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life advice

July 2009

Taking Worry Out of Your Marriage

Don't let worry become a habit in your marriage or your life. Here's how.

BY DR. NOELLE NELSON



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Stop the worrying in your marriage with a few simple steps.

You're broke. Again. You'd always heard that two could live as cheaply as one. Yeah, right. It's a week away from both your next paychecks and you're worried sick about making it until then. You can only sweet-talk the landlord for so long, the phone company couldn't care less about your woes and the cat is giving you a disgusted, "I'm supposed to use *this* litter?" look. Your nails are down to the cuticle, while your consumption of antacid is downright impressive.

And then there's your marriage, your once-in-a-lifetime love experience. But you haven't "felt the love" in quite some time, and you're increasingly convinced they don't either. You lie awake at night,

worrying, rehashing the same scenarios over and over: the arguments, the indifference, the too-silent nights. The thought of divorce sends nightmare chills down your spine, but the thought of a dissatisfying marriage doesn't exactly thrill you either. I mean, you had it good not that long ago, didn't you? And if you leave your spouse, there is a chance you'll meet someone new, but then of course there's even more chances you won't. Look how long it took you to find Mr./Mrs. Almost-Right!

Then there's the alone part. You torment yourself with thoughts of being single again—no, let's tell it like it is. You worry yourself witless about being aloooooone again—staring at your four walls and watching cool people out at cool parties having a wonderful time. Spending Saturday nights with Twitter for sole company, when all your friends are cozily cuddled in their blissful coupledness.

You're exhausted from all this worrying. You drag yourself around functioning just this side of depression constantly worrying, but all that worrying will do you absolutely no good whatsoever.

Worry never reinvigorated true love, got someone a job or put money in their pockets. Worry is the ultimate energy waster. Worry does absolutely nothing for you, yet takes from you in spades. Worry consumes large amounts of your vital resources: your energy, your creativity and your ability to act.

Tell worry, "Begone!" Boot worry out of your relationship, far behind you, back there somewhere out of sight and out of mind.

Sounds easy. Yet it's probably one of the hardest things to do. You see, worry is a habit; it's a ritual many of us use to soothe ourselves. As long as you worry about something it feels like you're doing something about it, but in fact you're not. Worry actually saps your ability to do something about whatever is troubling you.

Let worry be gone by dealing with it differently:

1. Put it on paper

Whenever you get a worry thought, write it down on a list called, "My Worries About Money," for example, or "What I'm Worried About In My Marriage." The next time the same worried thought occurs to you, remind yourself, "I already wrote that one down" and refuse to think about it any more. As you consistently and repeatedly deal with your worries by writing them down and then moving on to step two, your subconscious will start to get the idea, and your worry thoughts will decrease.

2. Do something about it!

If you want your worry to totally disappear, start using all that energy you used to spend worrying to doing some constructive problem-solving. Talk with your spouse about what's troubling you (that's what they're there for, right?). Get help from whomever, however you can to brainstorm solutions to your troubles. Take an online seminar, read a book, peruse the web for how other people have resolved their issues.

3. Act on those solutions!

The more proactive you are, the less reasons you will have to worry, and with that the worry will truly be gone.

Ah. . . doesn't that feel better?

Noelle C. Nelson, Ph.D., is a relationship expert, popular speaker in the U.S. and abroad, and author of nine best-selling books, including her most recent, "Your Man is Wonderful" (www.yourmaniswonderful.com) and "Dangerous Relationships." Dr. Nelson focuses on how we can all enjoy happy, fulfilling lives while accomplishing great things in love, at home and at work, as we appreciate ourselves, our world and all those who inhabit it. Visit www.noellenelson.com for more. Also, enter the Toad to Prince contest at www.toadtoprince.com. Deadline is August 31, 2009.