

5- Love Busters

The love you and your spouse have for each other is directly affected by almost all of your behavior. This is a point that I will repeat in most of my remaining concepts and Q&A columns. Until now, I have focused attention on behavior that will meet each other's most important emotional needs. When you behave that way, you are caring for each other. But the resulting Love Bank deposits will not do your marriage much good if other behavior leads to Love Bank withdrawals. So to help you gain control over your behavior so that you can learn to avoid making Love Bank withdrawals, I will introduce you to my next basic concept, Love Busters.

Why would any of us hurt the one we promised to love and cherish?

Lack of empathy is at the core of the problem. I was struck with what we are all up against while watching a Star Trek episode. Spock had volunteered to be possessed by an alien presence so that it could communicate with Captain Kirk of the Starship Enterprise.

As soon as it entered Spock's body, its first reaction was, "Oh, how lonely you must all feel."

You see, in the alien world, they were all connected to each other through telepathy so that each one could feel what everyone else felt. They were all emotionally bonded to each other. But as soon as the alien possessed Spock's body, it realized that we humans are all cut off from each other emotionally. And it viewed our state as incredibly isolated and lonely.

One of the most important consequences of our emotional isolation is that we cannot feel the way we affect others. And that creates the temptation to hurt others because in doing so we don't feel the pain we cause. If we were connected emotionally to others as the aliens were, we would be far less tempted to do anything thoughtless, gaining at someone else's expense. That's because in so doing, we would be hurting ourselves as well.

And that's what I always seem to be battling when I try to encourage one spouse to avoid doing anything that would hurt the other spouse. I cannot seem to trigger empathy. Each spouse complains about how thoughtless the other spouse is, without much awareness of his or her own thoughtlessness.

Lack of empathy helps makes thoughtlessness possible. Since we don't feel what other's feel, we tend to minimize the negative effects we have on others, and consider our thoughtlessness to be benign. An angry outburst is regarded by some as a creative expression. Disrespect is viewed as helping the other spouse gain proper perspective. And a demand is nothing more than encouraging a spouse to do what he or she should have done all along. None of these is seen as one spouse gaining at the other's expense, because the spouse who is inflicting the pain does not feel the pain. But whenever one spouse is the cause of the other's unhappiness, one thing's for sure -- Love Bank withdrawals are taking place.

I call all the ways that spouses are inconsiderate of each other's feelings Love Busters because that what they do -- they destroy the love that a husband and wife have for each other.

I've found that the most common Love Busters in marriage fall into six categories: Selfish Demands, Disrespectful Judgments, Angry Outbursts, Annoying Habits, Independent Behavior and Dishonesty

The first three of these Love Busters are instinctive, yet thoughtless, ways to try to get what you want from each other. When a request doesn't work, a spouse will often revert to a demand ("I don't care how you feel -- do it or else!"). If that doesn't get the job done, a spouse will try disrespectful judgments ("If you had any sense, and were not so lazy and selfish, you would do it"). And then, when all of that fails, an angry outburst often represents the last ditch effort ("I'll see to it that you regret not having done it").

Of course, demands, disrespect and anger don't really get the job done. You generally don't do things for your spouse because of these Love Busters, you do them out of care and consideration. If your spouse is demanding, disrespectful and angry, you tend to be less caring and considerate, leading you to do less for your spouse. Instead of giving your spouse what he or she needs, demands, disrespect and anger cause you to resist. I want you to have what you need in your marriage, but demands, disrespect and anger will not get it for you. They will prevent you from having what you want if you revert to these destructive instincts.

But when you indulge in these three Love Busters, you do more than fail to get what you need -- you also destroy the love your spouse has for you. All of these instincts, and the habits they help create, cause your spouse to be unhappy, and that causes Love Bank withdrawals.

The fourth Love Buster, Annoying Habits, is behavior that is repeated without much thought that bothers your spouse. Marriage is a partnership of incredibly close quarters, where just about anything you or your spouse does is almost sure to affect the other. If you want to stay in love with each other, your habits, even the innocent ones, should make Love Bank deposits, not withdrawals.

The fifth Love Buster is Independent Behavior, the conduct of one spouse that ignores the feelings and interests of the other spouse. If your decisions are made as if your spouse doesn't even exist, you will find yourself running roughshod over your spouse's feelings and your Love Bank account. Since it's usually scheduled and requires some thought to execute, the simplest way to overcome it is to take it off your schedule. And if you follow the Policy of Joint Agreement, Independent Behavior will never find itself on your schedule in the first place.

Finally, the sixth Love Buster, Dishonesty, causes massive Love Bank withdrawals whenever it's discovered. And spouses usually discover each other's dishonesty because of their emotional closeness to each other. If you or your spouse have a tendency to lie or distort the truth, chase that bad habit out of your marriage before it ruins everything.

If you would like to identify Love Busters that are responsible for Love Bank withdrawals in your relationship, first read a summary of each by clicking their names listed below, and then click this name, the [Love Busters Questionnaire](#), and print two copies of the form, one for you and one for your spouse. After you have completed this form, the priorities you give each Love Buster will show you where to begin in sweeping these rascals out of your lives.

- [Selfish Demands](#)
- [Disrespectful Judgments](#)
- [Angry Outbursts](#)
- [Annoying Habits](#)
- [Independent Behavior](#)
- [Dishonesty](#)

If you have a few extra minutes, [The Parable of the Net](#) will help show you how Love Busters destroy marriage.

The sixth Love Buster, Dishonesty, is so important to overcome in marriage that I have given it a basic concept of it's own. After you have had a chance to read it, I think you will agree with me that it deserve special attention.