



# CONTENT CREATION MAGNETS

*From the King of Content Marketing...* **JeffHerring**.com

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## 1. HOW TO SURVIVE.....

Remember the famous self-help book of several years ago “How to Survive the Loss of a Love?” I believe one of the reasons it was so popular was it met a need by giving the “how to.” You can do the same with your articles.

### Title Examples:

*How to Survive Bankruptcy*

*How to Survive a Stressful Day*

*How to Survive a Difficult Boss*

### The Template

“How to Survive.....”

Define what needs to be survived

List your tips Tip 1 Tip 2 Tip 3 Tip 4 Tip 5



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## ***Internet Marketing: How to Survive the Loss of Your Domain Name***

On Saturday evening October 28, 2006, I learned a very important lesson about Internet Marketing.

I returned home from a pumpkin carving party with my two sons and checked my email only to discover an email from one of my joint venture partners Ellen Violette, The eBook Coach. In the email, Ellen mentioned that one of my main domain names, [www.TheArticleGuy.com](http://www.TheArticleGuy.com) was going someplace very strange.

As I checked it out, I discovered I had forgotten to respond to several reminders from GoDaddy.com to renew my domain name. Because I had forgotten, it had gone back on the market and, due to all the traffic and back links I had built; it was quickly snatched up by one of the companies that does such things.

I was more than a bit panicked.



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## Survival Tips

- 1. Accept the support of those around you** – As I was freaking out my 12-year-old son made me really proud of him. He walked over, handed me a Bible, and told me “swearing doesn’t help Dad.”
- 2. Turn to those with more experience and cooler heads** – I called my Internet Marketing mentor Tom Antion who was available at 10:30 on a Saturday night! Having been through this before, he guided me through the next steps to take.
- 3. Take immediate action steps to take care of those affected** – Right away I did three important things 1- Got a similar domain name, [www.TheInternetArticleGuy.com](http://www.TheInternetArticleGuy.com) – actually I already owned it and had forgotten that I did - 2 – Transferred my files to the new domain name – 3 – Let all my members, readers, students and mentees know what had happened and to use the new domain name until further notice.
- 4. Decide whether to get your domain name back** – Because of the traffic rankings and back links I decided it would be worth trying to get my domain name back. I discovered that a company had purchased the domain name that I had been paying \$9.20 for a year would gladly sell it back to me for \$1500. I negotiated the price down to \$1000.
- 5. Keep your head and attitude right** – The problem was due to a divorce the year before and being in the middle of a move to Atlanta from Tallahassee there was just not \$1000 laying around to use for this purpose. Once I decided to get my domain name back, I created a very special deal on my Article Marketing Mentor Program and offered it to my subscribers. Not only did I get my domain name back, I gained several really great mentees that are out there making a difference with their writing and I made several hundred dollars.





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**6. Create systems to prevent this from happening again** – You can buy your domain name for up to ten years at one time. You can pay attention to the reminders sent to you. You can mark your calendar for when to renew. You can buy the right to be the first informed if your domain name does go back on the market. All these steps keep this from happening again, or better yet, ever happening.

**7. Be prepared for pleasant surprise gifts in the middle of the crisis** – While dealing with this little crisis, there were several unexpected and wonderful results and blessings along the way. In addition to actually making money from this mess, I gained several new and great mentees. When I let my members and subscribers know what was going on, I was surprised and very touched by so much support and so many suggestions for new domains names. As one subscriber put it, “Remember Jeff, they took your domain name not your brains.” Though I sometimes think the other way around would have been better. One of my biggest worries was what to do about all the articles on [www.EzineArticles.com](http://www.EzineArticles.com) about article writing and marketing with links back to my domain name now owned by someone else. This would have taken DAYS to change by hand. Before I could really even think about how to accomplish this, Chris Knight of [www.EzineArticles.com](http://www.EzineArticles.com) stepped up and volunteered to put his staff on the changes first thing on Monday morning. Another class act among many to whom I am so very grateful.





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## 2. THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES

Every niche or field of endeavor has it's most common mistakes. When you name those mistakes, you become an expert in the eyes of your reader. When you then show how to avoid these mistakes and what to do, instead you become a hero in the eyes of your reader.

### Title Examples

*The 5 Most Common Mistakes Made on the First Date*

*The Top Mistakes Made When Building Your Own Home*

*The 3 Favorite Mistakes of Online Marketers*

*The 10 Most Common Pitfalls for New Parents*

### The Template

“The (pick a number) Most Common Mistakes in.....”

Write an opening about the typical struggles involved in your topic. Play up the dangers and suggest you have some answers. List the most common mistakes Mistake 1

Mistake 2 Mistake 3 Mistake 4 Mistake 5



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## ***Article Writing: The Five Most Common Prospect Killing Mistakes Made Before You Submit Your Articles***

**Mistake #1 – You Don't Submit Any Articles** – I know it sounds silly, but many people write their articles and never submit them. Either they do not get around to it, don't know how, or are afraid of getting rejected by the article directories.

**Solution:** Submit your articles! Make it a goal to submit your first article before your head hits the pillow tonight. While it is unlikely that you will get rejected, even if you do, most article directories will work with you to get you accepted.

**Mistake #2 – Boring Key Word Empty Titles** – The purpose of the title for your reader is to make the reader want to read your article. The purpose of the title for the search engines is to have key words in your titles that will get picked up by the search engines.

**Solution:** Design a title that pulls the reader in with benefits and uses key words in the first four words of the title.

**Mistake #3 – Academic Summaries** – If you're the purpose of your title is to pull the reader into your article, the purpose of your article summary to pull the reader even further in. Most people write an academic sounding summary such as "This article is about blah, blah, blah."

**Solution:** Write an article summary that defines a problem that needs to be solved and then promise to solve it.

**Mistake #4 – An Un-Optimized Article Body** – I see it all the time – someone writes what is perhaps a decent article but then places it in the body submission field as one big chunk of text. What is the problem with that? This makes it tough to read online and gives the impression that this will take a long time to get through.

**Solution:** Break your article body up with lists/bulleted points, sub-headings and block quotes.



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**Mistake #5 – A Pointless Resource Box** – The point of your resource box is not to create an online ego wall like the wall in your office with all your diplomas and awards. The purpose of your resource box is to get the reader to click through to your web site and become a visitor, prospect or customer.

**Solution:** Give your reader a good reason to click through to your web site by letting them know there are more good tips on your web site like the ones they have just read. Include at least one complete link (<http://www.yourgreatdomainname.com>) back to your web site.



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## 3. TIME TO.....

In this template, you give an amount of time to accomplish something. This kind of title pulls people in because you is benefit rich and tell you how quickly you can get the benefit.

### Title Examples

5 Days to Your First Web Site

15 Minutes to Save \$15 on Your Car Insurance

5 Minutes to Create Your Email Signature

### The Template

“Amount of time to accomplish something” Write about how great it would be to accomplish something. Put a time limit on it. Then list the steps and/or tell the story about how to get there. Tell the story Step 1 Step 2 Step 3 Step 4 Step 5



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## ***Atlanta Singles Dating: 5 Minutes to Finding the Love of Your Life***

Are you tired of going out on several dates with the same person only to discover that this is not the person for you?

You know how it goes. You go out on a few dates and think maybe there is something here for you. Then you find out that this person never wants kids and you do.

Another wasted few weeks. Or more.

### **Find out in 5 minutes**

But what if you could find out in 5 minutes whether a new person has the *potential* to be the love of your life? Would you like to know how to do that? Would that be cool?

One of the important skill sets in conscious dating is scouting-sorting-screening-testing. Scouting is looking around out in the world for people to whom you are attracted. Sorting is having conversations that tell you whether this is a person worth pursuing. Screening is doing things together and having longer conversations that tell you whether someone could be a life partner. Testing is doing life together to see if this is doable over the long haul.

The sorting stage, initial conversations, is where you can potentially find the love of your life in five minutes.

### **Welcome to the power introduction**

The power introduction is a casual conversation with powerful intentions. You don't ask someone a list of questions and judge them on the answers. You bring up in casual conversation topics that reflect what is important to you and pay attention to the kind of response you receive.

For example, if I have just met someone I think I might want to get to know better, I'm going to mention my two boys and my doing stuff with them. If this new person



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responds with “Two boys! How can you stand that? When do you ever get time to yourself?” I know I do not want to pursue this any further. If, on the other hand, the response I receive is “Wow, how much fun is that! You must be a really good Dad.” This could be worth pursuing.

This is an example of a casual conversation with powerful intentions at the sorting level, when you have just met someone. So let’s say you and this new person decide to have some dinner and go on a few dates. You are now at the screening level of getting to know someone.

You can use the same strategies while dating. Let’s say that traveling is really important to you and for someone to be right for you they would have to want to travel also. So you are on your fourth date and thinking that this relationship could go somewhere. But when you mention your love of travel, your date tells you they are a homebody and absolutely hate to travel. Aren’t you glad to find this out early on than stumble on this information five months from now?

At the very least, using the “casual conversation with powerful intentions” strategy can save you some time. At the very best, this strategy can help you find the love of your life.



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## 4. SHORTCUTS TO.....

Everyone likes shortcuts. Well except perhaps for my oldest son, who when I mention we are taking a shortcut while driving, “Dad, is this another one of those ‘long-cuts?’”

Anyway, if you can take your expertise and show the reader shortcuts to accomplishing a task, you have a winner on your hands.

### Title Examples

5 Shortcuts to Your First Web Site

7 Shortcuts to Permanent Weight Loss

3 Shortcuts to Getting Out of Debt

4 Shortcuts to Playing the Piano

### The Template

Present something that many people want to accomplish. Point how difficult and/or time consuming it can be. Give ‘em some shortcuts.

Shortcut 1

Shortcut 2

Shortcut 3

Shortcut 4





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## **Article Writing & Marketing: 4 Shortcuts to Submitting Your Articles**

Article writing and marketing is one of the best ways to drive traffic to your web site for more prospects, publicity and profits.

The barrier that is mentioned by many of my students and members is how long it takes to submit an article. And what really frustrates them is how long it can take to submit many articles.

One of the ways I'm able to submit as often as I do is because of the shortcuts I've developed that allow you to rapidly submit great quality articles.

### **4 Shortcuts to Article Submission**

**Create your own formulas** – When you are filling out the title and article summary fields while posting articles, use a formula that works for you. That does not mean using the same words over and over. It does mean that you use a formula that helps you write and submit more quickly and efficiently. For example, in my article summaries I typically ask a question and then encourage the reader to check out the article for the “how to’s” of answering the question.

**Use the “Short Keys” Tool** – For text I need to write over and over, such as in the keyword field in article submission sites, I use Short Keys that you can find at [ShortKeys.com](http://ShortKeys.com) Many of my key word lists are now “short keys” and I just have to type a code I create to print a list of key words in the appropriate field.

**Automate Your Resource Box** – At [EzineArticles.com](http://EzineArticles.com) you can have up to three resource boxes saved and available to use in your Author's Area. Click on one, two or three and your saved resource box is printed in the field.

**Write in the Body Field** – I've what I think is the best tip for last. I save so much copying and pasting time by simply writing in the body field of the article submission



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site. You have to make sure you frequently hit draft or copy your text so it is not lost.

As long as you do this, this is a great time saver.

Use these shortcut tips and you can boost the speed and ease of writing and submitting your articles.



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## 5. BARRIERS TO.....

I guess it is just human nature. Readers are more drawn to negatives (barriers, mistakes, failures) than they are to positives (tips, how to, etc).

The best way to write a barriers article is to name the barrier and then include what to do about it.

### Title Examples

7 Barriers to the Perfect Tax Return

5 Barriers to Your 300 Bowling Game

The Biggest Barriers to the Life Long Enjoyment of Sex

Barriers Between You and Your First Internet Dollar

### The Template

Name the barriers, solve the barriers.



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## **Article Writing: 4 Barriers to Writing Your Second Article**

**Q:** In your opinion, what keeps so many people from writing their second article?

**A:** That's a really great question.

For a recent Article Guy TeleSeminar I asked my subscribers, students and members to send me their most important questions about article writing and marketing. That's how this question came my way, and it's one I never would have thought of myself.

### **4 Barriers**

As I have thought about the answer, I've come up with 4 barriers prospective writers run into when trying to write their second article.

**Barrier 1 - Arrival Syndrome** - It's human nature. We reach a goal and then stop doing all the things that helped us achieve the goal. If you want to get on top and stay on top, keep doing the things you did to get there plus do even more than you did before.

**Barrier 2 - Failure to realize this is a numbers game** - Just one article will not do it. Marketing with articles is a numbers game. The more you write, the bigger the critical masses of traffic that come your way. The more you write, the more each article cascades with the others into more prospects, publicity and profits.

**Barrier 3 - Believing you do not have another one in you** - Some people get caught in the trap of thinking they only have one article in them and after they have written it, there is nothing more in there. I've never seen anyone with only one article in them!

**Barrier 4 - Only writing one article at a time** - As you write each of your articles, ideas for other articles will occur to you. Write them down. The weakest ink is better than the strongest memory. Then turn the ideas into more articles.

Blow past these four barriers and you will be writing away, right away.



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## 6. THE BEGINNERS GUIDE TO.....

No matter our area of expertise, we were all beginners at one time. Wouldn't you like to have had a beginner's guide when you first started?

Here you get to be the wise hero that shows the beginner the way so they do not have to make all the costly mistakes that you did.

### Title Examples

Dating: The Beginner's Guide to Asking Out a Girl

The First Day of Middle School

The Beginner's Guide to a Private Practice

The Beginning Steps to Buying Rental Properties

### The Template

Take the beginner by the hand and show them the ropes.

P.S. Remember to leave them wanting more.....



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## ***Article Income: The Beginner's Guide to Making Money with Your Articles***

Article writing and marketing can be used to do more than drive traffic to your web sites. You can make money with your articles.

While there are dozens of ways to make money with your articles, I'll focus in this article on just three ways that I call the beginner's guide.

### **3 Ways to Make Money with Your Articles**

**Action Articles** - An Action Article is simply one of your articles with some important questions added at the end of the article. These are called "action questions." An action question is a question designed to motivate the reader to take action on what they have just read. I sell these on my web sites for \$7.

**Short Reports** - A short report is simply an expanded article of between 10 and 20 pages. Let's say you wrote a 7 tips article with one of my article writing templates. All you would have to do is write one and a half to two pages on each tip. That's your short report that you can sell for between \$9.97 and \$19.97.

**Paid eCourses** - An eCourse is simply an expanded article, such as a short report, delivered in a series of emails from a sequential autoresponder. If you had a 7-day Course, the reader would get one installment each day for seven days. You can increase the value to the buyer and the price you charge by having the buyer send you homework for each installment that you tweak and review. I sell my Multiple Streams of Article Income 5 Week eCourse for \$147.



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## 7. HOW TO TURN \_\_\_\_\_ INTO \_\_\_\_\_

The idea behind this one is to show the reader how to take something the reader has and turn it into something the reader wants.

### Title Examples

How to Turn the Junk in Your Garage into Cash with eBay

How to Turn Your Marital Conflicts into Greater Intimacy

How to Turn Your Passion into Your Full Time Job

Turn Your Words into Profits

### The Template

When you can show people how to take something they have and turn it into something they want, you have a winner!





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## ***Article Writing and Marketing: How to Turn Your Words into Prospects, Publicity and Profits***

Article writing and marketing has been very good to me. And when you do it right, it can be very good to you too.

I never finished the dissertation for a Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Therapy because I had convinced myself I could not write. That was sometime in the mid 80's.

Around '93 I wrote a couple of articles for the newsletter of the local hospital's psychiatric center, based on a couple of presentations I was doing regularly. Then in '94 I began to write a weekly column on relationships, parenting and stress for the local newspaper.

Little did I know where all this was taking me.

### **Prospects, Publicity, Profits**

No matter your niche, when you turn your expertise into words, your words bring you more prospects, publicity and profits.

Every time you write an article and submit it to the article directories, you have commissioned another 24/7, 7 days a week, international sales agent that never rests.

New prospects come to your web sites. You get more publicity as you become more well known. As your new prospects learn to know, like and trust you, they become regular and repeat customers.

If you knew you could have as many 24/7, 7 days a week, international sales agents that never rest out there working for you, for free, just how many would you want?

And oh, by the way, there will be those that try to come up with multiple reasons why this does not work and therefore you should not do it. They are wrong. Just give them



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permission to think that way. Your job is to keep turning your words into more prospects, publicity and profits by writing more and more articles.



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## 8. 3 STAGES

“A quote or lyric”

Present problem

3 stages mild moderate severe

List of things to do



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## ***Stress Management: How to Defeat Sunday Night Syndrome***

"We go from 'Saturday Night Live' to 'Sunday Night Dread'"

Picture the following scene:

It's Sunday evening, the weekend is winding down and you're beginning to think about the workweek ahead. What are your feelings?

Do you find yourself excited and challenged; looking forward to another week of doing something you love? The most fortunate among us get to feel that way on a regular basis.

Or are you instead feeling something else, perhaps anxiety or even dread? That's a special kind of anxiety and stress I call "Sunday Night Syndrome."

All of us experience some form of SNS from time to time. What's important is how often and how severe it is.

### **Mild Sunday Night Syndrome**

In most people, the anxiety usually begins Sunday evening, but it passes quickly and is gone by the time you arrive at work. This feeling is probably the result of working continuously for five days a week and having only two days off during which to recover.

#### **What to do:**

Relax and remember: The feeling will pass. Rent a movie, play a game, enjoy being with family and friends.

### **Moderate Sunday Night Syndrome**

The next stage of SNS is characterized by increasing anxiety as the workweek approaches. The anxiety begins earlier in the day and doesn't pass as easily as mild SNS.



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You begin to stay up later and later on Sunday night, in the hope of keeping Monday morning from arriving. As a result, you feel tired and sluggish on Monday, which leaves you ill-equipped to deal with your feelings and your work.

Other symptoms include increased irritability and inattentiveness around family and friends, as well as deteriorating work performance. Colleagues and supervisors may begin to notice changes at this point.

## **What to do:**

In addition to the above suggestions, make sure you get to bed early enough to be rested the next day.

Identify things about your job that you can feel good about, or even look forward to. As crazy as it sounds, some people have found that going into the office or doing some work at home seems to help.

If going into the office is not possible, being as prepared as possible can help.

## **Severe Sunday Night Syndrome**

The third level of SNS doesn't wait until Sunday to arrive. It begins Saturday or even Friday after work.

By the time Sunday evening rolls around, folks with severe SNS are experiencing strong anxiety and dread.

Some people become physically ill at the prospect of another workweek. Depression is common at this point, as well as drinking too much alcohol.

## **What to do:**



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What underlies your emotions and reactions? If you don't examine this issue, the feelings might just grow stronger. It could be time to consider a change, either in the details of your job or perhaps an entire change of job or career.

Consult a career counselor to look at your options.

Make sure you are doing something, from talking about it to physical exercise, in order to relieve the stress. You might want to seek counseling to help you manage the stress, emotions and decisions involved. Remember: If it's hurting you, it's not likely to be helping anyone else. All of us experience some form of Sunday Night Syndrome from time to time. It's how we respond that makes the difference.



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## 9. HOW TO.....

Present the problem – ex: coping with frustration

How to do the problem – how to get yourself frustrated

How to fix the problem – alternatives to frustration





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## ***Stress Mastery: Frustration or Fascination***

*"Learn how to turn frustration into fascination. You will learn more being fascinated by life than you will by being frustrated by it." - Jim Rohn*

Simply stated, feeling frustrated is saying that we just don't like what life is handing us right now, today, this week, this year, this lifetime. Nothing wrong with that necessarily, but like so many other things, it's our response to frustrating events that makes the difference.

Let's take a closer look at how to get frustrated and then at a few more productive responses to frustration.

### **How to get frustrated**

Take each and every obstacle that is thrown in your way very personally. Be convinced that the slow driver in front of you is doing it on purpose to you; perhaps he was even sent to find you.

Approach life with a strong sense of entitlement. Believe that you deserve to get your way no matter what. Blow everything out of proportion. Frustrations come at us in varying degrees: On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being the best and 10 being the worst, respond to every event as if it's a 10.

Live life in a constant state of stress, don't slow down, and definitely don't develop any patience. Get addicted to the rush of anger that comes with frustration. Consequences of frustration. Live in a state of perpetual anger. Say and do things you later regret. Face the same problems over and over again without ever discovering any solutions. Eventually this level of stress will affect you physically in some way. You teach your kids to react the same way.

### **How to get fascinated**



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Reframe obstacles as "challenging learning opportunities."

Ask better questions. Instead of asking "why does this always happen to me" or "how dare they do this," practice asking this question: "How can I creatively solve this in a way that I might learn something new and that will benefit myself and others."

Another good response would be: "Well, isn't this interesting. I wonder how we are going to solve this one?"

Stop reacting and respond. Reacting shuts down your brain. Responding jump-starts your creativity.

Stress management expert Tim O'Brien uses the QTIP technique: Quit Taking It Personally. I've actually suggested carrying a Q-tip in a pocket as a reminder. Sounds silly perhaps, but it works.

Look at the things that get in your way as simply events, nothing more. This one really saved me recently when I had spent hours on the previous three nights updating our QuickBooks files. Later, when I brought up the file, it looked as if we had lost hours of work and eight months of data.

I told myself, and my wife, that this was only an event. That allowed me to have the presence of mind to remember I have a friend who is an expert in QuickBooks. He showed us how to find the data. We solved the problem and diffused my urge to throw the computer out the window.

Like most things in life, we have a choice here. This time it's between frustration and fascination.

Choose wisely.



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## 10. SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Signs & Symptoms of the problem

What to do about the problem



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## ***Warning Signs of an Emotional Affair***

"But we're just friends" are four of the most dangerous words for your marriage.

But over and over in my office and on the phone I hear it: "We are just friends, there is nothing going on."

The majority of extramarital affairs begin as "just friends." While it is certainly true that there are affairs that begin with impulsive one-night stands with a stranger, the most common ones that I see begin as "just friends." In fact, if you find yourself thinking or saying "but we are just friends" you are probably already in trouble.

Gary Rosberg of America's Family Coaches states that there are at least 19 stages a person will pass through on the way to physically consummating an extramarital affair. There are at least two important notions that we can lift from Rosberg's statement:

- 1) At each and every one of the 19 steps, you have a clear choice between going further down or stopping the process. In other words, these things don't "just happen."
- 2) An affair - by the way, I hate that term!

It makes it sound like it is this wonderful experience with no consequences ... as in "It was a grand affair." In my marital counseling and relationship coaching experience, adultery breaks up marriages, wrecks families and crushes kids.

Anyway, now that my rant is over, an affair becomes adultery long before the physical act. In fact, emotional affairs can be stronger and more difficult to get out of than physical affairs.

The late Shirley Glass was a pioneer in the area of emotional affairs. In her 2003 book "NOT Just Friends: Protect your relationship from infidelity and heal the trauma of betrayal," Glass identifies three red flags that indicate that you have progressed from a safe friendship to a romantic emotional affair.



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1) You feel closer to your friend than you do your spouse.

You find yourself thinking of this person more and more often and looking forward to the next time you are together. When something happens during the day, the first person you think of telling is this friend, not your spouse.

2) Keeping secrets.

You no longer feel comfortable telling your spouse about this person. You begin to cover up so as not to be found out.

3) An increasing sexual tension.

You admit your attraction for each other, but promise (complain) that you can never act on it. You fantasize what it would be like to be with this person. This helps to create a pretend world where everything would be wonderful if the two of you could just be together.

One of the most overlooked and dangerous facts about emotional affairs is that we are all vulnerable. If you believe that this fact does not apply to you, then you are even more vulnerable than everyone else.

How to protect yourself and your relationship

Keep clear boundaries. A boundary is simply what kids mean when they say "don't go there."

Avoid being alone with and/or emotionally close to someone to whom you are attracted.

Talk often about your spouse. "Spouse bashing" does not count. Talk about what you have done lately and what you are looking forward to with your spouse.



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If you are going to talk about emotional issues in your marriage, make sure you are talking to your spouse, a trusted friend who is on the side of you and your marriage or a professional who is on the side of your marriage.

Be especially careful at work. More and more emotional affairs are occurring in the workplace. You spend time together, you go through crises together, you solve problems together. Do not make a habit of taking private lunches or breaks with the same person over and over.

Set up a review committee in your mind. Ask yourself, "Would my wife, my mom, my wife's mom, my sister approve of what I am doing right now?" or, "Would my husband, my dad, my husband's dad, my brother approve of what I am doing right now?"

If the answer is no, then I offer you what I call my RLH prescription. RHL stands for Run Like Hell! Here is a cold dose of reality: 75 percent of marriages between affair partners result in divorce. In closing, remember that we are all vulnerable, watch for the warning signs, and protect yourself and your marriage.



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## 11. TOP 10 LISTS

1 – Your best tip 2 – 3 – 4 – humorous tip #1 5 – 6 – 7 – humorous tip #2 8 – 9 – 10 –  
Second best tip





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## ***Top 10 Things to Never Believe from Your Teenager***

### **1) It's not my (pot, beer, cigarettes, etc.); I'm just keeping it for someone else.**

Yeah right. The next question for the parent to ask is, "If you are keeping this for your friend, what is your friend keeping for you?" One of the reasons parents can get fooled here is that you so desperately want to believe that it is not theirs and they are not doing drugs. It's important to remember that this is something your teen might be counting on.

### **2) When caught with drugs - This is just the first time I've tried it.**

Unlikely. Usually when kids get caught with and/or using some drugs, they have been doing it awhile. They have simply slipped up, gotten caught, and are trying to find a quick way out of it.

### **3) We don' have homework in that class**

Sometimes this is true. Or they have already done it at school. Often times it's a good excuse for not doing homework, or for covering up for skipping class. Either way, it's one of the easiest to check out by talking with the teacher. Which parents need to be doing anyway.

### **4) The teacher doesn't like me**

Maybe so. This is usually just a handy excuse for bad grades or getting in trouble. Either way, it's the kid's job to find a way to make it work, even if the teacher doesn't like them. It's simply practice for the real world, where not everyone is going to like you; sometimes even bosses or co-workers. The interesting thing about this one is the teen's solution to the problem. It goes something like this -"Well, the teacher doesn't like me, so I'll show them by flunking the class." And who is this hurting?

### **5) Of course there will be parents at the party**



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The answer to this one is, "If that's true, then you certainly won't mind me calling up your friend's parents to see if there is anything I can do to help."

## **6) Everyone else gets to do it, so why can't I?**

Another popular one designed to make parents feel guilty and old fashioned, so they will give in to something they think is wrong. My mother had a wonderfully confusing answer to this one; "If everyone else stood on their head in the middle of the street at three in the morning in their underwear, would you?" Probably would have.

## **7) Everyone drinks and smokes. There's not a single person my age who doesn't.**

Many, many teenagers do. But not each and every one. I know of plenty who do not and have a very good time with what they do. Another one designed to get parents to tolerate behavior they don't like.

## **8) If you let me off just this once, I'll promise I'll never do it again.**

Another one parents want so badly to believe. Unfortunately, what the teenager usually learns here is that the parent really doesn't mean it about consequences. While in some ways it might be easier to let them off the hook, it teaches very little about the real world.

## **9 & 10) Give me one good reason why I can't do that!**

This one gets two places because it is so common and so important. The crucial part not to believe here is that they are really asking for a legitimate answer to the question. After giving a well-reasoned adult answer, here is something you will not hear from your teenager, "Well, thank you for explaining it that way to me folks! And now that you have, not only do I no longer want to do that, I'm embarrassed and ashamed for asking. Please forgive me and good night." If your teen ever says this, call me quickly, something is really wrong!



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## 12. WTDW

WTDW stands for “What to Do When.....” Present the problem

What not to do

What to do



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## ***Relationship Ruts: How to Get Out and Stay Out***

"The only difference between a rut and a grave are the dimensions."

Q: My wife and I are both on our second marriage. We feel like we are both losing some of our excitement and love for each other, just like in our first marriages. We feel like we are stuck in a rut. What can we do to get out of this rut?

A: You've not only asked an excellent question, it's even been asked in song.

In "Make Love Stay" Dan Fogelberg asks,

"Now that we've loved, Now that the lonely nights are over How do we make love stay?"

### **New relationships**

New relationships are exciting. The thrill of falling in love and discovering new things about each other is simply a lot of fun.

After the honeymoon stage of a relationship has passed, we move into the "making it work" stage of the relationship. Sometimes the making it work stage is just not as much fun as the honeymoon stage. This is where the work part of making it work comes in.

One of the dangers of the making it work stage is to fall into what I call relationship ruts. A relationship rut is when as a couple you begin to feel as if you are stuck, sort of going through the motions and not getting anywhere.

This is the point that some relationships die, because the only difference between a rut and a grave are the dimensions.

Let's take a look at some of the signs of relationship ruts and what not to do, and then what to do to get out of the rut and keep the spark alive.

### **Signs of Relationship Ruts**



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One sure sign and conclusive evidence of a relationship rut is if the following conversation sounds familiar - "What do you want to do tonight?" "I don't know, whatever you want to do." "I don't know what I want to do; whatever you want to do is fine." "Where do you want to eat?" "I don't know, where do you want to eat?" ETC - ETC - ETC - yuck!

Other signs of relationship ruts include;

Doing the same thing over over again and it not being enjoyable

Having the same conversation over and over again

Having that strange sense of "relationship déjà vu" - we've been here before.

Arguing and bickering just for something to do

## **What Not To Do**

We all try to solve the problem of relationship ruts in our own way. Here are some solutions that I've seen couples try that are worth avoiding;

Keep doing the same things over and over and expect different results

Blame your partner or accuse them of being boring

Convince yourself that life would be much more fun with someone else

Make major changes just for the sake of change. For example, move (just a geographical cure) or have a child.

## **What To Do**

Having said all that, here are a few suggestions for breaking out of relationship ruts;



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Begin by remembering what it was that first attracted you to this person in the first place. You may have forgotten some things and may be surprised by what you remember

Do something "safely out of character." In the song "Dirt Gets Under The Fingernails" by Harry Chapin, the prim, proper and neat wife goes out and buys art supplies and makes a mess while the always-dirty mechanic husband gets a shave, hair cut, manicure and new clothes. Surprise each other.

Do some of the things you may have enjoyed as a child: buy a coloring book, some play dough, put on some roller skates, etc.

Use your creativity! One way to do this would be to brainstorm all the crazy, absurd, and ridiculous ideas you can think of, that you would never do. Then go back over your list and see if there are the seeds for some useful creative solutions.

Make a list of all the things you like to do for fun. Then pick one you that you may not have in a very long time.

As the songwriter says, making love stay can be one of the more difficult tasks in relationships. Avoiding and/or getting out of relationships ruts can go a long way to keeping the spark alive.



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## 13. PERSONAL STORIES

As I think back over 11 plus years of doing this, there are two personal stories I wrote about that received tons of mail and email. One was the death of my father (the only column I've ever written by hand and then faxed to my editor) and the night I got pulled over for speeding at 4 in the morning while trying to get our 1 year old son Jonathon to sleep, wearing only a t-shirt and underwear. Write about personal story or event and how you reacted to it, principles and learnings you can lift from it.

Your story

What you learned

Principles for life to draw from this event





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## *Life Lessons Learned in My Underwear*

For several years now, I've told the following story as a keynote presentation when I do speaking engagements:

When our oldest son was a toddler and teething heavily, he woke up one morning at 4 screaming and crying. My wife nudged me as a reminder that it was my turn to get up with him.

All the regular attempts to get him back to sleep did not work, so I decided to take him for a drive, which had been working for about a month or so. The problem was I was wearing only a T-shirt and underwear. My ID and pants were in the bedroom where Lauren had already gone back to sleep.

If I learned anything in that first year of parenthood, it was: Never wake a sleeping baby, and more important, never, ever wake a sleeping mom.

So, in my early-morning logic, I thought no one would see us. Driving around to get him to sleep did not work that night. To make a long story short, I got pulled over for speeding.

The officer asked to see my license and registration. I told him I'd really like to show them to him, but they were at home.

That led to the dreaded question/demand:

"Would you please step out of the car, sir?"

Looking down, I admitted I had a problem with that. He leaned over to see two skinny, pale legs sticking out of a T-shirt emblazoned with: Tallahassee Men of Integrity.

He then asked if I was naked. I replied that I was wearing underwear and would be happy to show him if necessary.



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He never cracked a smile.

He walked back to his car and called in my tag number to confirm that I was who I said I was. He returned and ran down the list of many violations he could charge me with, but he settled on a ticket for driving without proof of license and insurance.

His parting parenting advice: "Next time, sir, be sure to wear your pants." I can lift three principles for living from this story, all of which have to do with our choices.

## **1) Our choices have consequences.**

My only intention that night was to get my crying kid to sleep. But a series of choices led me to a result I had not intended or expected. I was responsible for the outcome of my choices, regardless of what I had intended.

## **2) Every time we go out into the world, we are representing ourselves, our family, sometimes our job or profession.**

Like my grandmother used to say, "Remember who you are." I used to think she meant something about Alzheimer's, but now I realize she was encouraging me to make choices that would represent me well.

## **3) We all have a story to tell, both during our lives and at the end of our lives.**

Will your story be one that is worth modeling and admiring, or will it be a cautionary tale, one to avoid copying?

If you do not like the story you are telling, it's never too late to change direction. Just don't let the learning from your own experiences take too long.

If you have been doing it wrong for the last 10 years, I suggest that's long enough. Our choices become our habits; our habits become our character; our character becomes our story and destiny.



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Life is full of choices. Good stories or bad stories are optional. Choose wisely.

And wear your pants.



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## 14. (#) STEPS TO.....

Intro

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4

Step 5

Conclusion



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## ***Relationship Advice: 7 Sure Fire Ways to Mess Things up***

### **1) Stay committed to your "right to be right."**

Argue for your point of view, making sure you never entertain the possibility that your partner may have a valid point of view. If you ever do discover that you were wrong, make sure you don't admit it or apologize.

**CoupleTip:** Often in love relationships, there is a choice: you can be right or you can be happy, but not both. Choose wisely. As a friend of mine said after his first year of marriage: "I finally figured out that the sun will come up tomorrow if we do it her way."

### **2) Compete with your partner.**

And there is so much over which to compete: who is right, who's in control, who's better at balancing the checkbook, who clicks the remote, etc.

**CoupleTip:** Learn the gentle art of cooperation. If you are going to compete, compete together to have the very best relationship that you can have.

### **3) Make it up as you go along.**

Don't talk about any of the important stuff, like how you want to handle money, kids, the future, in-laws, savings, where to live, etc. Believe things will just work out.

**Couple Tip:** Talk about the important stuff. If you get stuck, find a relationship coach to help. Create a relationship vision by asking the question "if we could have it exactly like we want, how would it be?" Build from there.

### **4) Never forgive.**

Hold fast to the myths about forgiveness:

>forgiving lets them off the hook >forgiving condones what they did >forgiving leaves me vulnerable for it to happen again.



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Remain convinced that staying angry will actually help your partner change.

**CoupleTip:** Forgive as much or more than you would like to be forgiven. Forgiveness can release you from the pain of the offense.

## **5) Complain and Criticize.**

A lot. Raise it to an art form. Make sure that each and every time your partner behaves like a human being and messes up, you not only throw the current issue in their face, you also bring up every mistake ever made, in detail.

**CoupleTip:** Celebrate what you want to see more of. Appreciation can go a long way



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## 15. BUILD ON A STORY

Take a common story, like the ones that get passed around the internet, expand on it, and then lift lessons to learn and principles for life from the story.

Story

What we can learn

Principles for life





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## ***Relationship Advice: What's Your Contribution?***

Q. Just about every time my spouse and I get into an argument, one of us will bring up something from the past. The next thing you know, we are fighting about the past and just making things worse. How do you put the past behind you in a marriage?

A. Any marriage has a past. This is simply a shared history among two people that includes some good stuff and some not-so-good stuff. The problem comes when the not-so-good stuff is regularly brought up.

The issue, as you have so clearly pointed out, is how you handle this shared history.

First, every marriage has conflict. It's inevitable and it's normal. At the same time, every marriage does not involve fighting. That's because fighting is optional.

The first thing to consider to keep the past in the past is stop repeating the past. Make certain the problems, mistakes, patterns and hurts from the past are not being repeated.

If you are repeating any of the same mistakes, then you are sending an engraved invitation to your spouse to bring up the past. It's really a silly way to shoot yourself in the foot. You cannot put the past behind you if you are constantly repeating it.

Step back and see if you can see yourself in the following story: There was once a farmer and his family who lived in a valley next to a mountain range. Every year in late summer, the farmer and his sons began storing hay in the barns for the winter. One year, they began storing hay earlier than ever before. The farmer told his sons that it was going to be a very long, cold winter and each week they had to double the amount of hay they stored.

One of the sons asked his father how he knew it was going to be a more difficult winter.



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The father replied, "Each year, I look up on the great mountain where the Indians store wood. In mild winters, they store just a little. In harsh winters, they store much more wood. This year, the Indians are storing more wood than ever before."

The next day, the son went to ask the Indians how they knew it would be such a difficult winter.

The chief replied, "We always know how cold the winter will be by watching the farmer in the valley. The colder the winter will be, the more hay the farmer puts away!"

So what is your contribution in your own relationship? Not your spouse's \_ yours? Change your contribution, and you change your marriage.

## **Make a place for the past**

You make a place for the past by acknowledging the hurt and pain caused by your actions. For some reason, this seems to be particularly difficult for many husbands. Men just like to move on and not hear about the hurt.

Paradoxically, the way to put the past behind you is to welcome hearing about the hurt, acknowledge the effects on both of you, genuinely apologize and commit to never doing those things again.

## **Put the past in it's place**

Behind you. It is a chapter in a book you once read and do not care to read again. You can't make this step without taking the first two.

Here are both the mindset and the words to commit to at this point: "Up until now we have kept the past alive in our relationship. It does not work and hurts us both. From now on, we will focus on the future and making this relationship a great place to be."



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It's difficult and dangerous to drive a car while always looking in the rearview mirror.  
The way to safely drive a car is to glance in the rearview as needed only to be aware of what is behind you, while focusing on the road ahead of you.



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## 16. NICHE ADVICE

Choose a narrow and specific area of your expertise.

Give an example of what not to do.

Give tips on what to do



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## ***Writing Articles: Goodnight It's Time to Sleep Titles vs. I Gotta Read That! Titles***

In 1994, I was privileged to begin writing a weekly mental health column for our local newspaper. Three other therapists had the weekly column gig before me. What bugged me the most about these authors were the "snooze level" titles that they would put on their articles.

### **Goodnight, it's time to sleep titles**

Here are a few examples of what I mean: What is Bipolar Disorder? What is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder? Puts you right to sleep, doesn't it?

### **I gotta read that titles**

Using the same subject matter, try out these titles:

Tired of Riding an Emotional Roller Coaster? Here are 7 Steps to Getting Off and Living When 100 Times is Not Enough: How to Stop Destructive Repetitive Behaviors See and feel the difference?

### **The ultimate goal of any title**

Your title is your headline. Lose the reader here, and you have lost the reader for good. When country music star Toby Keith asked country music legend Willie Nelson to sing part of a song on Keith's new CD, Nelson blew him off with "Send my people a demo tape and we'll see."

As he turned to leave, Willie Nelson asked Toby Keith for the title of the song. Toby Keith said: "Whiskey for My Men, Beer for My Horses." Willie Nelson said: "I'm in."

That's the effect you want your titles to have:

I'm in!



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## 17. Q & A

One or two questions followed by your answer. You can take these from actual clients, prospects, callers, etc. and/or make up composite questions from what you see in your practice. I'm assuming here that you will know the answer since you asked the question. ;)

Q:

A:

Q:

A:



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## ***You Gotta Be Kidding, Right? – Questions from Parents of Teens***

Q. We recently caught our son smoking pot, and we wonder whether he's doing more stuff. We have reason to believe he has been hiding drugs in his room, and we're wondering whether we should go into his room to see whether we can find anything. Some parents we've talked to say yes. Others say, "Don't invade his privacy because you will lose his trust." What do you think we should do?

A. Based on more than 25 years of working with teen-agers and families, I suggest: Absolutely, yes, go check out his room. I say this for at least three reasons:

### **1) It's your house.**

You bought it. You pay the mortgage. You can go anywhere in the house you wish to go.

End of story.

### **2) You have reason to believe that there is something dangerous in your son's room.**

If you knew there was a poisonous snake or a ticking bomb in his room, would you want to go in and get it out?

Of course. You have reason to believe there is something both poisonous and explosive in his room.

Find out and get it out.

### **3) While you are correct to believe that trust is a crucial issue here, the trust between you already has been broken.**





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Your son broke it when he began to smoke pot and keep it from you. And in my experience, there is usually more that you do not know behind what you have already discovered.

Your first job is to get him safe, and then you can work on rebuilding the trust.

You can look through his room and then deal with him about whatever you find.

Another way to look through his room is to do it with him, and then you get to deal with whatever you find as you find it.

Either way, he certainly won't like it much, but that is not the issue.

Q. Our 17-year-old son wants us to let his girlfriend spend the night at our house in his room. He has two beds since his older brother left for college. He says nothing will happen and lots of his friends' parents allow this. Should we try it and see how it works?

A. You're kidding, right? Let me ask that in a slightly different way: You are kidding, right? Unfortunately, I know you're not because you are not the first parent to ask me this. I must ask you: Are you ready to be grandparents? Are you ready to help raise, in your home, your new grandchild? Are you prepared to be charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor and/or sued? The answer is an emphatic NO! I don't care what promises are made to you; it's a horrible idea and invites disaster.

Teens Not Emotionally Ready for Sex In addition to all the moral issues, teenagers are simply not emotionally prepared for sex. While their bodies and hormones are many times well prepared, their emotions are not. And that goes for boys as well as girls. It's time for a healthy dose of Vitamin NO in answer to your son's question. And by the way, anytime you hear "everyone else's parents are letting them do it," watch out. More than likely it's not true.



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## 18. MUSINGS ON A PARTICULAR SUBJECT

For this article, you pick a subject from your expertise and niche (long distance relationships, career burnout, stress) and bullet of few of your thoughts and suggestions on the subject. In our super fast-paced culture, people really like small bits of information.

Bullet 1 -Bullet 2 -Bullet 3 -Bullet 4 -Bullet 5 -Bullet 6 -Bullet 7 -Bullet 8 -Bullet 9 -Bullet 10 -



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## ***7 Musings on Motivation***

Most of us are motivated by one of two things - inspiration or desperation. Most successful people choose inspiration as their motivation.

“There’s always a way, if you’re committed.” - Tony Robbins. The question then becomes, “Are you committed?” Because if you are, if there is not already a way, you can make one.

3. Once you set a goal and commit to a goal, you can have only two results. You either achieve the goal, or you have reasons (excuses) why you didn’t.

4. We tend to get confused about whether we really want to do something. We say we want to and then we don’t do it. There are only three categories we can fall into: I want to want to. I want to. I will - The only category that works is “I will.”

5. Here’s a motivating question - What’s currently in your life that you would like not to be there and what’s currently not in your life that you would like to be there?

6. What kind of lifestyle and career would get you up early, keep you up late, and cause you to live each and every day with excitement, purpose and passion? Get clear on the answer to that question and you will be well on your way to designing a life well lived.

7. In order to be successful at anything in life, we need to take “the CPR Approach”. CPR stands for consistent, persistent, and resistant" consistent in our actions persistent in our drive resistant to set backs and all those who may tell us we can’t do it.



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## 19. JUST PLAIN MUSINGS

This is just like Article Template #11 except you offer a few bulleted musings and observations on life, love and anything else you want to muse on. I usually include a few from each area of expertise, a pet peeve or a brief rant, and then end with the best quote I have seen recently. You can come up with a name for your musings to personalize and brand it – mine is “Things I’ve Noticed Along the Way So Far.”

Bullet 1  
-Bullet 2 -Bullet 3 -Bullet 4 -Bullet 5 -Bullet 6 -Bullet 7 -Bullet 8 -Bullet 9 -Bullet 10 –



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## *A Few More Things I've Noticed Along the Way So Far*

- Some people live in and talk about the past so much it's as if they are “planning for the past.”
- The “I’m an adult victim/survivor of (fill in the blank)” culture does a great disservice to the possibility of change. There comes a time when you have to give up the identity of victim/survivor and decide who you will be now and in the future.
- Here are 5 emotional states that can change your life: disgust, commitment, desire, decision and resolve.
- Some people confuse foolish stubbornness with determination.
- Would you hire a carpenter or plumber who had only one tool in their toolbox? Of course not. And yet we often approach life situations with an equally limited supply of tools. It was Abraham Maslow that said “if the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail.”
- Have you noticed that common sense seems to be less and less common?
- Sometimes I think God got it backwards. So much would be different if we could be parents before we were children.
- Parenting is like eating with chopsticks, playing golf, or driving a car. It looks so easy until you try it.
- Be careful of hindsight. While it may be 20/20, what might have been is not necessarily what would have been.
- There is no such thing as “no-fault divorce.”
- If the two greatest and most common phobias are flying and public speaking, I wonder what would happen if you had to give a speech on a plane?
- I don't know anyone who hasn't thought of a great idea for a product or service and then see someone else make lots of money with it years later. So next time you get a great idea, put it into action.



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- I have just one question for husbands (or wives for that matter) who don't believe in marriage counseling: "Do you believe more in divorce?"
- People who talk on cell phones in a movie theater should be made to clean up the floor after the movie ends, using only their tongue and bare hands.
- The more I do this counseling thing, the more I realize two things: I'm really just a coach, and there is so very much I do not know.
- Wouldn't it be cool if teachers coming out of college were treated like star athletes? You know, a draft, multimillion-dollar contracts and signing bonuses.....
- Most parents of teenagers have had the experience of playing "human alarm clock", having to try and wake up their teen for school. Research shows that adolescents need more sleep than adults. There could be several factors involved in your teen being too tired to get up. One possibility many parents don't think to check is that somewhere between bedtime and morning their kid has snuck out of the house and then snuck back in. Check for exit signs above the windows.



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## 20. TRAPS

List a number of traps and how to avoid them. List the traps and then add a few lines about each. You simply start with a skeleton and add some meat to the bones. David Steele has a good example of this in his article [The 14 Dating Traps](#).

Trap 1

Trap 2

Trap 3

Trap 4

Trap 5





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## ***The Parent Trap: How to Get Out and Stay Out***

**Q. My spouse and I cannot agree on how to raise our kids. I think my spouse is too strict and my spouse thinks I am too lenient. Meanwhile, the kids are getting away with everything. What can we do?**

A. This is an excellent and all-too-common question. So, in typical therapist fashion, I'm going to begin my answer with a question.

Where in the world did we get the idea that two parents have to agree on every aspect of parenting? Somehow, we are supposed to believe that two separate individuals, who grew up with different models of how to parent (if they had models at all), different life experiences and probably different temperaments, are now going to come together and agree on every facet of the complicated task of parenting.

Sorry, I just don't buy it.

Not only is this an unworkable notion in the real world, it can be a damaging one as well. The optimal goal, of course, would be for these two different people to combine their respective parenting styles into a well-functioning and supportive parenting team. This is difficult, although it can and does happen. But when people believe the lie about always having to agree, a power struggle can be set up between the two adults.

We all like to be right and we tend to fight for our positions. In too many situations, instead of coming together as a team, parents grow farther and farther apart, rigidly adhering to their own styles.

A person with a more strict style has something to learn from the person with a more lenient style, and vice versa. But instead of learning from each other, the strict one becomes more strict and the lenient one becomes more lenient. This creates, at best, criticism and resentment and a gap big enough for a child to drive a truck through. The children suffer, and the parents cancel each other out.



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It also sets up what I call the "parent trap." Picture the face of a clock. At 12 o'clock is the word "angry," at four the word "sympathy" and at eight the phrase "taken advantage of."

The trap begins when a child misbehaves, does something wrong or gets in trouble. The parent starts at the top of the clock, becomes "angry" and says something like "OK, that does it, you are grounded for life!" or some equally realistic statement.

After a while, the parent moves on down the clock to "sympathy," and lets the child off the hook.

Sure enough, the child takes advantage, and repeats the same action or something equally frustrating. This moves the parent over to feeling "taken advantage of." The parent doesn't feel this way for too long before thinking or saying, "How could you do this after all I've done for you!?" The parent quickly returns to the top of the clock and "anger."

Do you see the vicious circle this sets up? In the middle is the child, running the show.

Now let's complicate this process even more, with our two different parenting styles. Imagine having one parent stuck on anger and the other one stuck on sympathy, or some equally damaging combination. There's that hole you can drive a truck through.

There are many useful ways to get out of this parent trap. One of the simplest is called the odd/even schedule.

Here's how it works: On odd-numbered days, one parent will be in charge of parenting. That means that all discipline, privileges, discussions, etc., go through that parent for that entire day. The other parent is to stand by and merely observe (unless there is blood or some other legitimate emergency).

The parent who is on for that day can call on the other parent as a consultant if he or she so chooses. Otherwise, the off parent is required to "sit on their wisdom" for the



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day. On the next day, the even day, the roles are simply reversed. The parent who was in charge is off, and the parent who was off is in charge.

This plan can benefit the family in several ways:

The parents come together to agree to follow the plan.

Each parent gets to see the other one in action and see that he or she can parent.

Each parent gets to practice his or her own parenting skills.

The children get to see each parent in charge.

The door is open for the parents to come together as a team.

The task of parenting is difficult enough without it becoming a power struggle between the two adults. It's crucial to remember that the goal is to form an effective team, with both parents drawing on their own unique skills and learning from each other. In this way, the entire family benefits.



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## 21. UNIVERSAL LAWS

As I mentioned earlier, people really like small bits of information that they can use.

Universal Laws of (your expertise and niche)

The Law of

The Law of

The Law of

The Law of

The Law of

The Law of

The Law of

The Law of



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## ***Stress Mastery: 12 Universal Laws for Managing Anger***

### **1. The Law of Everyone**

It is not necessarily wrong to get angry. You get angry, I get angry, all God's children get angry. It's what we do with our anger that makes the difference.

### **2. The Law of Stress**

Although we don't often think of anger as a form of stress, it is by far one of the largest and most destructive forms of daily stress. Manage your anger, and you manage a large amount of your stress.

### **3. The Law of Choice**

Anger is rarely if ever an automatic response. It's a choice. It's a choice because we have to think about something before we get angry.

### **4. The Law of Shoulds**

We all have beliefs about how the world and the people around us should behave. When these beliefs are violated, anger is a natural and sometimes reasonable response. The problem is that when we "should" on somebody, it can become a trigger for our anger.

For example, if we run the sentence "that driver should not have cut in front of me" over and over in our heads, the response is not likely to be pretty. At best, we'll raise our blood pressure, and at worst do something really stupid.

### **5. The Law of Blame**

Another one of our thoughts that lead quickly to anger involves blaming someone or something. The dance of blame is a deadly two-step: 1) someone is at fault, and 2) they should be punished -anger can be very punishing.



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## 6. The Law of Cause

This one is closely related to the law of blame. There is a myth in our culture that very few people ever question. The best example is the phrase “he made me angry.”

Well, bull! No one can make us angry without our cooperation.

## 7. The Law of Enflaming

Another myth is that if we are able to vent our anger it will automatically decrease. That is not necessarily so. I once watched a neighbor stomp around the side of his house, grumbling and swearing as he went. Stomping by the air conditioning unit, he smashed his fist down on top of it. That move not only made him more angry, it looked to me like it hurt a lot too. Grumbling and swearing even louder, he stomps into his backyard and kicks a lounge chair. It didn't appear to calm him down, and it looked like that one hurt too. I found out later that he broke both his hand and his foot on his romp around the yard.

## 8. The Law of Source

In almost every case, anger is a secondary emotion. In other words, we experience some other strong emotion before we feel the anger. Follow the source and you usually come up with one of three strong emotions - fear, frustration or hurt, or some combination of the above. Deal with fear, frustration and hurt and you can cut anger off at the pass.

## 9. The Law of Battles

Learn to pick your battles. If you get angry at everything, then your anger means nothing. If that sounds confusing, here's an example: how much would gold be worth if we all had it in abundance? That's right, not much. Gold is valuable because it is so rare. If you are always getting angry, people stop taking you seriously and just want to avoid you.



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## **10. The Law of Worth**

Ask yourself this question: “is this situation worth getting angry over?” Most time it just isn’t.

## **11. The Law of Muscles**

Learn to exercise your choice muscles. We can choose to be angry or we can choose another way of handling the situation.

## **12. The Law of Channeling**

When you do get angry, channel it into something you can use to benefit you, such as motivating you into changing what can be changed.





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## 22. RULES FOR...

Simply another way to offer small bits of information.

Rule 1

Rule 1

Rule 1

Rule 1

Rule 1

Rule 1



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## **5 Rules for Getting Your Goals**

**SMH - Simply Must Have:** The first step is to choose a goal that you simply must have. Throw out anything that you would "like" to accomplish or that would be "nice" to have. Pick a goal that you simply must have this year, whatever it takes.

**BER - Big Enough Reasons:** Once you have chosen your goal, identify several "big enough reasons" for why you must achieve this goal. What will you be able to do that you cannot do now after you achieve this goal? Make sure your reasons are big and compelling.

**WID - Write It Down:** It never fails - the weakest ink is always stronger than the best memory. Write down what you want. In this way, it becomes a document that you can see, and not just a nice idea floating around in your already full brain.

**MIS - Make It Specific:** If you want to get rid of weight, how much? If you want to get out of debt, do you mean everything but the house, or something else? If you want to save money, how much? If you want to get in better shape, how do you want to look? Getting specific narrows your focus to what you really want.

**KIC - Keep It Close:** Now that you have written your goal and made it specific, keep it close to you. Put a copy on the bathroom mirror, the refrigerator, in your purse or wallet, on your computer wallpaper, etc. You get the picture. You want to keep it close to keep you reminded.



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## 23. BUST A MYTH

Take a popular myth in your field and bust it!

Myth:

Cost of believing the myth

Reality:

Benefits of going with the reality



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## ***Time Heals All Wounds is a Big Fat Lie***

Are you familiar with the phrase "Time heals all wounds?" This is one I often hear people say as they try to brush aside traumas and hurts in their lives.

But it is one of the most destructive clichés, simply because it sounds so close to the truth that it is difficult to spot the big lie here.

At risk of sounding too philosophical, time is an artificial structure that we have created, much like state or country lines. (Have you ever seen a state line? I used to look for them on the ground when I was a kid.)

What I say to clients when they say "time heals all wounds" is that time doesn't heal anything, time simply passes. It is what we do with our lives while time is passing that either helps us, heals us or keeps us stuck.

In my work over the years, I have noticed that some people seem to have an ability to accept the hurts and disappointments of life and then move on. They have a certain resiliency.

Others seem to stay stuck in their pain, living as if the painful events of their lives had occurred just moments ago.

As I sought to understand the strategies of these different types of people, some interesting differences made themselves clear.

What follows are lists of strategies for how to remain miserable and then strategies for how to heal, move on, and thrive.

### **How to stay miserable**

- Complain about the unfairness of it all. ("This should not have happened" - "How could anyone do such a thing?")



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- Organize your life around the event, trauma or injustice. Make it a central theme in your life. Talk about nothing else. Bore your friends.
- Remain bitter and unforgiving. A wise friend of mine once said, "Not forgiving someone is much like trying to crush a sandspur between your fingers. You might eventually do it, but it sure is going to hurt."
- Become a victim. Give up your power to take responsibility and control over your own life.
- Play the scene over and over in your mind. Keep thinking of what you should have done or what you should have said.

## **How to move on, heal and thrive**

- Talk about it. Many of us mistakenly believe that if we keep it inside it won't bother us. Quite the opposite is true. Remember the character -Tom Wingo in "Prince of Tides" and the damage done by not talking about the trauma that had happened in his family? Many times, getting it out in the open can make it manageable.
- Forgive those involved. Forgiving does not condone what someone else did; it simply releases us from the pain of their actions.
- Most importantly, follow this favorite advice of mine:

"Make a place for the event in your life and then put it in its place."

It's important to remember that it did happen and it did affect you. At the same time, its place is in the past, much like a chapter in a book you have read and choose not to read again.

If you find yourself wanting to but unable to follow these suggestions, you may want to get professional help putting the past behind you.



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## 24. WARNING SIGNS

This one can really draw in prospects and clients as they see themselves or someone close in the warning signs. Intro

List of Warning Signs

What to do

Conclusion



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## ***Two Dating Red Flags and What to Do About Them***

**Q: I've been dating a guy for about 6 months and things are good except for one thing - he is almost always late for our dates. I try not to make a big deal out of it, but it is really annoying. Should I just get used to this or what?**

A: Everyone gets to be late every now and then. That's life. When someone shows up habitually late, that's not life. That's character. It's also arrogance.

It's arrogant because what this person is telling you is that they believe their time and convenience is more important than your time, convenience, and feelings.

I believe the solution is to become unavailable for waiting, past a very few minutes. Becoming no longer available for something is another way of setting a boundary. A boundary is simply a way of saying "don't go there."

I'll even give you the words - "I've noticed that you are often late for our times together. What can we do to solve this, because from now on I am no longer willing to wait around?"

If the person is willing to work on this with you, then you just might have something worth hanging around for. If this person continues to make excuses and is not willing to work on this with you, then you might not have something worth hanging around for

**Q: The woman I am dating is very confusing. She will promise to do something and I believe she really means it, and then goes out and either does not do what she promised and/or does the opposite.**

**This is starting to drive me nuts, and I'm not sure what to do about it. Can you help?**

A: One of the main principles that has helped me through all of these years of working with people is this: "Does the person's behavior match their words?"





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If the behavior of a person matches the words of the person, then there are grounds for trusting this person. If the behavior does not match the words, consistently over time, then those are strong grounds for not trusting someone. If you are dating someone who consistently says one thing and then does another, this is a major red flag. Warning bells should be going off.

There is a word for consistently saying one thing and doing another.

It's called lying.

The key phrase here is "consistent over time." Most folks who say one thing, but do something else are also gifted at making excuses -- another reason not to trust them. If you do not and cannot trust someone, what do you really have, besides potential heartache?



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## 25. THE 5 AND 5

You can list 5 signs or symptoms of a problem, and then list 5 solutions. Another take on this is 5 things not to do and 5 things to do instead.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)



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## ***Relationship Advice: 3 Things to Avoid, 3 Things to Do***

"Almost no one is foolish enough to imagine that he automatically deserves great success in any field of activity. Yet almost everyone believes that he automatically deserves success in marriage." - Sydney J. Harris

### **3 Things to Avoid**

**Complaint** - In no way am I suggesting that if you have a legitimate complaint, you should keep quiet about it. What you want to avoid is becoming a member of the whine-and-moan group that complains out of habit and for the sake and pure joy of complaining. Complain too much and you will stop being heard.

It's much harder to hear "you never do anything around here" than it is to hear "I'm wondering if you can help me with something"; and, it's important to follow a complaint with a suggested solution.

**Criticism** -It's so easy to be critical. Each of us is a fallible human being, so there is always plenty to criticize. Constant criticism sucks the life out of any relationship. It causes the receiver to be on the defensive and derails any constructive conversation.

**Contentiousness** - Contentious is defined by Webster as "exhibiting an often wearisome tendency to quarrels and disputes." It sure is wearisome. When everything is a battle, you lose track of what is worth fighting for, like a great marriage.

If you recognize yourself in any of the above, you may have formed some bad habits. The good news is you can break bad habits by replacing them with good habits. Here are a few suggestions.

### **What to Do**



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**Apologize** - for something from the past. The ability to apologize demonstrates a strength of character rare in our world. If you have been married for more than a month, then you have enough history to find something for which you can apologize.

A genuine apology has at least these three components:

- (1) Sorrow for what has happened
- (2) Acknowledgment of the harm done
- (3) Commitment to avoid doing it again.

**CoupleTip:** Apologizing for things in the past helps clean things up. Apologizing for things as they occur helps to keep the slate clean.

**Appreciate** - something in the present. Do you know anyone who does not like to be appreciated? We need to do two things to be able to regularly appreciate someone. First, we can never take anything for granted. Second, we have to pay attention. I'll even give you some suggested opening words:

"Thank you for . . ." "I really appreciated you when . . ." "I really liked it when..."

These are magic words in marriage.

**CoupleTip:** Make a list of all the things you appreciate about your partner. Then take the radical step of sharing the list.

**Anticipate** - something in the future. We all need something to look forward to in life. This applies to couples as well. At the very least it can help you connect, and at the very best, give you hope.

**CoupleTip:** Get out a calendar and plan a few fun couple events for the near future. Planning is not a burden, it's a privilege.



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## 26. SEASONAL

Holiday blues

Holiday stress

Goals at New Year

Valentine's Day

Spring

Summer blues

Back to school

Thanksgiving



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## ***It's Time to Think Thankfulness***

"I challenge anybody in their darkest moment to write what they're grateful for, even stupid little things like green grass or a friendly conversation on the elevator. You start to realize how rich you are." - Jim Carrey

Over the years I've written several columns on the issue of gratitude, many around this time of year. Now, when a columnist writes often on a subject, there are a few things this could mean:

- 1) He thinks it's important,
- 2) He knows a lot about it,
- 3) He likes the subject, or
- 4) He's got nothing else to write about.

Go with number one, with maybe a little bit of two and three, hopefully not number four.

Regular readers of this column know that I like to write about practical things, and stay away from what I call the "squishy psycho-babble stuff." The issue of gratitude can sound like a squishy concept. In reality, it's a very practical concept. Call it an attitude of gratitude, thanks-living instead of thanksgiving, whatever you like.

### **An attitude of gratitude**

From a practical point of view, having an attitude of gratitude simply gets you more in life. This is because of a simple yet powerful rule of life that we often ignore: We get more out of what we focus on. If we focus on all that we don't have, on what others have that we don't, on all that we lack, we end up feeling lacking. Focusing on what we don't have results in envy at best, and, at worst, results in beating ourselves up for all the mistakes we've made. Not a really helpful or productive way to live.



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On the other hand, when we focus on the many things for which we have to be grateful, we realize just how blessed and rich we really are. When you feel blessed and rich, you feel much more alive and thus more motivated to live the life you desire.

## **A few suggestions**

So now, at the beginning of this holiday season, here is my challenge. Make a list of all the things for which you are grateful. Make a long list. Here are a few questions to get you started:

What have you been grateful for in the past? What can you be grateful for in the present? Who has helped you in your career? Who has been there for you when you needed someone the most? What can you be grateful for in your family? In your marriage? What can you be grateful for in your job? What are you grateful for in the last year, month, week, even today?

These questions should get you started. Keep the list with you, and when you notice your perspective shifting toward the wall reread your list to turn your focus back to where you want to go. If you notice a few names on your gratitude list, contact them and thank them for their contribution to your life. Let them know they made the list. They will feel great, and so will you.





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## 27. TOPICAL

Pay attention to the newspapers, TV, movies, magazines, etc.

Take advantage of topical subjects. For example:

Brad & Jen break up

Starter marriages

Little girl flying a plane

Reality TV



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## ***Relationship Advice: Why Brad and Jen Broke Up and What We Can Learn from Them***

It's been a few months since the riveting headlines: The Dream Couple, Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston broke up. The fallout from this celebrity break up is still plastered all over the magazine headlines.

Parade magazine recently took a poll asking for the number one celebrity shocker of the year. And who'd-a-thunk-it, Brad and Jen's breakup was the number one rated celebrity shocker of the year.

How could this be? This is the dream couple who have everything going for them: Money, fame, fortune, looks, glamour, celebrity.

### **How could this happen?**

Because fame, fortune, looks, glamour, and celebrity do not sustain a relationship.

A good fit and a good connection make for a sustainable relationship.

### **What Makes for a Good Fit?**

So what makes for a good fit? Just three things are needed to make a good fit – requirements, needs and wants.

For a relationship to work and be sustainable long term, there must be a good fit between the requirements, needs, and wants of the two people.

### **Requirements**

Simply stated, a requirement is "a gotta have." A requirement is a deal breaker. The relationships will not work if this is not present. There is no room for compromise.

For example, if one person wants children and the other one does not, that's a deal breaker. You cannot compromise here because you cannot have half a child.



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If you are not sure if something is a requirement for you, ask yourself this question "If I was with Brad Pitt/Jennifer Anniston, and everything else was great, but this one thing was not there, would the relationship work?"

If the answer is no, then it is a requirement. If the answer is a serious yes, then it is a need.

## **Needs**

Needs are similar to, yet different from requirements. Needs can be negotiated. There is room for compromise and negotiation.

For example, if you have a strong desire for time alone, you can negotiate the what, when, where of alone time.

There are two types of needs, functional and emotional. Functional needs are things that need to happen in a relationship, like saving money, keeping the house clean, or having sex three times a week. Emotional needs are something you need to experience to feel loved by the other person, such as security or appreciation.

## **Wants**

A want is the gravy in a relationship, the icing on the cake. Wants are things that make the relationship fun.

Most people become attracted to each other based on wants and desires, and needs and even requirements are ignored. In a successful relationship, there is alignment between the wants and needs of both people.

An alignment of requirements and needs between two people is what makes for a successful and happy long-term relationship.

And all the glamour, good looks, fame and fortune of a Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston won't be enough if the good fit is not there.



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## 28. CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW

Interview someone in your area of expertise. It can be a big name, or simply a colleague. You can then use the interview in a variety of ways. I've used my interview with Chris Knight, CEO of EzineArticles.com (which is the example article for this template) as a special report, a bonus, 3 articles on EzineArticles.com and other article directories, and it will someday become a product and part of a home study course.

Q & A #1 –

Q & A #2 –

Q & A #3 –

Q & A #4 –

Q & A #5 –

Q & A #6 –



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## ***Jeff Herring Interviews Chris Knight, CEO of EzineArticles.com on Article Writing & Article Marketing***

### **1. What is the one thing that every article writer and marketer must do?**

Get started and then be consistent. Marketing or syndicating and distributing your articles is an 'advertising' function (in addition to good old fashion grass roots marketing and brand building). Because it's an advertising function, it is an activity that you want to invest in on a monthly basis all year round.

You don't advertise your business once and you shouldn't engage in article marketing only once. Give it at least 90 days to 6 months to prove to yourself that writing and marketing with articles can pay dividends in terms of its ability to generate qualified visitors & traffic back to your website.

### **2. What is the one thing that every article writer and marketer must avoid?**

Article writers should avoid the very basic sins of not doing spell and grammar check or failing to review sentence structure and punctuation.

Article marketers must avoid being spammy with their article writing and syndication strategies. This can be avoided with two simple rules:

1) Always give value in the article body and you get to sell yourself in the resource box (never the other way around); and 2) Always read the posted editorial guidelines to respect the publishers rules for the type of content that they accept. You'll be saving yourself a lot of time and will find an easier path to a higher acceptance of your article content.

I know you only asked for one thing they should avoid, but another that is just as important is to avoid PLR (private label rights) articles. Article marketers want to avoid buying into those crazy article rewriters that churn PLR content into Frankenstein articles that make you look foolish, not to mention may carry legal penalties for



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infringement. If you want to find short cuts, look for ways to keep your integrity in tact by improving your article writing efficiency or by hiring a team of article writers to help you with your article inventory production goals.

### **3. Is this article stuff just a fad or is this something that is here to stay?**

Article writing and marketing is not a fad and it's been around for many decades in the print media world. It wasn't until the mid-1990's that article syndication on the Internet took off with a significantly higher viral nature than its print cousin.

It's here to stay despite many who say the sky is falling due to the duplicate content penalty concerns. Reality is that the search engines use duplicate content identification as only one of over 70+ metrics they use to determine how much value to give an article. It's hardly the prime factor as to whether article syndication will or will not hurt you in terms of love or lack of love from the search engines... and my recommendation is that you've got more to lose by not syndicating your quality original articles.

### **4. Can someone still write and market articles successfully if they are in a crowded niche?**

Yes, they can, but they will need to crank up the article volume by at least 10x more than a non-crowded niche. A decade ago, 20 articles put into syndication would have been enough to make your hit counter go mad.

Today, you'll need at least 200 articles in any niche to get a shot at the top and it may take 2000 or more articles to make a dent in a crowded niche. Is it still worth it? YES it is!

Keep in mind that only about 82-85% of authors or experts who engage in article marketing ever go beyond 10 articles. That means the bulk millions of qualified visitors belongs disproportionately to the 15% that go beyond 10 or more articles.

### **5. What has article writing and marketing done for you?**





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I've built a business on it and it has enabled me to grow the business to serve the tens of thousands of authors who submit their quality original articles to us by the thousands every day. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to serve as a catalyst for an industry that appears to know no ceiling.

Every single day I hear success stories of authors who land multiple hundreds of thousands of dollars in contracts or interview appearances in the Wall Street Journal, NY Post, various TV show producers or countless other high value intangible and tangible economic benefits. For some people, it turns their life around and gives them access to qualified prospects that they couldn't have afforded to acquire without article marketing.

## **6. What trends do you currently see in article writing and marketing?**

Mass adoptance. Article marketing is no longer a question of "should I or shouldn't I" engage in the strategy, but rather it is a question of "how many qualified visitors do I want to attract with my articles?"

Shorter articles. The 2000-5000 word articles are better left for white papers and research reports vs. the 250-700 word count that is more appropriate for article syndication.

Tactical planning. In the past, article writing and marketing was a hit or miss activity with very little planning or goal-setting for many authors. Instead, today a growing segment of authors are setting very specific numerical goals for their article writing and distribution strategies – and you can guess what that leads to: BETTER RESULTS! □





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## 29. CREATE A SERIES

Create a series of articles based around a theme. For example,

15 Dating Traps, 10 Universal Laws for Singles, with an article on each trap, law, etc.

This is a great blueprint for an e-book down the road.

First Article – Dating Trap #1

Second Article – Dating Trap #2

ETC.



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## ***Atlanta Singles Dating Trap #14 – The Sex Trap and How to Avoid It***

Singles tell me that dating is one of the biggest challenges they face in their lives. And that is before you mix in the confusing feelings that go with sex.

### The Sex Trap

It has been said that love is blind. Well, if love is blind, then sex is the blindfold.

Singles fall into the Sex Trap in one, or both, of two ways:

Singles believe that sex is a necessary test of compatibility. Therefore, if the sex is good then the relationship will be good as well.

More commonly, all consciousness goes out the window, and one or both formerly level-headed singles consider themselves a committed couple as soon as they have sex. This is the blindfold part.

The screaming danger is to confuse the immensely powerful and pleasurable feelings that go along with sex with love.

The next step down the slippery slope of the sex trap is this kind of thinking - "Well, there are some problems and warning signs here, but the sex is so good!"

Your Solution: Here's a difficult challenge - to keep your head about you when you are feeling all these great feelings. You can do this by being very clear on your requirements, needs, and wants in a relationship. No matter how good the sex is, if your requirements are not met, then it is a deal breaker.



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## 30. A BOOK REVIEW

Write a review of a popular book in your niche. Give the main points and ideas, highlight the features and benefits, emphasize tips, etc. This can help your article have a high ranking in the search engines when you use the title and author of a popular book in your review.



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## ***Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah – Book Review***

Author Richard Bach followed up Jonathan Livingston Seagull with Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah.

In real life Richard Bach would spend a summer barnstorming, flying around the Midwest in an old bi-plane, landing in farmer's fields, and getting permission give rides in his bi-plane and sleep in the field at night.

Illusions is the story of what could have happened one summer when Richard Bach met another barnstormer, Donald Shimoda, who was a slightly more evolved human being.

The rest of the story is about their adventures together one summer, and the things that Richard learned from Donald Shimoda.

One of the really nice features of the book is it is peppered with quotes that became learnings for Richard, all taken from Donald's Messiah's Handbook.

Some quotes are a little out there, but most of them are powerful and on target. Here are two examples:

"Argue for your limitations, and sure enough, they are yours."

"You are never given a wish without the power to make it come true. You may have to work for it however."

The book is really a tale about change and transformation, set in story form. If you promise not to read ahead, it ends like no other book I have ever read.

I give it 4 out of 5 bookmarks.



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## 31. A MOVIE REVIEW

Marriage and family therapist Dr. Frank Pittman has written movie reviews for years for The Family Therapy Networker. He takes popular movies and writes about themes concerning marriage, family life, married life, manhood, womanhood, and just plain life.

You can do the same. And then you can write off the movie tickets on your taxes as a business research expense! (I think so anyway, as I am not an attorney. My attorney said I had to say this.)



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## ***The Movie Hollywoodland is a Super Example***

Just saw the movie Hollywoodland, about the life and suicide of actor George Reeves, TV's first Superman.

The movie does a nice job of laying out the conspiracy theories that claim Reeves did not commit suicide but was murdered, either accidentally or on purpose.

Watch for the boom mic in scene where actor Ben Affleck as George Reeves burns his Superman costume.

Here is the theme that I notice the most - George Reeves, a struggling young actor is handed a brass ring, the role of the first Superman on TV. The show is a great success, and he becomes a celebrity.

Not a bad gig, right?

The problem shows up when it becomes clear that Reeves is not satisfied with this role, and wants to be a "serious actor." While this desire is certainly understandable, it is a shame that Reeves could not or would not appreciate the brass ring he was handed.

The implication is this disappointment in life is what led to his suicide.

Perhaps I saw this movie too much through my eyes as a therapist/coach, but it made me think of how so often we refuse to delight in the blessings around us and always yearn for more somehow.

I walked out of the theater feeling sad about the life and death of George Reeves, and very appreciative of my life and blessings.



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## 32. WHAT I LEARNED FROM.....

This one is simply a bulleted list of what you have learned from any number of things or events, such what I learned from my parents, my sister, my brother, my son, my daughter, from my third grade teacher, from September 11th, from watching a TV show, etc.

Bullet 1 – Bullet 2 – Bullet 3 – And so on.....





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## ***Life Lessons Learned While Watching M\*A\*S\*H***

M\*A\*S\*H is one of my all time favorite TV shows. In fact, an old repeat is on while I write these words.

I've had the good fortune over the years to meet both Alan Alda who played Hawkeye Pierce and Wayne Rogers who played Trapper John.

Life lessons from M\*A\*S\*H

### **1. Humor heals**

Can you think of a more stressful and debilitating situation? Thousands of miles from home, in a war zone, putting wounded bodies back together again.

One of the main coping techniques was laughter. Wisecracks, practical jokes, and more kept them going. Humor is a fantastic source of stress relief.

### **2. An off the rack world**

There is a scene in which Hawkeye and Margaret are talking about their struggles with relationships. From this conversation came a great line - "You know what your problem is? You keep looking for a tailor made fit in an off the rack world."

### **3. The joy of being really good at something you love**

The happiest people I know are the ones that get to do something they love for a living each day.

Even though they were in horrible conditions, you could tell that the surgeons enjoyed what they did and were committed to be the best they could be, no matter what.



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## **33. PERFORM A RANT**

Find something in the news, in your niche, in your life on which you can offer a strong opinion. People just love it when you take a strong stand and then back it up.

Being controversial gets you more readers.



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## ***Parenting: Children Should Play Not Pilot***

I wrote this article several years ago after an eight year old girl piloting an airplane crashed and was killed. While the story is old, the lessons we can lift from the story still ring true today, and always.

Play, not pilot

Should Jessica have been up there or not?

That's the question I have been asked dozens of times since 8-yearold Jessica Dubroff died when her plane crashed during her attempt to become the youngest pilot to fly across America.

In general, I'm very reluctant to comment on a situation involving parents and their children when I don't have all the facts. But this case is fairly cut and dried, and we have all the information we need.

Let's put aside, for a moment, the following:

In most states, you have to be 21 to drink legally, 18 to vote, 16 to drive a car and 15 just to be behind the wheel of a car with a parent present. You even have to be a certain size to get on the more intense rides at Disney World.

Let's instead talk about something I have not heard asked during all the reactions to this tragic loss of life: What's the No. 1 job of children?

If it's to be little adults, then we can continue to push children to achieve beyond their years.

However, children are not little adults.

They are children.

The No. 1 job and task of children is simply to play.



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Child therapist and registered play-therapist supervisor Art Cleveland has this to say about the importance and power of play in the life of a child:

"We as adults often say that children are 'just playing.' Children are never just playing. They are constantly dealing with their hopes, dreams, fears and anxieties through play. Without play, children cannot master their world. When this process is rushed, even by well-meaning adults, children lose not only their childhood but the opportunity for a happy adulthood as well. Jessica's childhood was on a crash course before she ever climbed into the cockpit."

Said another way, raising healthy children comes down to what is developmentally appropriate for a child.

What is developmentally appropriate is not necessarily, what a child says he or she wants to do. Children can talk a good game, but they are not necessarily ready and/or able to follow that up with appropriate behavior.

When I was 8, I wanted to grow up to be a grizzly bear. While my wife might say that at times, I have made it; this was a child's wish, not connected to reality in any way.

If something can be done, then should it be?

In my work with teen-agers, I have found they are great at wanting to be older than they are.

But what I encourage them to do is, if they are 16, simply be 16. Be a child, then be a teen-ager, then be an adult.

There's going to be plenty of time to be an adult.

The goal is to make it that far, learn and have fun on the way.

In conclusion, perhaps we can look at one more issue that could provide some insight in the case of this little girl.



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In the movie "Jurassic Park," the character played by Jeff Goldblum has this to say about the scientists who created the dinosaurs:

"They were so busy figuring out if they could; they never slowed down long enough to ask if they should."

Let's hope that more parents will now be encouraged to ask this question about their children.



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## ***Relationship Advice: On Starter Marriages***

A man walking through the woods near a river hears desperate screams for help. He runs to the river to see someone struggling as the river pulls him downstream. He jumps in and pulls the person to safety.

As soon as he gets to the shore, he hears another person coming downstream, screaming for help. He jumps back in and rescues that person. Sure enough, just as he gets the second person to shore, another person comes down the river, screaming for help. He rescues that person and another and still another. As more and more people come down river and he begins to tire, he stops jumping in and heads upriver.

When asked where he is going, he replies: "I'm going upstream to find out who is throwing these people in and stop them!"

This story came to mind after reading an article featuring a new phrase in the world of marriage and the family: So many 20- and 30somethings are getting married and within only a few years divorced, the people who track their numbers call them "starter marriages."

I'm struggling for the right words to comment on "starter marriages." The words that keep coming to me are "no, no, wrong, no, no, hell no!"

I'm familiar with starter cars, starter homes, starter jobs. But starter marriages? What's next, starter kids? As in, these are the kids we practice parenting on, and later we raise some kids to adulthood.

It frustrates me when sociologists or some other "ologist" finds a creative label for a painful phenomenon, as if a clever name takes care of it.

The guy in the above story was doing a worthy thing, trying to help people who were drowning, just as I hope that whoever came up with the starter marriage label is trying to



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do a worthy thing. At some point, however, you have to go upstream and deal with what is causing the problem in the first place.

How to create a successful marriage is a crucial thing we need to learn but one rarely taught in school. So the question becomes, what do we need to know before we get married in order to have a successful marriage?

Here are some suggestions:

## **1) Choose well**

It's often easier said than done. Love can make you blind. It can make you temporarily stupid, too. One way to choose well is to be aware of your own relationship radar - how you go about becoming attracted to certain people. If this radar is faulty, you likely will be attracted to someone who may not be good for you. In order to choose wisely, you may have to choose differently as well.

## **2) Pre-marital counseling**

It's a great way to identify and work out some bugs early on. Whether you see a minister or therapist, you can discover areas that might be challenging for your relationship and learn skills and techniques for handling them. Believing problem areas will automatically get better after marriage is a cruel myth. Without learning methods for managing differences, they almost are guaranteed to get worse, not better.

## **3) Have a teachable spirit**

Being teachable is a hallmark of success. Many people enter into marriage thinking they know how to do it right. I know I did. I even had a license and degree on my wall that said I was a marriage and family expert. Fortunately, I was blessed to have someone who was willing to hang around while I learned.

So, learn all you can about marriage, relationships, communication, etc.





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Columnist Sydney J. Harris said "Almost no one is foolish enough to imagine that he automatically deserves great success in any field of activity; yet almost everyone believes that he automatically deserves success in marriage."

Read books, go to seminars, get good coaching when and even before you need it. You also need to learn from each other. Teach each other how to be each other's own unique partner.

#### **4) Become a good heart-tender**

When we get married, we become the caretaker of someone else's heart. We can break it, ignore it, or take great care of it.