PA traits is simply a way to deflect feelings, and recover the security of his own isolation. DON’T feel rejected at a personal level, because this is occurring at an internal level.

What we need to understand is that a passive aggressive personality has been many years in the making, and is part of the very core of this person’s ability to relate. It is NOT a response to her behavior; it’s his “normal response” to everything that happens in his world, his marriage include. Without entering into the psychological elements of what makes this person behave in such a defensive way, what is important to see is that this is a way of being, structurally organized, and nobody can change it from the outside.

Only the person who has learned to react in this way can realize the damage it causes to any relationship and make a plan to modify his own responses. He does that after realizing that his behavior is only a mechanical repetition of the attachment developed in infancy with his caretaker or mother. People who had a rough time when born and growing up with an avoidant, rejecting mother will find themselves needing and hurting

the object of his love, at the same time. We have here offered lots of information about attachment consequences on adult relationships.

The only role a wife can have is to be a witness, and let him know what is the impact of his behavior on people around him, and on the relationships he says he needs. By denouncing as hurtful some of his responses, she is helping him recognize how inappropriate his answers are. And then hope that her words will motivate him to do otherwise. Perhaps he really knows how much he needs her and the family; perhaps it's time for him to outgrow the limitations of childhood attachment. Whatever the reason, the main impulse to change passive aggression has to be a deep conviction for him that now, he needs to grow up.

In the words of the same woman:

"If there's one thing that I've really learned, it is that a passive-aggressive person must find his own truth. We can talk to them about it, give them pamphlets on it, download articles off of the Internet, suggest counseling, etc., but until they choose to look at themselves without their rose-filtered glasses on and see the hurt inside of them, they have no reason to change. In my opinion, passive aggressive behavior is not something that can be cured, but managed."

B. Health Impacts of Passive Aggression

However, what if it wasn't just the heart of your *relationship* that was damaged by your passive aggression? Passive aggressive husbands, listen up: your behavior might just be putting your own life at risk.

According to a new article published on Medical News Today by Catharine Paddock, PhD, men who resort to passive aggression because of a feeling of superiority, self-importance or an unwillingness to see the other person's point of view (narcissism) may actually suffer physically for it, putting themselves at risk for heart problems.

In a study published in PLOS ONE, many men with these personality traits (exploitativeness, entitlement, arrogance) have higher than average levels of cortisol in their systems – which puts them at a higher risk for heart problems. According to Sara Konrath, quoted in the article¹, these men “may be paying a high price in terms of their physical health, in addition to the psychological cost to their relationships.” What is interesting about this new study is that men with these personality traits have high levels of cortisol even when they are not under stress.

Cortisol is the hormone that is released when your body goes into “fight or flight” mode. As a passive aggressive man, he may have high levels of cortisol, a “fight or flight” hormone in his system – does that sound about right? In your daily life, is his brain telling him “*I can’t deal with this, let’s run*”? Perhaps it’s saying, “*How dare my wife say that, I’m going to get her back*”? When he feels threatened, it’s definitely telling him those messages, isn’t it?

Why does his body releases cortisol even when he is not in a stressful situation? One of the study’s authors also quoted in the article stated that this was perhaps due to the fact that “[e]ven though narcissists have grandiose self-perceptions, they also have fragile views of themselves, they feel attacked and often resort to defensive strategies like aggression when their sense of superiority is threatened.”

This creates, in a sense, a feeling that the body is constantly under stress – it doesn’t matter if it is real or imagined, because the consequences are the same on the body. They lead to higher blood pressure and greater heart problems – we all know this!

C. How Should I Feel?

Which brings us to the last shortcut: it is not related to YOU! You don’t have to be a beauty queen, a savvy business manager or a sex bombshell to make him happy. It

¹[Expensive Egos: Narcissistic Males Have Higher Cortisol](#)

DA Reinhard, SH Konrath, WD Lopez, HG Cameron - PLOS ONE, 2012

may come as a surprise, but PA behavior has nothing to do with what you can offer him. Whatever you are, he is NOT relating to you, but reacting to some mental image he has from his attachment about what a “good” partner is or does. Often, this image is twisted to meet his no-responsibility needs.

This means that it doesn't matter who his partner is – he will react this way toward anyone who tries to enter into his private world and get involved. His fear is not of you, but intimacy and yielding his “ideal”; in other words, he is afraid of emotional compromise.

3. Where are you and where is the exit?

Current Understanding

Basically now, we understand this behavior as a childhood-learned defensive strategy. He has grown up under some kind of parental attitudes that prevented him from expressing his anger, and thus developed this shell to cover it up. Instead of confronting, explaining his needs and getting some agreement with other people, (and getting some satisfaction for his needs) he decides it's not worth it and proceeds to do his own thing anyhow. Of course, being oblivious to the fact that he is pushing his now partner away!

If you try to negotiate with him, thinking that he is a grown up man you are dealing with, sorry, but you are wrong. He is a kid inside, and a resentful one at that.

Learning how to deal with the situation:

Let's look at a situation that you yourself know by heart: This is a posting at our "[AskNora](#)" section:

"Then his PA/emotionally abusive behavior started out of the blue. My therapist thinks it's related to the death of his mother. It all started shortly after his mom died. I believe this must be correct. What keeps me hanging in there is my children and the hope that my sweet, understanding husband will return someday. But for now, I have no idea how he's going to react or handle things. It's extremely unpredictable. I never know what will set him off, it's usually something as simple as me asking him "what are you doing today?" this can send him into a rage. We could be talking and laughing like normal one minute and fighting like cats & dogs for no reason the next minute. I have retaliated with some passive behavior of my own. Not to get back at him but simply to avoid confrontation with him.

So I find that not talking to him much reduces his explosive episodes, and it's my wall of protection. I am the one that doesn't want to have sex, not to get back at him, I just don't want

to. How can I have sex with someone I can't even have a rational conversation with? His outbursts are not exactly a turn-on.

"He recently said to me "you have no room in your life for me..." That's because I work two jobs, take care of the house, kids, and all the finances. I do the books and all the paperwork for his business (he's self-employed). When my day is over, I can barely keep my eyes open. I'm mentally and physically exhausted, it's that simple. I've been telling him for years that it's all too much for me, I'm overwhelmed and I need help. He says he's gonna help but he always has an excuse why he can't. He puts everything on me so when something goes wrong of course it's all my fault because I didn't do it right."

Of course, she feels trapped in a no-win situation! If she takes over the home responsibilities in order to avoid him procrastinating and abandoning necessary tasks, she does the work of two people and has no energy for herself. If she decides to drop responsibilities and ask him to do them, then her second (or third job) will be to watch over him, catch him in the act of dropping tasks, spending effort in correcting the consequences of him not delivering in time what he promised to do...etc. She calls her not talking with him too much in this "supervisory position," her "wall of protection" against energy waste and mounting frustration. But her loneliness grows into resentment inside, because now she feels totally abandoned in this daily strife to keep the marriage going...let's look deeper into the impact of this behavior on the wife.

When doing research about what attachment theory tells us about the quality of relationships, as well as its potential for emotional needs satisfaction, what we usually find is that childhood experiences have a very important role in our lives.

Sometimes we hear about the challenges that passive aggression and other defensive behaviors have on marriages, but we fail to connect these present, adult behavior failures with the past conditioning produced in us by the family we grew up with.

So now we have a wife who is totally confused and blindsided by the spouse's behavior, and that frustrated wife erroneously connects her husband's unhappiness and their current problem to something she either did or didn't do.

In short, the present spouse could make herself responsible for her husband's behavior, and in taking this weight on, she tries to find the reason of the communication failure, so she can "heal it."

Nobody enters into a relationship with a disclaimer, or an instruction letter that would make it easier for the wife to know the territory she is entering. If such a letter did exist, the instructions on how to deal with a passive aggressive husband would be life saving. You can imagine him walking around with a placard that says: **"Beware, I'm incapable of connect and I'm scared of commitment"**

Deal or No Deal -- Leaving or Staying

Leaving

If you are thinking of ending the sadness and pain of your passive aggressive relationship, you are not alone. For many wives of passive aggressive husbands, ending a passive aggressive relationship is often at the center of their thoughts. You may have tried many other alternatives, trying to salvage the relationship or convince your husband how changing would improve your marriage. Although we always encourage communication and growth above leaving the relationship, sometimes this option is a necessary final step. Sometimes, it is simply healthier for you to leave your husband and move on to a new stage in your life.

The first step in leaving a passive aggressive husband is to come to terms with your situation. You may have already done this, but if you haven't, let us explain. It is important to realize the facts about your relationship: your partner is passive aggressive. You have tried everything you could, and still he refuses to accept his share in conflict ownership. Regardless of that, he is responsible at least for half of the relationship

failure...and still in denial of this fact. You are in pain, ready to move on, ready to begin again on your own if you have to.

Another thing to keep in mind is that certain strategies that have worked for others may not have worked for you, and that's okay. After a certain point, some people are not fixable or changeable – simply because *he* has to be the one to commit to changing himself. Have you heard the phrase, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink?” If your passive aggressive husband can't commit to changing, it is not your responsibility or obligation to try and change him anyway. If he's not willing to commit to change, he's also not willing to commit to the relationship.

The next step after accepting that he will not change – and you have no obligation to change him – is to grieve the dreams you're leaving behind. Sounds dramatic, doesn't it? It's true though. Essentially, you suffer from the relationship not just because it thwarts your need for love, support, and trust. You also suffer because there is some part of you that still dreams of a perfect marriage, and this part of you is constantly crying, “*Look, this is what could have been.*” This may be the hardest thing you'll ever have to do. It requires teaching yourself that sometimes, we can't rely on others to fulfill our dreams, or wait for them to give us what we need. We have to take charge and take what we need for ourselves, or move on and find someone who deserves us. Realize that you have more to offer than is being recognized; you are worth respect and adoration!

Let's not forget a bit of motivation left in you:

Perhaps his systematic resistance has left you with anger? with resentment for all the love energy thrown to the garbage bin because of his resistance?

Think of this feeling as a leverage: you are going to show him, and the you that was attached “forever” to him, what you can do now by yourself. Take a deep breath, get in touch with this well of resentment, and swear that you are going to be immensely

happy, only to show him (or his image inside your brain) that you can be totally happy without him. You don't need him to be happy, because you know how to make yourself happy!

Learning to live free and well

After you've left the relationship behind you – moved to a new city, gotten a new job, whatever it is that you decided – the next important step is to re-motivate your life. Stop, think clearly for a moment. Has it sunk in yet, that you can do whatever you want? That you are free? That there is nothing holding you back from doing the things you've dreamt of doing? Think about something you've wanted to do, somewhere you wanted to be. Maybe you have projects that you never were able to do, goals you left behind to put your husband's needs first. Pick those things back up! Let yourself dive back into them, and being to nurture and heal yourself in the process.

And share your love and your happiness with others!

Lastly, it is critical for you to have a network of supportive people to shelter you as you transition from your old marriage to your new life. Whether they are family, friends, church members, teachers, mentors, or coaches, the benefits of having someone to listen to you and guide you cannot be overestimated. You need someone who will know how to put you on the right path when you're not sure where to go next, when your ex-partner tries to guilt trip you, when there are complications in the process or when you just feel discouraged and lonely.

4. Plan for Action: Staying and dealing with your husband's passive aggressive behavior

A. Beginning Steps -- Life Review

Have a Plan B: review your life, dust off your basic life mission and refresh your goals. You need to have a happy productive life, with him or without him. This will give you lots of good things to do and so takes the pressure off him. You are not expecting him to be all the source of your happiness! Given that you have your own fun and interesting things to do, he will be forced to stop doing passive aggression only to get back at you for the hurt his parents did to him...Big opportunity for him to wise up!

B. Dealing -- The Approach

By taking the pressure off, you give him some space between your projects and his automatic response of negativity and procrastination. In this space, the question: "*do I have to frustrate her always or can I have some of the same fun she has?*" probably will pop in his mind...Is vital to this strategy that you show how happy and interested you are in your projects...so he can't imagine how could he destroy your joy. The purpose is to leave him alone as soon as he is doing passive aggressive behaviors, while you continue with your own life...Here, being left alone means being left behind, and he is not as silly as to appreciate being left alone. He wants company too!

So, be clear that he will be included as soon as he can be agreeable, kind and participative in common projects. Tell him: "as soon as you are ready to enjoy this activity, no grudges or silence or resentment included, you are in!" and be ready to slam the door.

C. Specific Steps -- A Game Plan

Pay attention:

Put your attention on what he does, not in what he says. In passive aggressive communications, he can keep many verbal interactions vague and confusing on purpose. You must separate words and deeds, and look only at the facts. What is what he is doing now?

Regardless of what your partner says about “forgetting details,” start asking yourself if there is:

- A discrepancy between what he promises and what he delivers;
- Avoidance of his responsibility, always blaming others;
- “Good” words expressed, but nothing to show.

You can look at those behaviors and see indicators of passive aggressive punishment, provided they are consistent and often centered around one particular type of activity.

Here’s a good example: if Robert generally is dependable and is home on time for Tina to attend her meetings, the one “miss” may not be motivated by passive-aggression. However, if he often only sabotages Tina’s attendance to a particular event (her therapy sessions or her female friends’ group monthly dinner) while denying he is intending to do so, an attack pattern is emerging.

Operation Consequence

Start Operation Consequence if there is no match between words and results:

The Operation Consequence gives you specific tasks to engage in to nip his passive aggressive attack in the bud. You must show that you are going to handle it in an adult way, taking action and not throwing a fit, as he expects you to do.

a) Suspect sabotage and resistance:

Suspend expectations: *"I don't wait for you to show for the party one hour late"*

Say gently: *"As I could not be sure you would go, I decided to do it alone."*

b) Learn his hidden anger indicators:

You can halt future attacks in their tracks by learning his patterns and indicators. People are creatures of habit, and passive aggressive husbands are no different. Here are some examples of indicators that he is hiding his anger and is trying to attack/punish you:

- Vengeful "accidents" such as ruining only your things: deleting files, burning food, etc.;
- No emotional reaction, indifference to share your joy over an accomplishment;
- Detaching from the people or family members you love, no reason given.

c) Confront efficiently:

Collect proofs by having another person around or by keeping a diary and taking notes;
Prove connection between actions and damages by showing how one leads to another;
Establish responsibility by presenting him with the choice between childish or adult behavior, like:

"When you mistreat my parents, as you did this afternoon hanging up on them, I feel hurt because later I need to do a lot of explaining. Is this the way you want them to see you?"

d) Control your desire to attack back:

Detaching means not to respond emotionally, as in crying or throwing a tantrum (discussed above). Remember: if you have outraged reactions to passive-aggressive behavior, you are emotionally rewarding the passive-aggressive husband.

e) Practice much needed detachment and self-discipline:

We say not to throw a tantrum at your husband, but you will gather a lot of anger and frustration living with him. It is of course normal, and must be dealt with in a healthy way.

So, you need to:

- Work on yourself, to sort out any deep animosity you may have towards this person;
- Examine the relationship and find moments in which you gave control, responsibility or power to this person;
- Link the power given to him with the results obtained, and ask yourself: “Am I being shortchanged here”?

Pay attention to your first reaction, the emotional one, because this is probably the most truthful. You are allowed to feel resentful, frustrated or angry at his skillful defection; it's a natural reaction. And it is the tantrum version of this reaction that your husband is setting you up to have. You can take back control by handling that anger in an adult way. Keep breathing deeply, or go for a walk so you can control yourself!

Now, you want to confront this person in the most productive way, diverging from showing this person how much he can hurt you. The “emotional outburst” type of confrontation will not serve your purpose. If you allow yourself to show your disappointment, then he has fulfilled his mission!

Decide what you need to accomplish:

Is it basic that you know what you're trying to accomplish, by recognizing and handling his passive aggressive attack. Ask yourself, what is your real goal upon seeing him sabotage you and your best projects?

What goal will help you live a better life and not be brought down to his level? It is to...

- Let your husband know of your frustration? what is accomplished here?
- Have a cathartic show of your pain, so you can feel better, and he knows how to hurt you?
- Get him to finally deliver? Now, you are talking! you need him to deliver!

All of these are worthy aims, but remember that the first two are dangerously close to the tantrum throwing result that he wants to see. Finally, what you want is to get him to deliver, right?

Is time then to do some [Fair Fighting](#), in a calm, rational but direct way. You can learn here how to fight for the satisfaction of your emotional needs.

Remember that the best way is to detach emotionally from any result, and see if he can recognize his involvement in this marriage and moves towards cooperating with you in making it happen.

If finally you get him involved in his own healing through following our system called: [Four Steps to Stop Your Passive Aggression](#), *then you are in the good path to recovery...*

5. Extra tips to manage passive aggression:

The wife has to do a process of understanding her situation that requires from her to process first a lot of confusion (at the lack of coherence between the adult man she married and the child behaviors she receives), anger and frustration (at the lack of love and connection) and a lot of loneliness (being married to someone who can't deliver as a grown up).

The final point is to accept that she is not responsible for his attitude, learned in his childhood, way before they met and fall in love. And what is her task now? can she change his husband's attitude by being more ready with the right responses?

A passive aggressive intimate connection is a cruel puzzle. Exactly in the heart of the relationship that promises love, companionship and support, we humans encounter a huge obstacle that perverts and blocks all her efforts.

At the level of daily interactions, there are multiple opportunities in which this passive aggression will rear its ugly face.

We review some of those behaviors, and offer an strategy to modify each one.

BEHAVIOR 1.- Doing comments always focused on negative aspects of life: for him life is a miserable experience and there is no joy to be expected, so we are victims of a cruel destiny. Others (first the cold mother and now the wife) are responsible for the circumstances he is in, and little can be done to change. He needs to focus only on the empty cup, his negative appreciation of life, so he will ignore or reject life's positive aspects.

Exercise Number 1: To counteract passive aggressive behavior's impact on your self-esteem, you need to be sure of your own accomplishments, and be proud of them. When your partner ignores your own successes, reinforce your self-esteem with positive appreciations from others. Remind yourself constantly about your good qualities, before

it's too late and you begin to accept your partner's negative framing as the mirror with which you perceive yourself.

- Do some breathing exercises and tell yourself how good you are at what you do.
- Keep a folder handy with your papers, pictures, etc. related to the good things you do.
- Keep your good friends around, so they can also remind you of your good qualities.

BEHAVIOR 2.- Be ready to take care of the induced confusion in your own brain. While you are trying to understand what is going on with the relationship, he will deny that there is a problem, and if you push a lot, he will say that yes, there is a problem, produced by your pressure on him. You can't win this battle, hence the mental fog: did you ever come across the term "gas-lighted"? This is pure and unadulterated gas-lighting your brain.

Exercise Number 2: Accept confusion and emotional pain as indicators of being in a relationship with a passive aggressive (PA) person. Another kind of person would make you feel totally different; the truth now is that this person is confusing and manipulating you!

DO take your confusion seriously: go for a walk; do something alone; write in your diary; learn breathing exercises to calm your brain and heart; watch a positive romantic movie in TV; talk with your best friend; do mindful meditation, even get some therapy for you, (not for the couple), anything that fills you with mind clarity and peace is welcome!

BEHAVIOR 3.- Be aware of the possible sabotage of your best projects: If you are excited and enthusiastic about some project of yours, be ready to receive the complete list of its possible failures. Because your partner will see your projects as taking you away from him/her, this person will offer help only to sabotage it later. If the project is important, describe it using neutral terms, without affection and diminish its importance.

Exercise Number 3: It is very difficult but necessary to learn emotional detachment. The more detached you can be from the final outcome of any shared project, the more

protected you become from manipulations that will eventually disappoint you.

So, you need to present your heart's desires in a way that is detached from the emotions they produce in you. Of course, looking at this recommendation it can be a contradictory suggestion: Aren't the two sides supposed to get more and more connected with each other? Not with a passive aggressive person... Is better to control any visible emotional connection or desire, while you move ahead with your projects simultaneously. The passive aggressive person will notice this detachment and will be forced to answer some questions about why it is happening. Ideally, he could be already in a therapeutic conversation where he can receive some answers.

BEHAVIOR 4.- If he is resorting to [“Silent Treatment.”](#) in daily communication. Maintenance of aloof silence is an expression of one's anger or disapproval: a deliberate discourteous act that punishes you. If he is someone who's normally eager to speak to others but now keeps couple conversations to the bare minimum, he is using cold shoulder. This can be hurtful, frustrating, and confusing.

Exercise Number 4: Asserting Yourself in light of the silent treatment. You are not responsible for his behavior, he is accepting to be cold and distant and controlling as the way to be in this marriage. Don't fight or try to ask for a different behaviour.

Again, detaching yourself by having your own projects and friends, can help you protect your core from the isolation forced unjustly on you. If he is asking about what is going on, then confront him explaining the impact that this behaviour has on you, and on the future of the relationship.

Confront in this way:

“When you decide to keep silent for 2 weeks and ignore my questions, I feel alone and abandoned in this marriage. Because lots of things need decisions here and I have nobody to talk to. How do you think we can go ahead?”

BEHAVIOR 5.- Always “not being completely there” In a time of need, the PA person will always be, as the saying goes: “an hour late, a dollar short, or a block away.” He

backs off at the right moment, doing nothing when something is expected from him. He hides behind a curtain of good intentions..."I tried to, but..." He "was meaning to go with you to the doctors...but something else came up." He can give you a dozen reasons why he could not do what he promised. The first excuse is that he forgot about the deal. This leaves you confused between believing him, and listening to your hurt feelings.

Exercise Number 5: Every time you receive this excuse; each time he says that he "forgot", substitute the words: "didn't want to" instead of "forgot." You then can properly realize what is going on, and can move on with your decisions. You put an end to the confusion and paralysis provoked by his mix of good intentions and omissions. And, of course, you learn that you need always to have an alternative ready to do what you want to do, when sabotage enters the picture. Have the phone number of a taxi service, when he offers to drive you and then begins to fix the car...and you know it will take him two hours to put it together again...

Living with a person so insecure of his relationships that needs to use the shield provided by passive aggressive behaviors can induce pain, confusion and loneliness. Regardless of that, you might be very well looking at his good aspects and trying to make a good effort to develop a stable and long term relationship, while at the same time learning to ignore and neutralize its worst aspects.

Exercise Number 6. Taking your life back

Please, repeat in loud voice:

- **This is a condition I did not cause!**
- **I cannot cure it or control it!**
- **NOW, I can stop blaming yourself!**

Wouldn't that kind of disclaimer be a god-sent message? It would save so much pain, grief and time, so much lost happiness. Together in this blindness is the passive aggressive spouse, who will support to his death the conviction that his behavior is

normal and everybody else is “too demanding” or “needy” or whatever way he uses to describe a wife with emotional needs going unsolved.

Let me recap: if you are in a passive aggressive relationship, take a step back and frame everything under this mantra: I did not cause his condition, I can't cure him and the best I can do is not to take personally anything of the hurtful behaviors he is doing now.

When it gets hard, remind yourself:

Whatever he is doing now,

- it is his only way of responding; he doesn't know better;
- it is the response he learned with his primary care-taker or mother;
- your best way of protecting yourself is letting the behavior go away without engaging on it. Just ignore it.

Now that you have this vital piece of information, what are you going to do?

Certainly not try to change him yourself. That role lies with him whose behavior it is! To encourage him to take his own behavior into his own hands, we encourage passive aggressive husbands to take our [Passive Aggressive Test](#). He will be guided to see for himself that these are his own behaviors (not yours or your responsibility).

6. Wait, There is More!: This Approach Works like Magic

Here we offer some ideas from our magic touch, with a serious disclaimer. This is a wacky plan that will surprise you. Is so controversial, that you will reject it, as being against your beliefs. This plan needs that you, the main person doing it, still keeps some degree of compassion inside. You need to be able to see your husband not so much as the eternal monster, but as a person seriously damaged, who is also suffering in his own way.

If you can have a bit of curiosity, or interest, or hope that something can be done, let me know if you fill the conditions necessary to understand and apply it:

Warning: I teach this plan to women who call me if:

- they are younger than 60 years old,
- have been married no more than 40 years
- don't have a lot of anger and resentment in them

Why? because when you spend almost all your married life in a situation of systematic frustration of your basic needs for love and connection, it leaves deep wounds. Usually, there is almost nothing of empathy or patience or the desire to see the partner in a slightly different light in them. What I hear is a profound sadness, and sometimes resentment. So I don't dare to propose this plan to you...

This Magic Plan Requires You to Understand What Makes a Man Tick:

I.- This is the basic issue with any husband, is his need to feel respected.

What kind of respect, do you ask?

There are five different aspects of respect for a man.

1. Respect for his decision-making process

A man needs his judgment to be respected, including his own opinions and decision-making processes. There is no need to challenge a man's decisions all the time. Instead a woman should trust the man's process to be sound and based on his knowledge. And, if it is not as perfect as she wishes, then she has to challenge her own expectations about what her "perfect man" delivers and accept the reality of the man she has chosen!

She says to him, "How did you come to that (silly) conclusion?"

What message does she send by challenging him in this way?

"You are not intelligent enough." or "You are stupid."

Women can say instead: *"I appreciate the way you make decisions. Now, let's look at what needs to be decided?"*

2. Respect for his skills without second guessing the results

Men like to tinker and discover how things work on their own. If they get it right, there is the payoff of feeling affirmed, competent and proud of his efforts.

She says to him: *"Haven't you finished setting up that computer yet?"*

What message does she send by interfering?

"I don't trust you know how to do this."

Women can say instead, *"I know you can do it."*

3. Respect for his accomplishments

Men worry about their social worth and ask ourselves questions like, *"Am I any good at what I do?"* We need constant validation from the person that matters most: our spouse.

Women should avoid diminishing respect by hiding a criticism in their praise: *“You did good paying the electric bill on time but you forgot to pay the cable bill.”*

What message does the wife send by interfering? *“You are not enough.” “If I need to remind you to buy the milk, you have failed”*

Offering appreciation for what he does will satisfy this need. Women can use forms like this: *“When you (mention the good deed) I’m happy because (mention the impact of such deed on you).*

For example: *“When you pay the bills on time, I’m happy because I feel secure for the rest of the month.”*

Or women can say, *“I appreciate you doing the errands tonight.”*

4. Respect for his public image

If the wife teases her man in public, it shows to the world that he can’t control her public behavior. Something must be very wrong with this couple because he is being disrespected in public. This brings up a painful feeling of inadequacy for him, of being humiliated as a man in public. Adding insult to the injury, it is most hurtful that she can’t recognize the personal humiliation he feels.

We men avoid this public humiliation at all costs. What women don’t understand is the public aspect of it: if the teasing happens in front of other men, he is diminished in front of these men, because men are always sizing each other up. If they would be his competitors in the future, they already view him as inferior because of his inability to control his wife in public.

To his colleagues this means that he is not in control of his own home, thus he cannot be trusted to control a team on a project. He is perceived as being powerless, and his competitors know it.

If she talks about her husband’s embarrassing drunkenness at a party one month ago, what message does the wife send by criticizing him publicly? She sends the message that she wants to have the upper hand; that she will sacrifice his public image in order to

get even with him about some offense felt at home that he doesn't even remember doing; or even worse, that she is power hungry and does not care to support her own husband.

Women can say instead, *"My husband can always be counted on to keep household finances in check and that is a great relief to me."*

5. Respect for his reality rather than making assumptions

Below are some common assumptions that women make regarding their husbands, all of which lead the husbands to feel disrespected:

- The wife assumes that he needs to be told what to do or to be reminded.
- The wife assumes that if he doesn't do something, it is because he doesn't care.
- The wife assumes that relationship problems are caused by him and need fixing.

What message does she send by choosing her own assumptions over his reality?

"My wife feels she is in charge and that I am not an adult. She feels she needs to raise me the way she might raise a child."

"My wife is the one that decides how and if the marriage is successful. She is the relationship expert and is in charge of constantly evaluating our relationship. She even refers to external experts to support her view of what is wrong."

If the wife sends this message consistently, her husband might feel diminished in his family roles and withdraw from family interactions or refrain from taking an active role in the children's lives.

If he believes he is not essential or is not affirmed in his role as husband, he will become peripheral, only in charge at times of providing some income. Worse, he will be another case of a passive aggressive husband.

Women can say instead, *“My marriage is a joint partnership in which we help each other develop into responsible human beings.”*

Conclusion

Men have a set of particular needs that are usually completely ignored by women. When women continue to deny this dual reality, a deep crisis appears: men feel constantly frustrated by their wives' ignorance of their needs and by their own incompetence at revealing their needs to women. Above everything, the constant perception that the lack of respect makes them feel: *"I'm not good enough for her,"* prevails and makes every interaction fraught with fear of being made feel not good enough

There is a special taboo against explaining men's needs to their wives. It is equivalent to revealing a deep weakness to the "enemy" who will immediately profit from this knowledge by wounding him precisely in this vulnerable spot.

This lack of respect is perceived by men as a cause for isolation and as a rejection by the very person who is supposed to accept, appreciate and value them: their spouse.

HOW TO APPLY THE MAGIC:

Now that you know what are the hidden needs of your man, (never expressed to you), you can do some magic. Of course, don't share with him that now you know what hurts him.

(And, remember that I warned you that this technique would be hard on you...so breathe deeply and use it. If you feel too upset or resentful, probably it's not for you...Trust me, it works!)

Instead of finding what he is doing wrong, do a little guerrilla appreciation:

a) Find any opportunity to appreciate in loud voice a positive aspect. Find something, even minor, that he is doing well. And mention it in loud voice:

“I appreciate that you can repair the electric things in the house, so we can save money by keeping repairs done by you.”

“When you pay the bills in time, I feel protected, because I don’t have to worry about that.”

And leave it there; don’t explain, don’t say anything more. Just watch his surprise! you are feeding his need for respect, that has been always frustrated, in a way he can’t reject!

TRY to continue doing systematic appreciation at least for two weeks. It’s good if you can say two appreciations a day....with the most casual voice you can find.

You can offer appreciation even in the middle of a fight, which is really disconcerting for him! This is what you need to do: provide him some recognition, coming from out of the blue...and in public, in front of his family or friends....C’mon, you can do this, right?

AND WATCH THE IMPACT OF THIS MAGIC BEHAVIOR AT HOME! He will begin to be more present, more connected with you, and engaged in the home. He will be expecting your appreciation and depending on it to feel better about himself. You are interrupting a long line of failure, marital failure for him, and returning to him his self-esteem.

Don’t discard this powerful technique, because you feel resentful (and with lots of reasons); use it and see how you can produce visible changes in him. You will feel better, and he finally will turn to his role in the marriage with a different attitude.

RESOURCES FOR YOU:

We know it is empowering for women to have a name for the disorder, as well as a description, an explanation, and the strategies to deal with it; only then can wives know how to overcome their role as victims in their intimate relationships.

We want to share our professional experience and knowledge as to teach women what to expect and how to respond to any passive aggressive situation.

At our company Creative Conflict Resolutions we offer a wide array of resources for women in passive aggressive relationships, as well as women suffering from emotional abuse. Some of these services include personal one-on-one coaching support, and follow up in crisis situations.

It is useful to begin reading "[Recovering from Passive Aggression](#)" first, in order for women to accurately judge their situation and relationship status. Women who find themselves in the painful role of a spouse in a passive aggressive marriage, and wives who are looking to gain relief and support from the strategies offered by a team of relationship experts, are encouraged to get their own copy.

As you get to the last page of the present book, we want to invite you to browse other different books on the same issue. Keep connected with us!

Resources for Your Personal Happiness:

Coaching by Coach Nora:

You can have 30' of phone [coaching](#) with Coach Nora any time you are ready! Have a free half-hour conversation to discuss about your goals, how coaching can help you to move forward and to answer any questions you have about your present challenges.

See the complete list of our resources here:

NORA FEMENIA, Ph.D

Kindle Author, Conflict Coach, Public Speaker

Passive Aggression Series:

[How to Spot a Passive Aggressive Partner](#)

[Closing the Passive Aggressive Defiance Gap](#)

[Escaping the Sexless Marriage](#)

[How to Fight Fair in Your Marriage](#)

[The Silent Marriage](#)

[Guerrilla Tactics Against Passive Aggression](#)

[Relationship Counseling](#)

Emotional Abuse Series:

[Emotional Abuse: the Hidden War](#)

[Breaking Free from Emotional Abuse](#)

[Emotionally Abusive Relationships](#)

[Boosting your Self Esteem](#)

[When Love Hurts](#)

To contact Dr Nora Femenia, or to be placed in a mailing list to receive updates about new releases, books, blog postings and events, visit her website:

www.creativeconflictresolutions.com

About Creative Conflict Resolutions, Inc.

Creative Conflict Resolutions is a group of professionals working from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA to promote more harmony and joy in your relationships.

We care about:

- Providing fast and easy solutions for inter-personal conflicts;
- Managing and transforming anger into cooperation;
- Healing deep hurts that cause hostility to appear;
- Inviting people to reconcile and appreciate each other.

How do we do our work?

By developing educational materials, like our books.

By inviting our clients to participate in live online presentations on issues of interest, like conflict solving techniques, parenting skills, relationship-enhancing skills, etc.

By offering coaching sessions on the phone, in Skype, through <http://conflictcoach.me> ips, and how we could provide the help you need.

We would like to hear from you...and what are your interests and needs! Feel free to write and tell us what are you concerned about in your relationship.

Wishing you a happy life!

Creative Conflict Resolutions