

Why Many Married Women Are
Frustrated
(And How Not To Be)

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D E D I C A T I O N

To

Mother:

Mercy Olufunmilayo Komolafe

With Gratitude & Admiration

Brother:

Tiwalade Olatubosun Ademorijimi

An Inspiration, who lived with Dignity and Self-Respect,
who Made the Choice to Live his days Fully while here
until he moved on.

Taiwo & Lily

My Blessings

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Thank You All!

Oluseye A. Komolafe, 2011

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Poem: Bridal Dream

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B R I D A L D R E A M

*I'm waiting for the day
When I can finally say
That I'm a married woman
And that my husband is my number one fan
'Cause at the moment it's only a dream
At times I just want to scream
Fearing this will never happen for me
Yet in my mind it's all I see
Wanting to wear that white gown
And feel like the queen of the town
To have flowers all around
To have bubbles blowin' from the ground
The perfect wedding that's what I want
But bad dreams haunt
Me every day
Thinking, knowing I'll never see it that way
What can I say, it's every girls dream
To be a bride and beam
Beautiful for the world to see
And know she's all she can be
I dream of being a bride
By the ocean and crashing tide
The warmth of the sun
For my day to finally come
But for me it will never be that way
It's a dream, that's all I can say.*

The confession of a girl -- Jessica Diamond

P R E F A C E

This book is written against the background of the author – who comes from a part of the world where the traditional structure of the family is still strongly held on to and valued by the society and promoted by the culture – where in many cases the female gender seems to be at the lower end of many un-balanced relationships.

The models and theories put forward in the book are not solely for married women or the female gender, the models and principles are in themselves gender-blind, and are applicable to all sorts of relationships, irrespective of the gender and number of people involved, including relationships outside of the traditional family setting.

The author only chooses to use the traditional family setting because it presents a classic example of real life case studies of the models.

The models also explain and give a lot of insight into the root causes of many of the issues and challenges that couples in a traditional family setup deal with, which if (or when) brought to the fore are easily dealt with, giving room for a healthy and blissful relationship to emerge.

The author believes it will be a good exercise and a good investment of time if a husband takes the time to find-out the real reasons why his wife is frustrated or may become frustrated, and with the cooperation of the wife address the root causes. Same goes for the Parent–Child

P R E F A C E

relationship.

In summary, this book is about building better relationships especially on the home front. The author is aware and acknowledges that there have been a great number of books, theories and models suggested to address the different challenges and issues in the marriage relationship. Many of these are rooted in faiths and religious beliefs, but the emergence of Life Coaching and Couples/Family Therapy models and interventions have encouraged a higher consideration for non-spiritual and non-faith based sources. So the author being a Life Coach is approaching this issue from the perspective of a Life Coach.

The author lays no claim to originality for any of the models here presented, much have come through studying, reading and practice. He strongly believes that the principles will work for anyone who will patiently learn and apply them as presented in this book.

Oluseye A Komolafe

I

THE LEVELS OF LIFE

Many times, the author has been confronted by individuals (many married, others single and some in one type of relationship or the other), and they have always expressed one or more of these sentiments: "Why is it that, in more than two-thirds of families the best of everything is saved for 'Father' and he is waited on? If the children annoy him he goes to his club etc." The wife and mother bears not only the children but the burdens and heartaches? The husband only supplies the money (not always and generally not usually enough), the wife has the care of a growing and increasing family, and if the wife should die, there are plenty women for the asking?"

Other questions include; What role should the man or the woman play in an ideal marriage relationship? Who should dominate the other? Who should sacrifice more, the man or the woman? Are 'loving' and 'responsible' parents (especially the mothers) not supposed to sacrifice their lives for the family, i.e. her husband and her children? What other career goal should a 'responsible' woman have other than raising 'brilliant', 'academically sound', 'medal-winning' and later in life 'well employed' children?

Unfortunately by default, the societal expectation is that the woman should sacrifice more of her life for the betterment of the family, and her reward being the 'achievements' of the rest of the family members. That the woman should

make it the business of her life to 'suffer' and should pride herself on

how much she has had to 'suffer', and 'bear'. These questions and similar ones are the real reason for this book. The author attempts to treat every individual in a relationship first as a 'complete' individual – with ideals, dreams, hopes, goals, expectations, purpose, vision and mission which is who they are.

The author strongly believes that there is but one way to establish harmony in the home, and that is - **to establish it first in the individual!** The author also believes or assumes that no man wants a burden-bearing, round-shouldered, wrinkled and fagged-out wife. 'That no man respects or loves a woman who will "submit" to bearing unlimited burdens or babies either. And, if a woman "submits" and yet keeps up a continual grumbling and nagging about it, a man simply despises her. 'That what every man hopes for when he marries a woman is that she will be a bright and reasonable comrade. If she is even half-way that she will get all the love and consideration she can long for.

Bearing the above beliefs or assumptions in mind, we will attempt to see the implications and effects of the "life of sacrifice" that is expected of women on the women themselves as individuals. As well as the effects and implications of the "life of sacrifice" parents live for their children. Let us begin our exploration from the concept called "The Levels of Life" The reader should note that, Levels of life are not the same as levels of the mind. Levels of life refer to the different environments and situations that make up the world we live in. While Levels of the mind are the representations of the different layers or parts of our

thinking selves that concern the processing of these experiences. In

other words, 'levels of mind' is a much more complex area that is way beyond the scope of this book. However, different areas provide different opportunities for us to interact and experience different types of thought, which may in turn involve the different layers of mind. The models treated here look at how we fit in as individuals into larger groups, how our lives are split into parts, balance, and the imbalances that may occur between what we think we want and what we really want.

The Different Levels Of Life (looking at different models)

We are going to look at a few models and representations, each of which tries to provide a 'map' of our lives. Each one aims to enable us to understand more effectively how different parts of our lives have various values, contributing to our overall experience. Some of the models seek to explain the sources of various types of satisfaction or fulfillment, others time allocation or priority. Depending on individual situations, each model has something to offer. However, it should be noted that these models are themselves only tools to assist understanding, and should not be considered definite and fixed patterns. Different people will have different experiences in different areas of life, and may vary somewhat from the suggestions in the models.

These variations may actually be clues to dealing with the issues and challenges that individuals face, since the differences may require compensation elsewhere.

Levels of Experience (Group Size)



In the *levels of experience* model we see *the different levels* of how we fit into the universe around us.

The theory here is that generally one must satisfy the basic needs of each level in order to address the needs of the level or layer above it. In other words, the model expects that individuals should have a clearly defined ‘**Self State**’, with clearly defined individual goals, derived from one’s ambitions, desires, hopes and dreams. It is after the ‘**Self State**’ has been defined and balanced that one should

progress to the '**Family**' stage.

Thus, one must ensure one's own survival and happiness before beginning to build a family unit and being concerned with the needs of that small and special group. Once the family group is stable, then, one tends to look outside it towards other groups to affiliate to and work with. At each level the groups become more all-encompassing and generally more 'macro' in nature.

Clearly we are thrust into situations in life that require us to work on multiple levels at once. When we do this, however, typically we are surviving all the levels, not experiencing them fully!

The main point from this model is that it is very important for any individual to ensure that the most 'micro' level - in this case, the 'SELF' - is stable. Only when the 'Self' is stable can the person begin to contribute fully to each of the other stages.

From this model, two reasons why many married women are frustrated are; Undefined 'Self'-State and Unbalanced 'Self' state. 'With no clearly defined and set individual goals, motivated by no ambition, beaming with unfulfilled desires, with hopes only in God for a divine intervention, and memories of childhood dreams and wishes. What other recipe is there for frustration?

In fact they can be said to be *'living a lie'*. This obviously is not just an issue with married women but with most people.

'Living a lie' is based on the premise that; *"To be or to live less than you are, is a complete denial of who you are"*.

Many individuals know quite well that they can achieve much more than they currently do, that they are not living their real lives, that they are not being themselves, even after many years of being in relationships, they know they are only acting as directed either by the society's expectations of the roles they should be playing or their religion's or their family's.

They are trapped in drudgery! What is drudgery? It is simply *'unloved work'* - nothing more nor less. Any work which is looked down upon, and which is done with the hands whilst the heart and mind are criticizing it, and running out after other things, - any work thus done is drudgery. Work done with the hands and a small and unwilling part of the mind, is drudgery. To him or her who respects, and loves, and does with a will what she finds to do, there is no drudgery.

Many people wake every single day to go to work they know very well they do not like, jobs they are not happy doing, jobs which if given the option they will never choose. But, they go anyway, because they assume they have no choice, they believe they must leave home every morning for somewhere called *'work'* or else...! Many feel they are

trapped in the work, and if they do not do it they are as good as dead!

Some or many of these people may be doing well on the so called jobs and even get to the top the jobs has to offer, but they know the job is only a meal ticket, nothing more.

In other words they know deep within themselves that they are living a lie. **This in itself is a cause of frustration.**

Let's take this a step further!

The majority of women have been wrongly programmed to see relationships such as marriage as end in itself and not as means to an end. They see marriage as the goal of life, expecting that once they are married, they have the solution to all their issues and challenges, and they will be forever happy ever after!

In fact, many young girls have been programmed by their parents, culture, and society, to live for and to please their husbands. But marriage being not an end, fails to meet their expectations, hence frustration sets in as a result of unfulfilled hopes and expectations.

'As important as the family institution is, more important are the individuals who make-up the family institution or unit! Once again: **there is but one way to establish harmony in the home, and that is to establish it first in the individual!**

If two heads are better than one, then the two heads had

better be two good heads, or else the two heads will be worse off than just one good head.

Hence it is important that any two individuals who are going into a relationship of any sort must be individuals with a deep sense of awareness of who they are, what their goals and ambitions in life are, etc. They should be individuals who are comfortable with their identity as an individual and well secured in themselves. They should be individuals who are aware of their strengths, weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats around them at various points in their lives. These are issues which can only be sorted at the level of **"Self"** from our model.

Marriage has no answer to these issues. They are personal issues that can only be successfully dealt with personally, of course with the help and encouragement of others.

Over the years, lots of women (and a whole lot of men) avoid like plague answering fundamental questions like; who am I? What is (are) my life goal(s)? How will I know when I am achieving my goals? etc.

They will rather spend time thinking, meditating, and even praying for answers on questions like *who will I marry? And, when will I marry?* They assume once the question of who to marry is sorted; all other questions will be answered or will automatically sort themselves. This is of course, until marriage tells them otherwise.

The argument here is not about whether it is wrong or right to ask who will I marry, or to wish to meet and marry the right partner, but that some fundamental personal issues must have been determined because it is mostly outside the

jurisdiction of a relationship to answer these questions, even though relationships can greatly influence, make or mar some personal resolutions, especially when such resolutions are not made out of strong convictions at the level of “**Self**”.

These personal convictions become the foundation on which the family institution is built, and if the foundation is well laid for the individuals coming together to form the family unit, the better for the family.

The Holy Scriptures confirms this theory by asking the rhetorical question: “if the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (KJV). It is the convictions of the individuals in a marriage (or in any other relationship for that matter) that fuels and directs the relationship and not the other way round (i.e relationships do not usually direct convictions). Issues like Personal Value System, Character Development, Personal Vision and Personal Mission and so on, should be and are best sorted at the level of “**Self**”. When they are not sorted at this level, they become a source of conflict and frustration in other areas and at other levels down the line or as the group grows larger.

This model is also applicable to other areas outside the marriage setting. We have heard and seen instances and cases where men and women of ‘great wealth’ and ‘fame’ (celebrities so to speak) are shamefully disgraced by a major or minor character flaw. We have heard of individuals with

enviable credentials and high levels of achievement in their careers, yet having issues of low self esteem, and addictions of various kinds. These are symptoms of jumping, or omitting either intentionally or ignorantly issues that should have been sorted at the level of 'Self' which later show up as defects in other larger groups.

This highlights a mistake some 'rich' husbands make. They assume that all a woman needs is money! Therefore, after depositing lots of money in the woman's bank account, they see no reason why she should work or ask for more from life. Such men never bother or care enough to ask their poor wives (irrespective of how much is in her bank account) what her dreams are. They never bother to find out if money is all she needs, or if she is even happy at all, in spite of the money.

Many people can attest to the fact that life is not all about money! So many people (probably including your wife) want more out of life than money!

We are all called to serve irrespective of our status and gender. There is a dimension of an intrinsic joy, that comes from knowing we are not just living for ourselves, that we are leaving our footprints on the sands of history, that humanity will know that we were here long after we have gone - that we came, we served, and contributed to building a better earth and making the earth a better place than we met it, before passing the baton on to the next generation. How can one quantify this feeling and joy in monetary terms, or how can it be monetized?

Husbands need to appreciate their wives even if it is just by reciprocating what their wives have done for them over the years. We are not referring to roles switching here! But just as wives have encouraged many husbands to become nothing less than what they are, and have encouraged and assisted them (their husbands) to take their deserved places in their careers and in the market place, loving and caring husbands too should also begin to ask if they have ignorantly or intentionally neglected the **'Self'** or the **Individuality** of their wives.

Just as the wives have been supportive over the years, husbands should assist their wives in discovering who they are, identify with them; and help discover any hidden talent(s) or untapped potential(s) in their wives.

In short, try and re-discover the woman you have lived with for years and yet know so little about! Ask genuinely about her goals, her ambitions and her dreams. Ask her, if you (the husband) were not in the picture what would she have loved to do? Where would she loved to go – physical places? Who would she have loved to be? What would her wardrobe look- like? And so on.

You will be surprised how much of herself and her life, she has sacrificed for you! Even she may not know it! So make it a duty or service and contribution to humanity and help someone identify and discover herself and support her in living to her potential.

Your wife will be eternally grateful and you will begin to see love emit from her to you not just at the emotional level but at a level and dimension that can only be experienced rather than imagined.

On a lighter note; many women in their characteristic emotional response to genuine love and care, will tell their husband: "Honey.... Thanks for caring... butyou see....actually.....I can't imagine my life without you.....if you are gonethen I'm gone.....without you.....life has no meaning...my life is empty....blah, blah, blah" and the discussion ends with one or two rounds of love making.

Please, don't let that happen, at least not until you get what you are looking for.

We should also note that a woman's dreams and goals after marriage may be genuinely different from her dreams and goals before marriage, and there is nothing wrong with this.

II

SELFISHNESS, SACRIFICE AND MARTYRDOM

Let's talk about Selfishness, Sacrifice and Martyrdom, another reason many married women are frustrated.

Positive Selfishness

The concept of being selfish tends to be considered negative in our society today, since it is considered an example of being inconsiderate towards others. This, however is not totally true, this type of selfishness would be referred to as **Negative Selfishness**.

I will define both concepts like this;

Negative Selfishness	Positive Selfishness
Person puts themselves first in all things, including to the deliberate detriment of others.	Person puts themselves first, without any deliberate or knowing ill effect on others.

As we can see, the key difference is the intention towards other people!

Now let us consider a typical third position - **Martyrdom!**

Let me sound a note of caution here, By 'martyrdom' we are not referring to any kind of religious extremism, but rather martyrdom to an ideal within a relationship (*again, this is not restricted to a traditional marriage relationship, - it could be any kind of relationship*).

Let's define Martyrdom and compare it with Positive Selfishness.

Martyrdom to relationship	Positive Selfishness
Self-sacrifices in order to ensure everyone else within the relationship comes 'first'	Ensures personal wellbeing first

Now let us consider the end effects and implications of each of these concepts.

The Martyr acts out of a sense of duty and responsibility to act for the benefit of others, excluding Self. This person will often be deeply miserable, never ensuring personal well-being, stability or happiness. They measure their success in terms of the happiness of others, and not themselves. This creates all sorts of problems and is a totally unhealthy relationship, whether between partners, or towards children.

Let us consider some possible end results of a martyrdom-type relationship:

- Sense of being 'owed' something for all the sacrifice.
- Sense of being 'let down' when the other person moves on or grows up.
- Sense of guilt for having 'let themselves go'.
- Sense of unfairness and resentment for not having received the same self-sacrificial attitude in return.
- Sense of 'where did my life go' after a long period of

continuing such behaviour.

Classic Scenarios of Martyrdom: Marriage Relationships

In a marriage or long-term relationship, one person worships the other, panders to their every whim, allows themselves to be down-trodden or even abused, and then when they split up wonders where their life has gone.

This is a major cause of frustration for many married women who have been pre-programmed that their happiness and success in life is tied to that of their husbands. Therefore, once they get into any relationship, they suspend or stop all personal plans, goals and ambitions for that of the husband. They start to condition their life to that which they think or assume pleases the man. Under the guise of preparing themselves to be the 'good wife' or 'the virtuous woman' they sacrifice their self-esteem, self-confidence and even their individuality!

One cannot estimate the degree of frustration many married women go through when their marriage is childless! This is mostly due to the wrong assumption that all issues, complications and challenges associated with being childless, have everything to do with the woman and nothing with the man.

As a result of this erroneous belief system, such women run around for assistance, going to hospitals and taking various kinds of medical tests while the husband is totally

uncooperative. In some instances, the man with the support of his family members (*who will counsel and advise that the woman to be patient*) will go ahead and marry another wife under the guise of wanting to bear a child, leaving the first woman in a state of helplessness and frustration!

*...You were born together, and together you shall
be for evermore. You shall be together when the
white wings of death scatter your days. Aye, you
shall be together even in the silent memory of
God. But let there be spaces in your togetherness.
And let the winds of the heavens dance between
you.*

*Love one another, but make not a bond of love: let
it rather be a moving sea between the shores of
your souls. Fill each other's cup but drink not
from one cup.*

*Give one another of your bread but eat not from
the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be
joyous, but let each one of you be alone, even as
the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver
with the same music.*

*Give your hearts, but not into each other's
keeping. For only the hand of Life can contain
your hearts. And stand together yet not too near
together: For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each
other's shadow.*

Kahlil Gibran.... *The Prophet*

Parent –Children Relationships

Another classic scenario (*of which women are still more of the victim*) is in parenting. We see parents sacrificing well beyond any level the children really wanted or desired, and then expecting the children to be eternally grateful! Later in life when the children have grown up and have moved-on with their lives as adults. They make comments like “I gave up everything for you”, “You could not have wished for a better childhood”, and so on.

Ironically, such behaviour often drives the other person(s) away, since it tends to make the other person feel suffocated, suppressed and obligated. This behaviour is usually accompanied by the false expectations of great gratefulness and thanks. The Martyr forgets that he/she initiated this unhealthy behaviour, and not the hapless recipient! (husband/ wife, children or both).

Acting like a martyr is creating the same dynamic of relationship as when the other person is dominating or abusive. The difference is that it is initiated by the Martyr. Unfortunately, many married women are martyrs, only not many of them are conscious of it.

If you are voluntarily self-sacrificing in a relationship, and you know or suspect there is going to be resentment, recrimination or guilt afterwards, then the dynamics have gone wrong. We all make sacrifices for our partners, but these should always be on the grounds that they are

necessary, fair and will not be repaid with a guilt-trip afterwards.

It is a basic premise of relationships that, whatever roles and responsibilities are shared in whatever manner, the power balance should be fairly even. Neither party should be made to feel obligated to the other. Let us discuss this further!

The Parent - Child(ren) Martyrdom

We are in a culture where it is expected that parents should by default sacrifice their lives for their children. This is in principle what happen by instinct, as every normal parent wishes and wants a better life for their children and preferably a better life than they lived. Parents will naturally if need be sacrifice even their lives. There are instances and examples of parents who have had to sacrifice their lives for their children.

The love between parents and children is one of the strongest at least from the documented history of man. Many strong and influential men have been turned into weaklings and victims of cheap blackmail because the enemy had threatened them via their children.

We are not concerned about parent-children sacrifice under such extreme circumstances. We are concerned with the everyday martyrdom parents (especially mothers) commit for the children thinking they are bound to do it, or that if they don't do it they will be labeled 'BAD Parents/Bad mothers' or that the children will hate them forever for

being so selfish by not putting them (the children) first.

Let's start from education....

From the actions of many parents, it is observed that many parents (especially mothers) believe their own education stops or ends when or where their children education starts. Not that they do not wish to continue their own education, (some of course don't), but all practical steps and commitment towards it stops. Such that from their total income, their budget for Continuing Education immediately crashes to zero, while that of the child rise from zero to about seventy percent (70%) of their total income.

In itself, this action may or may not be a bad one, but, when one begins to question and explore the reasons for this action, one will begin to see why such action is nothing but unnecessary martyrdom, which is of no substantial benefit to both the parents and the children.

First, underlying such action is the belief or desire that (our) children are supposed to be a continuation of our lives, that they should be our successes where we as parents have failed, they should be the corrections of our failures, and as 100 percent ours we (parents) should continue our lives through them.

That is, if our own parents (now grand-parents) could not send us to the 'best schools' of our time, we should be able to send our own children to the 'best schools' of their own time, even at the cost of the parent's own continuing education.

This conclusion also stems from the widely held belief and illusion that the 'best schools' for our children are the 'most expensive' schools our total income can **strenuously** accommodate.

This position is also reinforced by the belief that sending our children to these so called 'best schools' will give our children a head-start in life. As what and who the children will eventually become in life is a function of the schools they attend, the calibre of friends they make and keep from these schools (who should be children of some prominent/wealthy parents in the society), and the quality of what the teachers in the schools teach the children from the books the parents bought for the children.

Let us explore and question these beliefs and their sources. Is it true that children are 100 percent owned by their parents, and that their lives should be a continuation of the parent's life? Just a little thinking will let us know these beliefs are not true! No child is simply an extension of the parent, and good parenting recognizes the difference between our images of the child and the real child who emerges. Each child has self-possession, and this grows in the nourishing soil of interpersonal relationships. Every child is a unique individual and has his or her own life to live. They might have come through us (parents), they are

really not ours. We are only their custodians for a period of time.

Children have never asked anyone to stop living their lives because of them! As a parent, any area of your life that you have chosen to stop for the sake of your children (be it education, sport, exercise, work, etc), you did of your choice, your children never asked you to stop anything for their sake!

There are many cases where parents have been greatly disappointed because they expected their children's lives to be a continuation of theirs, and help them fulfill their unfulfilled dreams and aspirations. Some parents have wished and planned that their children will grow up and study a particular course (which the parents as students fail to study) and become their 'proud sons and daughters', only to discover that the child or children as the case may be have their own lives to live, and go 180 degrees against the parent's wish.

Yet, these parents have their own unique unexplored and unexploited talents and potentials, which they have since abandoned under the guise of 'sacrifice' for their children.

Again, how true is the belief that the best way to train or give our children the best education is by sending them to the most expensive schools our income can strenuously accommodate? It is unfortunate that many parents are

victims of mass or societal programming when it comes to children's education. The first and most important teacher(s) in a child's life are the parents, although, whether or not they are the best teachers is subject to argument as this depends on the parent(s) in question.

Permit me to digress a little; aside being a Life Coach, I am also a senior human resource consultant with one of the leading Human Resources Management & Development Consulting firms in the country. I am saying this so the reader will know what I am about to say is not just mere speculation from a layman's point of view but that of a professional.

In HR Learning and Development for an organization's workforce, one of the most potent employee development programmes in terms of acquiring the skills and techniques required for their jobs is through what is known as 'On-the-Job-Training' programmes. This could be packaged as a mentorship programme or better still as an internship programme for a soon-to-be professional or an employee.

The common factor to these programmes is that the inexperienced individual learns from the experienced person, in real life cases and scenarios, what the job requires - in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes - using real problems that demand real solutions. The period of internship varies depending on the organization; it could range from three months to one or two years. As mentioned earlier, this is one of the most potent methods of employee training and development.

However, this is not rocket science - break-through knowledge or discovery, as it is the way most animals (mammals especially) train and bring up their offspring and prepare them for life challenges and survival in a very risky and dangerous wild life, where the rule is 'Jungle justice' and 'Survival of the Fittest'. Only that the modern human has relegated and given the responsibility of training his/her children to some teachers in some so called 'best schools'.

We know in home economics, that there is a science to cooking - where every menu or meal has its recipe with specific and detailed measurements of all the ingredients that could or will be used in preparing the meal including the quantity of salt - measured to scale. In reality however, very few homes have measuring scales in their kitchen, and doubt that wives actually use the measuring scale to measure the quantity of salt they use relative to other ingredients when they are cooking our everyday meals. This is because over time, they have learnt the art of cooking and now know by instinct the required quantity of salt for the meals they prepare without consulting the measuring scale. This brings to fore the difference between the *Science* of things and the *Art* of things. In home economics as taught in schools they teach the science of cooking and meal preparation but in our various homes we see and eat everyday from the art of cooking and meal preparation.

Now let's bring this home; in all forms of Mentor - Protégé, Internship or Apprenticeship programmes, the protégés and interns are learning from their mentors the arts of their chosen trades, vocation or profession.

So it is in the Parent - Child(ren) relationship. Parents should take 100 percent responsibility for teaching their children the art of living; the children are the parent's interns in life. While the science of living could be thought in schools and read in books. It is by learning from an adult that a child can functionally learn the art of living, which (in the author's opinion) is more important.

Permit me to once again use my HR professional experience as a reference. One of the services my firm renders to various clients include Executive search and Recruitment Services. Before we embark on any of such assignments, we take time to get or develop (in cases where such is not readily available) the Job Descriptions, detailing the various roles and functions the person that will occupy a position will perform. After this, we will begin to explore with the client what the Person Specification for the position should be, that is, we ask what qualifications should the ideal person have? What skills should the person have, including the number of years of experience in similar jobs and role and specifically from which industry? And so on.

From our experience however, when clients (by clients I mean employers) are asked what the person specification for their various positions are, some attributes have been constant for virtually all job positions from entry level jobs

to senior management level jobs, from different set of clients across industries and sectors of the economy, from multinationals to medium and even what could be termed one-man-small-scale industries, enterprise and ventures.

The emphases have been less on the academic qualifications and more on the attributes like:

The Person...

- “Must be smart and intelligent,
- “Must have an entrepreneurship spirit,
- “Must be able to use his/her initiative,
- “Must be able to see opportunities where others see problems,
- “Must be a problem solver,
- “Must be self-confident and self reliant, and be able to work with little or no supervision,
- “Must be a team player,
- “Must have excellent communication skills, both written and oral,
- “Must be passionate and committed to whatever he/she is doing,
- And so on.....

The list goes on and on. Usually we don't have problems identifying and getting potential candidates with the required qualifications and years of experience, but the challenge (which is what the clients pay for) is getting candidates with the above listed Person's Specifications who are jobless or looking for job! Usually they are not

looking for jobs.

Some of the demands seem mutually exclusive. How would one logically expect someone who has an entrepreneurship spirit, with a can do spirit, combined with an ability to see opportunities where others are seeing challenges, coupled with the fact that this individual has excellent communication skills both written and oral, to be jobless or looking for a job? Irrespective of the course of study or grades or qualification, such individuals rarely respond to job adverts. It's like looking for the living among the dead!

They are usually the types clients pay Executive Search Consultants to recruit. More so that most of these attributes are not formally taught in schools. They could possibly be taught in some schools as part of the curriculum of science of living, but they can only be learnt and acquired through the Art of living in an internship - like programme.

Since the best way to lead or teach is by example, parents should live a life that is truly worthy of emulation for their children to learn from. If "...man is as he thinks" then parents should take responsibility for molding and shaping the thinking and mind of their children rightly.

But you cannot give what you don't have, how will you or how can you teach your child when you don't know what to teach? How will you give your child an entrepreneurship spirit when you don't have it? How can you imbibe a 'can do' spirit in your child when the child has watched you do nothing all his life?

Just as parents want to be proud fathers and mothers of successful and accomplished children in the future, so do children want fathers and mothers they can be proud of and about whom they can boast to their friends in the present!

To children, parents are heroes and heroines; supermen and superwomen who can do anything for them just for the asking. So, parents have the responsibilities of living a great life for their children to see and emulate.

Ideally, the number of hours children spend with adults should be greater than that spent with their peers. This is because every minute a child spends with an adult (who gives the child attention) is a minute invested and spent in a form of learning, basically learning an art of living from the adult. While most of the time a child spends with his or her peers is spent playing. Some adults often glamorize the idea of large families and children growing up together. But children should learn about the world and life in general from adults, not from other children. This is another reason why children should always be included in conversations, especially conversations about them.

It is important that parents give birth only to the number of children they can adequately be responsible for. Any one adult can only focus on and give attention to one child or two children at a time. If there are too many children for the number of adults, then the adults become overwhelmed and unable to give enough attention. And you should never

take responsibility for more children than you can give adequate attention to.

It is high-time that parents realised that paying a large percentage of their income as school fees to some 'best school' and then living miserable lives as a result is not giving the child the 'best of education' that they can afford.

There are also parents who find the task of raising children too difficult, but will want to satisfy their conscience and prefer to pay the fees of the 'best school' as a sign of sacrifice for their children.

Every home should be a home school with a functional library for every child in the home, and then a formal education through a school that parents can conveniently and comfortably afford should be sought to complement the efforts of parents in the holistic training they are trying to give their children.

Because this book is primarily not about parenting, we should not flog the topic more than necessary. The key learning point in this is that parents don't have to commit martyrdom under the guise of bringing up and giving their children good education. The children don't demand such from us. They want us to live a great life and be happy just as they are.

Letter From Abraham Lincoln To His Son's Teacher¹

My son starts school today. It is all going to be strange and new to him for a while and I wish you would treat him gently. It is an adventure that might take him across continents. All adventures that probably include wars, tragedy and sorrow. To live this life will require faith, love and courage.

So dear Teacher, will you please take him by his hand and teach him things he will have to know, teach him - but gently, if you can.

Teach him that for every enemy, there is a friend. He will have to know that all men are not just, that all men are not true. But teach him also that for every scoundrel there is a hero, that for every crooked politician, there is a dedicated leader.

Teach him if you can that 10 cents earned is of far more value than a dollar found. In school, teacher, it is far more honourable to fail than to cheat.

¹ In the author's opinion, this letter should have been addressed to the modern parent!

Teach him to learn how to gracefully lose, and enjoy winning when he does win.

Teach him to be gentle with gentle people and tough with tough people. Steer him away from envy if you can and teach him the secret of quiet laughter.

Teach him if you can - how to laugh when he is sad, teach him there is no shame in tears. Teach him there can be glory in failure and despair in success. Teach him to scoff at cynics.

Teach him if you can the wonders of books, but also give time to ponder the extreme mystery of birds in the sky, bees in the sun and flowers on a green hill.

Teach him to have faith in his own ideas, even if everyone tells him they are wrong. Try to give my son the strength not to follow the crowd when everyone else is doing it.

Teach him to listen to everyone, but teach him also to filter all that he hears on a screen of truth and take only the good that comes through.

Teach him to sell his talents and brains to the highest bidder but never to put a price tag on his heart and soul. Let him have the courage to be impatient, let him have the patient to be brave.

Teach him to have sublime faith in himself, because then he will always have sublime faith in

mankind, in God.

This is the order, teacher but see what best you can do. He is such a nice little boy and he is my son.

Abraham Lincoln

Comparing the Negatively & Positively Selfish Individuals!

Let us compare these behaviours with those of someone being **negatively selfish**. Remember, this is *the behaviour where the person is selfish at the deliberate cost of others*. From our examples, this personality would be the one forcing the other into a position of submission and cooperation –perhaps the abuser, dominator or other manipulative-type character.

The person who is positively selfish, however, is very different. **They are selfish in order to ensure their own wellbeing and balance. They do not willingly do so at the detriment of others, and will sacrifice if it is needed and fair.** Thus they will make sacrifices when it ‘feels right’ to do so, not because of any false obligation.

By being centered, stable and having all the resources they need, the positively selfish person is usually strong,

dependable and reliable. They can therefore easily assist and support those around them, because it suits them to.

The positively selfish person helps others because they want to!

This want can be driven by self-interest (helping a colleague for the benefit of the group), out of love (helping a family member), or out of some other instinct to make a difference.

In each case it is not out of obligation, but out of caring and an instinctive desire to be helpful. This is often referred to as '**unconditional love**'. In other words, they do not have to, they do not feel obligated to, they simply feel 'right' about it.

If you now refer back to the diagram (pg 12 - Levels Of Experience - Group Size), you can see how a positively selfish person who is balanced, stable and happy in '**Self**' level can bring that happiness to the other groups that follow across each layers of the diagram.

At each level the individuals should avoid dysfunctional behaviours like martyrdom, guilt, obligation and manipulation, but, instead act according to what fits best with their beliefs, convictions, plans and goals.

This is could also be refer to 'doing what fits with the highest version of you'. In other words, doing what feels right, and what you will feel OK with afterwards too - as coined by N. D. Walsh in his books on multi-faith spirituality.

A key learning point in the first map of the areas of self,

teaches us that we have to put ourselves first, in order to be there for others. Self-martyrdom causes guilt, resentment and dysfunctional relationships.

The flip side of this, are those relationships where the strong partner dominates the weaker partner, forcing them into self-sacrifice and is thus being emotionally abusive.

III

DYNAMICS OF THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

The dynamics of a marriage relationship in terms of how couples relate to and with each other could be another source of frustration for many married women (of course and men too). This specifically has to do with the various roles individuals play when relating to each other. The theory is that when individuals are playing in-appropriate roles, the relationship dynamics goes wrong and frustration sets in for one or both parties in the relationship. The question posed by the theory to individuals in a marriage relationship is: What role are you playing in your relationship with your spouse? This question will be explored using the Transactional Model of how people relate to each other in a typical relationship.

Transactional Analysis is a theory developed by Dr. Eric Berne in the 1950s. Originally trained in psychoanalysis, Berne wanted a theory which could be understood and available to everyone and began to develop what came to be called Transactional Analysis (TA). Transactional Analysis is a social psychology theory and a method of improving communication. The theory outlines how we have developed and treated ourselves, how we relate and communicate with others, and offers suggestions and interventions which will enable us to change and grow.

Transactional Analysis is underpinned by the philosophy that:

- People can change
- We all have a right to be in the world and be accepted.

This particular model is an adaptation derived from the work of Eric Berne, and relates directly to the previous chapter, in which we discussed martyrdom and abusive partners in relation to self-sacrifice. The model uses three terms: **Child (C)**, **Adult (A)** and **Parent (P)**. These are not completely literal – they refer to the roles individuals play in relationships.

- **The Child** is dependent, needing the advice, guidance and discipline provided by an adult.
- **The Adult** is independent, makes their own way and decisions, and owns their own opinions.
- **The Parent** is the dominant character, making decisions for others and looking after the child, who is in their care.

Often in life we play an inappropriate role, thus entering one of these roles in an inappropriate way. At other times we are quite appropriate in wandering into the role – for example; giving comfort to a partner who is in pain, and ‘mothering’ them because they are temporarily dependent and incapacitated. However, when we enter the role in an inappropriate way, we either cause friction, or we cause the other person to change role too.

Generally, grown-ups (irrespective of their gender) should be living in the ‘Adult’ state. When they leave that state, problems occur. Usually if a person takes the ‘Parent’ state

and acts in this way towards another person, they will either create conflict - (because if the other person or partner is in the 'Adult' state he/she will naturally resist being dominated, pushed around or patronized), or force that other person into the 'Child' state. In this situation the 'Parent' is being dominant and forces the 'Child' into self-sacrifice. If a person takes the 'Child' state, they are acting the martyr, and this either creates conflict, or it results in the other person accepting the 'Parent' state. At any stage, if the second person refuses to change state, and adheres to the 'Adult' state, conflict occurs. This is because the adult is refusing to either be patronised, or to 'mother' the other.

The table below displays the mostly likely outcomes of a range of combinations with two individuals playing different roles and the outcomes of different role combinations.

Assuming two adults, playing the different roles					
Person 1		Person 2	Relating:		Result
Parent (P)		Parent (P)	(P) + (P)	=	Conflict
			(P) + (A)	=	Conflict
			(P) + (C)	=	Dominant Relationship
Adult (A)		Adult (A)	(A) + (A)	=	Harmony
			(A) + (P)	=	Conflict
			(A) + (C)	=	Conflict

Child (C)		Child (C)	(C) + (P)	=	Martyrdom Relationship
			(C) + (A)	=	Conflict
			(C) + (C)	=	Conflict

From the table above, it is realized that couples should relate with each other as ‘Adults’ for there to be harmony in the relationship. Where conflict occurs, either there will be a change in states to ‘Adult’ – ‘Adult’ or the two people will avoid each other. Obviously, this is only valid where both people are ‘Adults’. In many instances, many married women are found in the ‘Child’ state either by choice or coerced.

Other dysfunctional examples occur, such as when an actual child is forced into either an Adult or a Parent role by someone else -for example, a parent feeling needy and acting in a Child role or in instances where actual children are income generators or bread-winners of their families. Sometimes it is appropriate to play roles other than the Adult, but only when it is short term and non abusive to others. Generally, assuming we are adult, the best policy is to be deliberately ‘Adult’ at all times, i.e. independent, making their own way and decisions, and owning their own opinions, except only for those rare exceptions when it is helpful to choose otherwise.

Usually frustration for individuals especially married women comes in different ways. For example;

- ♣ You might be frustrated by the fact that you are unhappy in your relationship.
- ♣ You might be feeling frustrated and say you would

prefer to be single again.

- ♣ You might be frustrated by feeling and indicating that you are only staying in your relationship out of obligation.

The first step is to recognize that something is not right, hence your frustration. Once this is recognized, you can begin to formulate a list of responses, such as re-negotiating some or all the elements of the relationship, (even if it goes right through to separation).

Obviously the author will never suggest to a client to leave a relationship (and no professional Life Coach would) - it has to be entirely your (Client's) decision!

Often, the realization of why you are doing things is the key to the deciding the new strategies for your next line of action. Often partners (or, in this case - loving and reasonable husbands) are quite receptive to change, as long as it is explained and fair, especially if it then creates a harmonious environment in the home for everybody in the family.

Very often, when people stop doing all the things they feel obligated to do - they will then choose to do other things that are far more meaningful to others around them, i.e. things that are beneficial to others without being cajoled, manipulated or coerced.

Take for example the wife who resolves to stop being a

full-time house wife ('Child' state - i.e. fully dependent on her husband for all her needs) and decided to further her education and later take up a job offer. Now as an enlightened and empowered woman and wife, she can contribute to education of the children, reduce the economic burden of the husband and make strategic plans with her husband concerning the future of the family as an equal stakeholder and partner ('Adult' state).

Another example is the husband who resolves to stop being a 'taxi service' ('Parent'). The wife then takes responsibility and catches a bus or learns how to drive ('Adult' state). The husband removes a source of obligation and stress from himself, feels happier, loses a source of resentment towards the wife, and begins to be romantic, affectionate and happy again. The wife might have to get up half an hour earlier to catch a bus, but is more than happy to do so because while she is home, she has a loving husband again, rather than a grumpy, resentful one (Adult - Adult = Harmony)!

Be warned that often there is a list of such seemingly silly little examples, which become symbolic of various emotions, and turn into a 'big deal'. Resolving them can make a huge difference to your relationship(s). The key learning point in this model is the when couples begin to deal and relate with each other as adults there will be less chances for conflict or frustration in the relationship.

IV

RIGID & UNBALANCED LIFESTYLES

Another salient reason many married women are frustrated is rigid and unbalanced lifestyles. This is of course not limited to married women, many people, have very rigid and unbalanced lifestyles. They are expecting too much from the same place or from the wrong places. Our lives are split into various environments and activities on a practical level.

These may interact with the levels in the first model (Group Size), in that we often experience these environments either as an individual (self) or as part of a larger group.

There are many sections, and in the diagram below, an attempt is made at identifying the typical potential outcomes for each of the sections and areas of life. The table that follows is an attempt to describe and categorize some of the occasional and typical benefits we derive from the various sections or areas of life. For example, from our work/workplace; occasionally we experience teamwork by working with our colleagues as team members, we are opportune to display our creativity and experience both mental and physical stimulation. Typically, work/workplace gives us the opportunity to be productive, interact with colleagues, take responsibility, get rewarded and be financially empowered.

These outcomes are the positives outcomes we aim and expect to get from each environment. However, the table

only serve as a guide, since depending on the individual, different outcomes will result from each area. For example, one person may achieve job satisfaction in a particular job while another might not in the same job.

Expectations and Areas of Life

Area of Life	Occasional benefits	Typical benefits/ Outcomes
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teamwork • Creativity • Mental Stimulation • Physical Stimulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity • Interaction with colleagues • Responsibility • Reward • Financial empowerment
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex • Recreational activity • Legal or illegal • Recreational substances • Creativity • Spiritual activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction with friends • Interaction with strangers • Interaction with groups • Interpersonal communication
Physical e.g. Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social interaction • Teamwork • Competition • Achieving targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical stimulation • Fitness • Health • Adrenal regulation
Spiritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beauty • Unconditional love • Religious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging to something greater • Models of understanding

	guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self development • Social interaction 	
Close interpersonal (romantic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex • Love 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support • Interpersonal communication • Self exploration
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love • Procreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belonging to a group • Support • Identity
Hobbies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity • Social Interaction • Mental Stimulation • Physical Stimulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative

As can be seen from the table, there are a number of factors, such as social interaction, that may exist in a variety of areas of life, and have a number of nuances. Others, such as creativity and mental stimulation, can be harder to allocate. Generally we have a need to fill our lives with all the benefits and outcomes in order to achieve a reasonable degree of happiness. It is not always critical where we find the benefit, as long as it is there somewhere.

It is very important to note the two golden rules:

- Do not try to gain all the outcomes from one area of life.
- If any one area is low on beneficial outcomes, substitute elsewhere.

By doing this, you can work on achieving balance in your life.

A common mistake is for many married women to concentrate and be obsessed only on one or two areas (which usually are Family and Spiritual) and then expect to be happy, spending all their time and efforts on just one or two areas of life. In doing so, you are trying to gain all the satisfaction and stimulation you need from just those areas. This creates two outcomes: You are unable to achieve anywhere near all the required outcomes and you begin to resent the areas you are focusing on, because you are not happy.

In this case it is important to objectively go through your lifestyle and look at what different areas/environments you are experiencing, and what you feel you are getting out of each one. For example, it is very common for people to underestimate the need for mental and physical stimulation in particular, and also spiritual and creative outcomes.

It is observed that many African married women under the guise of raising children have stopped engaging in virtually all forms of mental stimulations either through studying or reading. Same with physical stimulation in the form of sports and recreational activities.

There is a balance required between mental and physical

stimulation. Unless both are stimulated, the person feels unsettled and unbalanced, and often experiences stress or poor sleep patterns.

We all feel the need on some level to be creative, whether that is something we create at work, or someone doing cross-stitch, painting, playing a musical instrument, making models, collecting something, etc.

Spiritual issues are often misunderstood – we often assume this means going to a church, mosque or temple! It need not have anything to do with religion whatsoever.

In its broadest sense, being spiritual can involve anything that makes us feel part of something greater than ourselves. This can be a country scene, walking along a beach, a piece of provocative, emotional music, certain works of art, or creative art like sculpture, religion, poetry, certain evocative books, etc. The list is potentially longer.

Whatever the trigger for the individual, it has certain quality which tends to have certain features;

- Typically, you feel part of something greater,
- The logical view of what is important in life is suspended,
- There is an instinctive sense of the experience being important,
- There is usually a strong element of sensory stimulation,
- There is a generally non-specific nature to the experience that denies complete explanation in logical terms. It is by nature esoteric and hard to grasp.

In conclusion, there are two key issues to address –

- Ensure that you are not trying to get all the satisfaction in life out of too narrow a set of experiences, and
- Ensuring all (or most of) the areas are covered.

Once you have done this, take time to consider the first model again (chapter one). If you are getting all the forms of satisfaction, for example social interaction, how does this sit with the models of self, family, group and so on?

Sometimes you will have a need to experience many of the satisfactions and benefits in a variety of different size groups as well as when alone.

For example, you may wish to socially interact:

- Popping down the pub/gym alone
- Popping to the pub/cinema with a loved one
- Taking the whole family out for a meal
- Enjoying time with a social club, e.g. sports group

This need for different levels of interaction for some forms of satisfaction may apply across board, and the need for it will vary for your spouse and also for other individuals.

Imbalances in Levels & Areas of Life

It is important to reiterate the need for balance. We have probably all heard expressions like: "All work and no play make Jack a dull boy". Unfortunately, we tend to forget the wisdom behind these expressions when it comes to practical application. Imbalances in levels and areas of life is also a major cause of frustration for many married women while balancing the levels and areas of life is also a highly potent means of diffusing frustrations.

We are familiar with comments like these:

- "All I seem to do is work, the money is great but I have no time to enjoy it."
- "What is the point of work all the time, there must be more to life."
- "Life seems so meaningless; there must be more to it."
- "I am so busy surviving; I have no time to really live life."
- "I feel so alone, all I seem to do is go to work, and then come home and sort out the kids."
- "Everyone I know seems so shallow; I don't know anyone who is interested in anything deeper."
- "I lie awake at night shattered from work, I am dog tired but my mind is still racing."
- "I am mentally worn out, but I am dying to go for a run, I just feel so stressed I can't be bothered half the time."
- "All I seem to do is run around after my husband and

kids; I have no time to myself.”

- “I am so busy doing night shifts and then running around after the wife and kids in the day, I just need to get away sometimes.”
- “Ever since my partner died, I don’t feel comfortable with religion anymore; I just get on with the practical side of life. I am too busy doing stuff than to worry about the future or being happy.”

These are just a few typical phrases that we hear from people from time to time. The common factor is that life events have meant that the parts of their lives are out of balance. This is as a result of over concentrating on one or few areas and not deriving the satisfaction that comes from other areas of life.

For instance, if you have no one to spend quality time with, the productivity of work can seem pretty meaningless!

In instances where frustration is caused by an imbalance in the areas of life, the antidote in such case is to restore balance back in your life, by taking practical actions in that direction. Perhaps you have over concentrated on work and spiritual activities (engaging only in religious activities), you should try out some recreational or sporting activities, or get involved in some social activities.

You can track how you got to this point. Some people sleepwalked into this situation i.e. unconsciously lured and trapped into the routine lifestyle; others were shunted into

it by trauma or pain. If you sleepwalked into it by accident, then wake up and find your own choices for redressing the balance. If you ended up in this situation through being hurt in some way, you may need to resolve that pain before you are able to embrace change.

If some terrible loss, pain, or other negative learning experience has caused the current imbalance in your life, there is likely to be a certain degree of fear in redressing that balance. This may require direct assistance in the form of therapeutic support. It may be that in finding new sources of the required satisfactions, different ones to those lost before, may suffice.

In other examples, however, the person may be afraid to face the issues that are re-stimulated by trying to find that area of satisfaction again. For example, mixing socially may remind the bereaved person that they no longer have their loved one with them. If this is the case, then remedial work is needed.

The key learning point is that imbalance in life is a major source of frustration and causes unhappiness, or at best a lack of satisfaction with those elements of life that are required for a complete life.

V

SURFACE NEEDS VS DRIVING NEEDS

Another issue we need to talk about which could also result in imbalance is the issue of dissonance between **Surface Needs and Driving Needs**. Put simply in the context of our discussion; Surface needs are needs we yearn to fill when individuals are trying to do what they think they **'Should'** be doing - and not what they really feel is right for them 'deep down', while Driving needs are what individuals really feel is right 'deep down'-- what they actually really want to do. The gap or dissonance between what individuals really want to do (driving need) and what they are coerced or manipulated or conditioned to do (surface needs) could become a constant source of frustration.

Many individuals will often have an agenda based on what they have been taught or told they should want. For example; the concept that they should want lots of money and a big house. Or even the idea they should want to get married and have lots of children, otherwise they are less human!

When an individual has been brought up in a way that strongly emphasized one set of priorities, these (values, opinions or beliefs) may 'ring true' for them, or they may clash terribly with the inner desires of the individual. We are bombarded with value judgments for all of our lives, and depending on our age and emotional situation at the time, and of course who is imposing the opinion, some affect us more than others.

For example, when growing up, we are dependent on the judgment of those parenting us. So, in most cases they tell us what we should want and what we should do based on what they think or assume should be good for us. During these formative years, they suggest to us what our goal(s) in life should be, what our focus should be, how we are expected to behave, their ideas of what is right and what is wrong, and so on, sometimes some of these suggestions and beliefs are backed with some superstitious consequences.

As we grow up, we internalize some of these suggested goals or beliefs and pursue them as if they are ours. Others we begin to question. Common examples of imposed goals and beliefs, both from external sources and from internal negative beliefs include:

- “I should be the perfect wife.”
- “I should keep the house spotlessly clean at all times.”
- “I am not allowed to be ill, I have to keep going.”
- “Only I can manage to look after the family.”
- “I must be a business success and make a fortune.”
- “I should put work/family/God/husband/wife/kids first!”
- “I must self-sacrifice and put everyone else first.”
- “I must succeed in all things.”
- “I have to be the best.”
- “Big men don’t cry, so I need to be stronger.”
- “Good wives don’t argue, so I need to be more

obedient.”

- “I must be perfectly healthy and never eat anything that is not 100% healthy for me.”
- “I do not deserve to be happy, I should just get on with things.”
- “I have to be super slim/super fit/super muscular or else no one will find me attractive.”
- “I must not ask for help, I have to be completely competent because only weak people ask for help.”

There are many variations on these examples, and they are usually characterized by the use of words like “**must**” and “**should**”. These indicate the individual is being driven by an imperative that is not considered and is merely accepted as ‘**the way it is**’.

Sometimes, during our teens we rebel and begin to question some of these beliefs and look for new models. Then from teens to mid life we are trying our own models out for size. According to psychologists, it is in mid-life that we try to balance it all! Hence the so called midlife crisis, which is actually the individual realizing things are not balanced at all!

A way to address the dissonance between surface and driving needs is to begin to assess the validity of goals. The reason for this is of great importance, and more important than goal definition and goal setting.

We will start with looking at the validity of goals as an issue, by goals we mean individual life goals. It is commonplace for individuals to set objectives and goals that they only really want to achieve on one level (Surface). They may not really want to achieve what they are saying at all, or they may believe that the stated goal is what they 'should want'.

So it is crucial to spend time as an individual identifying 'why' you want to achieve what you want to achieve. Is it because you truly want to? Have you been told to? Have you been conditioned to believe you should? Is the goal a product of low self-esteem?

Some judgments and goals prove very valuable, others very destructive. The best way to identify the difference is to get in touch with all the judgments that affect us.

Take time to complete a frank self-exploration exercise, think about and look for examples or instances in your life where you have either said to yourself, 'I should', or hearing the words 'You should'.

This can be expanded to implied 'shoulds', and similar expressions:

- "You must",
- "You are going to have to",
- "Just do it",
- "When are you going to",
- "Don't argue just do it",
- "Don't be stupid, get on with it" and so on.

For example, some common ones are:

- “I should be a perfect lover, friend, parent, teacher, student, and spouse.”
- “I should not make mistakes.”
- “I should look attractive.”
- “I should keep my emotions under control and not feel anger, jealousy or depression.”
- “I should not complain.”
- “I should not depend on others, but take care of myself.”

The next stage is to ask each example – “Why?”

And then ask each one – “Who Says?”

By challenging each preconception or “**should**”, you can identify them, work out if it is a reasonable concept, and work out whose idea it was.

For a positive example:

I should not put my hand on a hot flame.

Why? because it burns.

Who Says? Initially my parents, now I am aware this is good advice.

Another example:

I *should* not talk to anyone but my partner when we are out socialising.

Why? Because it might be seen as flirting

Who Says? My partner, he is being over jealous, this does not seem reasonable!

A person does not need to still be in your life to have an impact with “**shoulds**”. When a dominant influence from our lives is no longer there (has died or moved on), we internalize them into our thoughts. A sufficiently important, strong and dominant personality thus remains with us; our own minds repeating what they would have said were they still there. Thus an old mentor’s advice may remain with us (positive), and an abuser’s vicious comments may also (negative). Therefore, do not forget to consider that comments and judgments may be past figures in your life.

Doing this serves an important purpose – it disassociates your person from the memory of the other person, allowing you a higher degree of free choice. By realizing it is not your own individual thought, but instead a memory of someone else’s opinion, you are able to consider it, just as if it were advice offered to you by a real person today. Otherwise, there is a tendency for you to forget it’s just someone else’s opinion or judgment, and assume it must be your own.

The key learning points is that sometimes we follow a path in life based on values of our own, that we later choose to change. Sometimes we follow paths that have been imposed on us, either directly, or because others have conditioned us to do so. We may then choose to design our own path instead.

Therapeutically, you can do this exercise. Make a list of 'should's. These can be positive and negative. Decide which are negative and might need reconsideration, and are good advices that you are voluntarily taking to heart.

Remember, 'should's can come from any significant person, society or yourself (lack of confidence etc).

Give the 'should's little cartoon personas. Be aware that they are not your own thoughts and see how you feel about that. Make sure the cartoons are non-threatening, funny and have a range of characteristics. Include voice, image, body language, maybe even speech bubbles, nasty little habits (burping etc), smell etc. Have some fun with it – it is important you feel 'in charge' of the image, and thus the voices/opinions coming from it.

This process may not be as easy as it sounds on the pages of a book. Different individuals respond differently to the process, some are often confused, or feel guilty about walking away from all the values that have been imposed on them. Therefore some work may need to be done to help them trust their own judgments. So professional assistance might be suggested if need be.

By addressing all the areas of satisfaction in life, you will be metaphorically 'dipping your toe' into a range of experiences and satisfactions. Only by doing this can you verify and discover what really matters to you.

This process of trying experiences out enables you to discover what really matters to you, what works for you and what is enjoyable for you. This is then feed back into the balancing process.

In concluding this little work, we could summarize the reasons why many married women are frustrated as follows:

- 1) Lack of adequately defined and balanced 'Self' state, before and in a marriage relationship,
- 2) Ignorantly committing martyrdom,
- 3) Playing inappropriate role(s) within the dynamics of marriage relationship,
- 4) Living rigid and unbalanced lifestyles and,
- 5) Inner conflict which results from pursuing surface needs over driving needs.

We have explained these reasons, as well as provided antidotes for them. However, it is important to state that the reconstruction of family life cannot be reduced to something which takes place mechanically, or to the cure of a medical disorder. It can also not be reduced to its social, psychological and legal components.

Attempt has only been made to explore and discuss these reasons using models, theories and principles, which demand a systematic way of seeing and understanding issues. This is also based on the fact that research has shown that there are ways of describing family interaction, and thus a scientific base for family education and family

therapy.

Much of the work in family education and therapy involves helping couples to affirm that their experience of each other, though this could often be messy and sometimes unromantic, it is the real thing. All other concepts will have to be done away with because spouses cannot fall back on the concept of the roles they have learned individually and then expect the other party to adapt to it. Spouses must realize the need to jointly construct the role of each person. In a situation where each person essentially is not only different but continuously changing, this is the work of a lifetime.

The pressure of the role(s) imposed on married women in the reality of modern times (i.e. having to combine domestic activities with economic activities) is such that has made women highly vulnerable and susceptible to stress and frustration. Spouses (husbands) and the society should consider their vulnerability and assist them as much as possible. The issue is that many would prefer to retain the rigid and concrete structure of family as they have known it, and this is in many ways the challenge.

Spouses need to engage with each other actively as persons to construct their relationship. Women are married to a person, not simply an institution or a role. These tasks demand reflective, responsive and spiritual parts of us and for many this is unexpected and difficult work. It is

different from the romantic beliefs about relationships. But as the saying goes “where there is a will...there will always be a way”!

P R O F I L E

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