

REVISED AND UPDATED

# HIS NEEDS, HER NEEDS

Making Romantic Love Last

**WILLARD F. HARLEY, JR.**



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Grand Rapids, Michigan

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# Preface

In 1978, I was asked to teach a thirteen-week course on marriage at the church I attended. The topic was “What must a couple do to stay happily married?” The Christian education director tape-recorded the course for me.

Over the next few years, I used those tapes in my counseling practice to support the advice that I gave couples. One couple volunteered to transcribe the tapes so that I could give them to other couples in written form.

In 1984, that rough transcription made its way into the hands of an employee of the Fleming H. Revell Publishing Company, that person passed it on to the acquisitions editor, and the rest is history. It was published in 1986 with the title *His Needs, Her Needs: Building an Affair-Proof Marriage*.

Within two years of its first printing, the book became a bestseller, and it continues to be one of the most popular books on marriage right up to this year. It’s been translated into twenty-two languages, and more than three million copies have been sold worldwide.

Finding a publisher for this book was the easy part—it almost fell into my lap. The hard part had been finding the answer to the question “What must a couple do to stay happily married?” which was the topic of the thirteen-week course I taught at my church.

## **Learning What Makes Marriages Succeed**

When I was nineteen, a married acquaintance in college told me his marriage was in trouble and asked for my advice. The advice I gave did not

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help—his marriage ended in divorce. But my friend’s marital failure started me thinking: What was wrong with the advice I gave? What makes some marriages succeed and others, like my friend’s, fail?

It was 1960, and I was about to witness something that few expected—the beginning of the end of the traditional nuclear family in America. Evidence of this social disaster accumulated over the next twenty years. The divorce rate climbed from about 10 percent to over 50 percent, and the percentage of single adults increased from 6.5 percent to 20 percent. While the divorce rate finally stabilized at about 45 percent in 1980, the percentage of single adults has continued to increase right up to the present. It is currently at about 50 percent and climbing because fewer and fewer people are willing to commit themselves to one partner for life.

At the time, I didn’t know that my friend’s marital failure was part of a trend that was about to overwhelm nuclear families. I was unaware of new cultural forces that would threaten marriages as never before. Marriage counselors had it easy prior to that time because people simply didn’t want to divorce, regardless of how unhappy they were. But now, they were unwilling to tolerate an unfulfilling marriage. So if a marriage was to be saved, a counselor had to know what made marriages fulfilling for both spouses. At the age of nineteen, I certainly did not have that answer.

Over the next few years, couples continued asking for my advice regarding marriage—especially after I earned a PhD in psychology. But I wasn’t any more successful with them than I had been with my friend years earlier.

So I decided to become a marriage “expert.” I read books written by the most prominent marital theorists and practitioners. I learned the latest techniques in helping spouses communicate with respect and understanding. I enrolled in a two-year internship at a clinic that had one of the best reputations for marital therapy and was supervised by the chairman of the University of Minnesota’s Department of Family Social Science. But even after helping couples learn to communicate effectively, I was still unable to save their marriages. Almost everyone who came to me for help either ended up like my college friend—divorced—or simply continued to be in an unfulfilling marriage. I knew about my failure because I was doing something that very few other counselors did: I followed up on everyone I counseled long after they had made their last appointment.

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I followed up not only with the couples I counseled but also with the couples of other counselors in the clinic where I interned. To my utter surprise, almost everyone else working with me in the clinic was failing as well! My supervisor was failing, the director of the clinic was failing, and so were the other marriage counselors who worked with me.

And then I made the most astonishing discovery of all. *Most of the marriage experts in America were also failing.* It was very difficult to find anyone willing to admit their failure, but when I had access to actual cases, I couldn't find any therapist who could prove that the counseling provided was any better than no counseling at all.

Many of these “experts” didn't even know how to make their own marriages work. The clinic director divorced while I was working there. Many others had been divorced themselves—several times.

Marital therapy had the lowest success rate of *any* form of therapy at that time. In one 1965 study I read, less than 25 percent of those surveyed felt that marriage counseling did them any good whatsoever, and a higher percentage felt that it did them more harm than good. It seemed that marriage counseling made couples *more likely* to divorce.

By 1975, I finally began to discover why I and so many other marital therapists were having trouble saving marriages: we did not understand what made a marriage work. We were all so preoccupied with what caused them to fail that we overlooked what helped them succeed. Many marriage counselors, myself included, thought that a lack of communication and problem-solving skills was causing these marriages to fail. So my goal had been to teach these couples how to communicate, to stop fighting, and to resolve conflicts.

But when I asked spouses why they had married in the first place, it wasn't because of great problem-solving skills. It was because they were in love. And over the years, they had somehow lost their love for each other. In fact, some had even come to hate each other.

When I asked spouses what it would take for them to be happily married again, most couldn't imagine that ever happening. But I persisted, and as the spouses reflected on it, they came to the realization that they would need to be in love again.

The poor communication that was apparent in many of these failed marriages had contributed to their loss of love, but it was also a symptom

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of their lost love. Spouses who fall out of love tend to fight instead of resolving their conflicts the right way—with care and respect. So if I wanted to save marriages, I would have to go beyond improving communication—I would have to learn how to restore love.

With this insight, I began to attack emotional issues rather than rational issues. My primary goal in marital therapy changed from resolving conflicts to restoring the feeling of love—romantic love. If I could help restore romantic love, I reasoned, then conflicts might not be as great an issue.

My background as a psychologist taught me that learned associations trigger most of our emotional reactions. Whenever something is presented repeatedly with a physically induced emotion, it tends to trigger that emotion all by itself. For example, if you are flashed the color blue along with an electric shock, and the color red along with a soothing back rub, eventually the color blue will tend to upset you and the color red will tend to relax you.

Applying the same principle to the feeling of love, I theorized that romantic love might be nothing more than a learned association. If someone were to do something or be something that made me feel good, then the person's presence in general might be enough to trigger a good feeling. But if that person were to make me feel especially good, then the association might make me feel especially good—something we have come to know as the feeling of love.

My theory could not have been more correct. If each spouse tried to do whatever it took to make the other happy and avoided doing what made the other unhappy, their feeling of love could be restored. The first couple I counseled with this new approach fell in love again, and their marriage was saved. From that point on, every time I saw a couple, I simply asked them what the other could do that would make them the happiest, and whatever it was, that was their first assignment.

Of course, not every couple really knew what would make them happy, and not every spouse was willing to try doing it. But as I perfected my method, I began to understand what it was that husbands and wives needed from each other to trigger the feeling of love. I helped them identify what each of them needed and also became more effective in motivating them to meet whatever need was identified, even when they didn't feel like doing



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it at first. Before long, my method helped almost every couple fall in love again and avoid divorce.

My method proved to be so successful that I stopped teaching psychology and started counseling full-time. As you can imagine, there were more couples wanting help from me than I could possibly counsel. It was then that I was asked to teach the thirteen-week course at my church: What must a couple do to stay happily married?

### **Thirty-Five Years and Counting**

Some surveys have found this book to be the most effective book on marriage ever written. Couples report that by reading this book and following its guidance, their love has been restored and their marriages have been saved. That's because it gets right to the heart of what makes marriages work—the feeling of love and what couples must do to create and sustain that feeling.

Romantic love is a litmus test that reveals the right way for spouses to demonstrate their care for each other. If you're in love, you are caring for each other the right way. If you're not in love, your care for each other is missing the mark. This book will teach you how to care for each other in a way that will create and sustain romantic love and that will make your marriage fulfilling and secure.

# Introduction

**W**hat is marriage? Its definition has been debated as never before by politicians, theologians, philosophers, judges, scientists, and therapists, just to name a few. There are many today who are not quite sure what it is. You might be among them. And yet, if I am to offer my help in creating a fulfilling marriage for you, we should begin by agreeing on what it is. Right?

So I come to you with a definition of marriage that I don't think you will question. It includes what almost everyone expects to give and receive when they marry.

**Marriage is a relationship of mutual extraordinary care.**

I've found that when the care that is expected by both spouses on their wedding day is given throughout their lives together, their marriage is fulfilling—and it lasts. But something else also lasts: their feeling of incredible attraction for each other—romantic love. In all the books I have written, I teach spouses how to provide mutual extraordinary care, and when they do, their marriage becomes everything they ever wanted or expected it to be.

There are three different expressions of that care: emotional care, protection, and partnership.

- *Emotional care* involves being each other's greatest source of happiness by meeting each other's most important emotional needs.

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- *Protection* involves avoiding being each other's source of unhappiness by eliminating habits that I call Love Busters.
- *Partnership* involves making decisions that are coordinated and benefit both of you instead of only one of you.

While all three of these aspects of extraordinary care are *very important* in marriage, the first one is *crucial* in creating the feeling of love. That's the purpose of this book—to teach you how to provide the first expression of extraordinary care: emotional care. You and your spouse will discover and then learn to meet each other's most important emotional needs.

When you were first married, you assumed that those needs would be met, but for a variety of reasons, you may have become disappointed—perhaps disappointed enough to occasionally wonder why you were married in the first place. Ignorance usually contributes to this failure because men and women have great difficulty understanding and appreciating the importance of each other's emotional needs. Men tend to try to meet needs that they value, and women do the same. But the most important emotional needs of men and women are usually very different, and by trying to meet needs that matter less instead of those that matter more, spouses become very frustrated. The effort they put into caring for each other doesn't yield the appreciation they expect to see. Over time, many simply give up trying altogether when their effort doesn't seem to matter.

There are two reasons that a husband and a wife should meet each other's most important emotional needs. First, promises are made to meet certain emotional needs in an exclusive way. These promises are made to establish the nature of the relationship. It is secure and permanent, necessary ingredients for a lifelong marital relationship. But when those promises are not kept, spouses become confused and disillusioned. It's not fair. They've given each other the exclusive right to meet certain emotional needs without having ethical alternatives. Must they go through life without those needs met? When a commitment is made to be an exclusive provider of care, that care should be provided.

But there is a second reason that I will explain more clearly in the pages of this book: when you meet each other's most important emotional needs, you create and sustain a feeling of love for each other—romantic love—that

is essential in a fulfilling marriage. I want you both to experience it throughout your life together.

## **Romantic Love Is Essential in Marriage**

The feeling of being in love with someone is a remarkable experience. It's that very emotion that encourages two people to consider spending the rest of their lives together before they marry.

But in most marriages, spouses lose that feeling for each other within the first few years. That's because they don't understand what it was they did to trigger their feeling of love for each other while they were dating. After marriage, usually out of ignorance, they stop doing it for each other.

Should staying in love with each other matter? Consider this: I've never witnessed a single couple in love who divorced. Not one. It is the single most important factor in making a marriage secure.

But there are those who suggest that the loss of romantic love is not important and should be expected in marriage. When that happens, they encourage couples to move on to what they believe is a more mature, loveless marriage. These people are ignoring the facts: a loveless marriage usually ends in divorce or permanent separation.

Prior to marriage, the feeling of love is usually regarded as essential before making that commitment. You may be asked by your family and friends, "Are you in love with the person you are about to marry?" If you are, then go for it. To them, it means that you're right for each other. If you are not in love, you are usually discouraged from going ahead with the marriage.

Are couples in premarital counseling warned that their feeling of love will eventually disappear? That they should prepare for a loveless marriage after a few years? No. If that were explained, it would be one of the quickest ways to encourage couples to call the wedding off. No one wants to look forward to a loveless marriage.

Instead, most premarital counseling leads couples to assume that their relationship will retain their feeling of romantic love. It's only after marriage that counselors introduce the idea that romantic love is not sustainable.

But my personal experience and the experience of about 20 percent of all married couples are proof to the contrary. Romantic love is sustainable.

Falling in love with each other mattered before you married. What matters even more, however, is *staying in love* with each other after you marry.

## How to Fall in Love and Stay in Love

It was so easy for you and your spouse to fall in love with each other that you may have thought that staying in love would be just as easy—you were made to be together. It's the effortlessness of falling in love while dating that masks exactly what you were doing for each other that triggered that reaction. Most people who fall in love can't really explain it, so it's no wonder they don't know how to stay in love or how to restore that feeling after it's been lost.

I didn't know the answer either. I was in love, but I didn't really know what my wife, Joyce, was doing to keep it that way. It took quite a bit of study on my part before I was able to figure it out for myself.

The most important part of what it takes to be in love is to be each other's greatest source of happiness—to meet each other's most important emotional needs. It's the first part of extraordinary care that I mentioned. As you read the following chapters, you will achieve that objective by first identifying and then learning how to meet each other's most important emotional needs.

But there's another important objective: you must also know how to protect each other—from yourselves. In marriage, you and your spouse are in a position to do more to hurt each other than anyone else you know. You can become each other's greatest source of *unhappiness*. That's why I've written a second book, *Love Busters*. If you know how to make each other happy by meeting each other's most important emotional needs but fail to avoid making each other unhappy, your skill and effort will be wasted.

You might think that making each other happy and avoiding making each other unhappy cover all the bases when it comes to creating romantic love. But there is yet one more consideration: conflict resolution. Every couple faces conflicts throughout their marriage. Joyce and I have a conflict just about every hour we're together. The way you go about resolving those conflicts has everything to do with extraordinary care. If you care for each other, you should learn to resolve them the right way—in a way

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that makes both of you happy with the outcome. But if you resolve them the wrong way, where one of you wins while the other loses, resentment is almost always the result.

So I've written a third book to address this expression of extraordinary care—partnership: *He Wins, She Wins: Learning the Art of Marital Negotiation*. It was written to help couples resolve conflicts with mutual extraordinary care.

You've married someone who is wonderfully different from you. That difference can be a great advantage for both of you. It's as if you are standing back-to-back, looking in opposite directions. You see an ocean, while your spouse sees mountains. If you respect each other's perspective and try to learn from it, you will gain a much fuller understanding of the problems you face and how to solve them. But if you think that your perspective is right and your spouse's perspective is wrong, you will miss much of what life has to offer you, and many of your conflicts will go unresolved.

You express your extraordinary care for each other by showing profound respect for each other's opinions and perspectives. That mutual respect can help you make much wiser decisions because they reflect your mutual wisdom instead of the wisdom of only one of you.

But mutual respect does something else: it creates a partnership in which both of you become united in the decisions you make. Instead of making choices that benefit only one of you, you are motivated through mutual care to want each other to benefit. That leads to win-win outcomes.

I've also written two workbooks to guide you through the chapters of these three books: *Five Steps to Romantic Love: A Workbook for Readers of Love Busters and His Needs, Her Needs* and *He Wins, She Wins Workbook: Practicing the Art of Marital Negotiation*.

I encourage you and your spouse to read these books together, complete the questionnaires, and answer the questions at the end of each chapter. You might even use different-colored highlighters as you read so each of you can let the other know what is most important to you. Keep these books in a place where you can refer to them regularly because you should be reminded of the lessons they will teach you.

You might think that all of this is just too complicated and too much trouble to understand and apply. But I can tell you from personal experience

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and the experiences of the thousands of couples I've counseled that being in love makes doing all that I recommend almost effortless. Granted, restoring your love for each other may require some reading and careful application of what you have read, but after your feeling of love for each other returns, your marriage will be not only fulfilling but also very easy to maintain. A marriage of extraordinary care is what marriage was and is meant to be. It's what most couples expect to experience when they say, "I do."

# ONE

## Your Love Bank Never Closes

Unfortunately, most of us don't realize what we're getting into when we say, "I do." We think the dynamics of a good marriage depend on some mysterious blend of the "right" people. Or if a marriage turns out badly, we call the two people "wrong" for each other. While it's true that two inherently incompatible people *might* marry, it's unusual. More often than not, being right or wrong for someone depends not on some mysterious compatibility quotient but on how you affect each other. If what you and your spouse do for each other makes you both happy and it doesn't make you unhappy, your marriage will be very fulfilling. The possibility of divorce will never cross your minds.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? Too simple, you might be thinking. You might also be thinking that making each other consistently happy is impossible. And that avoiding what might hurt each other is also impossible.

Granted, there may be speed bumps on the road of marriage. On rare occasions, you might slip up. But this goal of making each other happy and avoiding what makes each other unhappy has been achieved by millions of couples, and their marriages are everything they hoped they would be. This does, however, require skill that you may not have at this time.

What, then, if you are willing but unskilled? Good news! You can do something about it. Training is possible at any time. For that reason, I believe marriages that have been torpedoed by emotional neglect need not



sink. They can be towed into dry dock, repaired, and refitted. Once refitted, they will sail farther and faster than at any previous time.

But first, to help couples understand how important it is to make each other happy and avoid making each other unhappy, I created a concept that I call the Love Bank.

### **Everyone Has a Love Bank**

Figuratively speaking, I believe each of us has a Love Bank. It contains many different accounts, one for each person we know. Each person makes either deposits or withdrawals whenever we interact with them. Pleasant interactions result in deposits. Unpleasant interactions result in withdrawals.

In my Love Bank system, every deposit or withdrawal is worth a certain number of love units. If I meet a friend (we'll call him Jim), and the encounter leaves me feeling comfortable, one or two love units will be deposited in his account in my Love Bank. If the interchange makes me feel good, Jim's deposit in his account may be five love units. Very good gets ten or fifteen. Twenty units or more go in his account when he makes me feel exceptionally good.

Suppose, however, that I find myself feeling uncomfortable when I am with someone; we'll call her Jane. One or two love units are withdrawn from her account. If she makes me feel bad, five units are withdrawn. Very bad warrants a ten-unit withdrawal. If I consider my encounter with Jane among the worst experiences of my life, it would cost her at least a twenty-unit withdrawal and maybe a loss of much more.

As life goes on, the accounts in my Love Bank fluctuate. Some of my acquaintances build sizable deposits. Others remain in the black but have small balances because they make almost as many withdrawals as they do deposits.

But a third group goes into the red with me. That means they cause me much more discomfort than comfort when we are together. I don't feel good when I think of them, and as a result, I try to avoid being with them. In short, their accounts in my Love Bank are overdrawn.

This concept of the Love Bank is simply designed to underscore the fact that we affect each other emotionally with almost every encounter.

The accumulation of positive and negative experiences determines our emotional reaction to those we know. You are not actively aware of any of this, of course. You don't say to yourself, *Wow, that was a three-unit deposit!* or *Ugh! Minus four units for him.* Nonetheless, the love units keep coming in or going out.

### **A Love Bank Love Story**

Two Love Banks constantly operate in marriage: his and hers. Let's take a look at the story of John and Mary to see what can happen to a couple's accounts.

When John meets Mary, he immediately feels something special. She is intelligent, beautiful, charming, and full of life. John's Love Bank instantly credits her account with ten love units.

A day or two later, John calls Mary and asks her for a date. She accepts, and as John hangs up, ten more units go into Mary's account.

On the date, they have a fabulous time. John rates it as one of the best experiences of his life. Twenty more units added to Mary's account bring her balance to forty love units. A second date is almost as good, and she gets fifteen more love units, bringing the balance to fifty-five.

But the next time John calls Mary for a date, she has to turn him down. She says she feels truly sorry, but she has a commitment she set up many weeks ago. She quickly adds that she is free the next night, if John would be interested. John is indeed interested and arranges to pick her up for dinner about eight o'clock.

What happens to Mary's account in John's Love Bank as a result of this slightly negative encounter?

*She definitely sounded sorry she couldn't go out with me tonight,* John muses. *I can't expect her to be available just any time. Besides, she did suggest that we go out tomorrow night. I'm sure she really likes me.*

Regardless of how much John tries to assure himself, the experience still leaves him feeling slightly uncomfortable. Mary's account in John's Love Bank is debited five units.

Over the next few months, John and Mary date regularly and often. The good and fabulous experiences far outnumber the occasional negative ones,

and Mary's balance soon stands at five hundred love units. Only Sarah, an old flame whom John broke up with over a year ago, had ever accumulated more units in John's Love Bank.

After six more months, Mary's balance rises to one thousand love units, an all-time high total for any woman in John's life, well in excess of Sarah's balance. At this point, John feels something he has never felt before. He is in love and tells Mary that she is the most attractive, intelligent, sensitive, charming, and delightful woman he has ever met.

Mary's balance in John's Love Bank has breached what I call the *romantic love threshold*. When someone's account is above a certain balance, the feeling of romantic love is triggered.

John associates Mary with many positive—even fabulous—emotional experiences and only a few negative ones. He looks forward to each date with Mary, and his mind dwells on her when they are apart.

He begins to wonder what he would do if he ever lost her. He can't imagine going through the rest of his life without her. *With Mary at my side, I wouldn't need anything or anyone else in order to be happy*, John tells himself. Vivid thoughts of marriage form in his mind.

Meanwhile, John's account in Mary's Love Bank has grown steadily but not at quite the same pace. When they met, she found him quite attractive, and their first dates were very good experiences for her. Because his account is clearly positive, 250 units, but has not yet breached the romantic love threshold, she likes him but is not in love with him.

While Mary's account in John's Love Bank continues to grow, surpassing twelve hundred units, his account in her Love Bank begins to falter. He begins to criticize the way she does things which makes Love Bank withdrawals. He also starts to focus his attention on her in a way that makes her feel uncomfortable and frightened. More Love Bank withdrawals.

So Mary abruptly tells John she needs a little breathing room. She suggests that they suspend their dating for a month or so and wonders if they should date other people during that time.

John feels devastated. This encounter registers as one of the all-time painful experiences of his life. Twenty units quickly come out of Mary's hefty account. A few days later, John calls Mary and tries to convince her to change her mind, but she remains firm. John calls several more times

over the next week. Mary stands fast, and before John decides to leave her alone for a month, debits accumulate in Mary's account that total over one hundred units.

John spends the next month feeling miserable. But he is still deeply in love with Mary, whose balance in his Love Bank still remains high, above one thousand units, in spite of the recent withdrawals. John tries to date another woman, Jill, but she does not stand a chance. Because he is so crazy about Mary, he finds dating Jill to be a negative experience. Through no fault of her own, his dates with her accumulate nothing but debits in her account.

At the end of a month, John calls Mary. Her balance has remained above one thousand units because, while he has missed her, there have been no additional negative experiences to cause any more withdrawals. John feels ecstatic when Mary tells him that she has also missed him and accepts his invitation to a date the very next evening. All she needed, she says, was time to think things through and see clearly how she felt.

The first date after the month-long separation is a memorable experience. Subsequent dates seem better than ever. At the end of the year, Mary's balance in John's Love Bank has risen to two thousand units. At the same time, John's account in Mary's Love Bank has also risen steadily until it, too, has breached the romantic love threshold and is now at an all-time high of eleven hundred units. Mary also thinks of wedding bells.

One night, after dinner at their favorite restaurant, John proposes marriage. He tells Mary he wants to live his life for her happiness and assures her that if she will marry him, he will do whatever he can to make her happy and will never do anything to hurt her. She accepts his proposal, and after a brief engagement, they become husband and wife.

## **Beyond the Honeymoon**

The first year of their marriage is an extremely happy one. Without really thinking about it, John and Mary meet each other's emotional needs quite well. John remains as affectionate and attentive to her needs as he was when they dated. Mary responds passionately during lovemaking. They spend considerable time together and share their hopes and dreams in long

conversations. Mary takes tennis lessons so that she can keep up with John in his favorite recreational pastime.

John earns an excellent income as a computer analyst, and Mary works as an office manager at a mortgage company. They are both happy with their working arrangements, at least for the present.

During their first year of married bliss, what happens to the balances in their Love Banks? They are still increasing, but not at the rate they did before marriage. Their dates before marriage were especially designed to make each other feel terrific, but now they become focused on other priorities: careers, the possibility of children, housing, friends and relatives, and an assortment of other distractions that take their attention off each other when they spend time together. It's not uncommon for them to field text messages from others when they actually do have a date.

In spite of her reduced rate of deposits in John's Love Bank, Mary's balance still increases. At the end of their first year of marriage, her net gain from the previous year adds up to an additional one hundred units. That brings her overall balance to twenty-one hundred units. Approximately the same pattern holds true for John's account which rises to twelve hundred units. During the next four years, accounts in both Love Banks continue to rise, but ever so slowly.

On their fifth anniversary, John still feels madly in love with Mary, and she feels the same about him. They decide to start a family, and little Tiffany arrives as they start their sixth year of marriage.

Critical changes start taking place in that sixth year. Mary is still the joy of John's life, but he notices an increase in his "down times." While John loves Tiffany dearly, she still creates new demands for both John and Mary and takes away from the amount of attention they once had just for each other.

As a net result of all these common changes, Mary's balance in John's Love Bank drops by one hundred units over the year. The loss is not that significant—yet. Mary's balance still remains very high at two thousand units, and John feels deeply in love with her.

But around the time of Tiffany's second birthday, Mary gets restless. She wants to advance her career. She approaches John to see if he would support

the idea of her going back to college, finishing her bachelor's degree, and possibly going on for a master's degree in business administration.

"It will take six years of classes," Mary explains. "But I'll quit my part-time job so I can concentrate on the baby during the day and take most of the classes at night."

John agrees to her idea enthusiastically. He enjoys a solid and stable income, and they can manage without Mary's paycheck. He will take care of Tiffany while Mary is at school and when she needs time on occasion to finish homework assignments.

### **No Time for Romance**

Mary enrolls in classes and soon earns excellent grades. But those grades require sacrifice of attention and time. What bothers John the most is that Mary rarely seems to be in the mood to make love. John understands her dilemma. School consumes a lot of energy, and what is left she devotes to housekeeping and caring for Tiffany. By bedtime, Mary feels exhausted, and John doesn't want her to feel pressured to make love.

John makes the best of it with less frequent and more hurried lovemaking when he finds Mary in the mood, but he also misses the attention she used to give him and the tennis games they usually played on Saturday mornings. Now Mary seldom spends time with him and rarely plays tennis on Saturdays. Instead, on the weekends, she does housework and catches up on homework for her Monday classes.

John and Mary continue in this pattern for the next two years. Mary's account in John's Love Bank drops slowly but steadily. John begins wondering what happened to the woman he married. She seems lost in her books and doesn't want to discuss what she is learning with him.

"It's all stuff you had years ago," Mary tells him. "Besides, you're a math expert, and I'm not taking that much math."

Note that John's account in Mary's Love Bank holds steady because John is helping her meet a very special need in her life right now—completing her education. Mary realizes they haven't spent much time together, but she deeply appreciates all John's sacrifices and his apparent total commitment to his family.

## HIS NEEDS, HER NEEDS

*Things will be better as soon as I get my degree*, she tells herself. So Mary plunges into academia, not quite realizing how her husband feels.

But she does notice a change in the attention he gives her when they are together. He is less affectionate and certainly less conversant. He hardly ever sits down with her just to talk. The only time he seems to show much of an interest in her is when he wants to make love. Because it feels rushed and focused on him, she feels used rather than loved.

They have entered a marital negative feedback loop. The less Mary meets John's emotional needs because of her study schedule, the more her account in his Love Bank drops. The lower her account goes, the less motivated he is to meet her emotional needs, which causes a drop in his account in her Love Bank.

Eventually, their sizable Love Bank balances drop so low that they are no longer in love with each other. Can the love they once had be restored?