Week 2:
INTRO

SAVE MY MARRIAGE ONLINE COURSE

MarriageHelper

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As we start this segment, I want you to understand that before we can tell you how to fix things, you really need to understand what the real problem is. Now, you may be thinking, "I already know, Joe. My spouse is having an affair or my spouse says that I'm controlling or whatever" and I understand that and I'm certainly not trying to say that you're not bright enough to know what's going on. But I want to ask you some questions and get you to think through some things more specifically than that, to give you a deeper comprehension and understanding of what's happening in your situation.

You see, if you look at the research about why people divorce, if you'd sensitize all that research, I mean you find scholarly articles here and scholarly articles there, and indeed what we would call a literature review. Which John Gottman by the way at the University of Washington Loveland did a few years ago, he found that if you sensitize all that research, it comes down to one of three reasons typically. Now, we're not talking about symptoms like money problems or sex problems or in-law problems, we're talking about the emotions that underlie them because that's what we really need to understand. If we're going to be able to rectify the situation and salvage your marriage. So Gottman, as he did that literature review said it really comes down to this, people typically want out of a marriage because they either feel unloved, disliked or disrespected, like "I don't feel like you love me, I don't feel like you like me, I don't feel like you respect me."

Now, that last one is more powerful than you may think. Love and like, we tend to understand but get this, respect is crucial. Sometimes when I'm on national television shows or radio shows, they'll ask me, "Isn't it true that communication is the most important thing in a relationship?" and I always reply, "It's important alright but not on my estimation as it the most important". Love, liking and respect, those are the three and respect means that you treat me as an equal. In the marriage world, it's called an egalitarian marriage. I need to know that you're not putting me down. I need to know that you're not treating me badly. I need to know that not only do you see me as an equal, but you treat me as an equal.

Now, whatever the situation is, that's in your relationship whether your spouse is having an affair, whatever it might be. Understand that there are at least two perspectives, there's your perspective and there's your spouse's perspective. And so as we look at this, even though you might be thinking wait a minute, my perspective is the one that's right and it may well be. Don't hear me say that it's not. But we really need to get you to think in terms of your spouse's perspective because if you understand that and can do a little analysis there, it can give you some really good tools to be able to potentially salvage your marriage.

So what does your spouse say the problem is? Well, I know if your spouse is off with someone else and feels like he or she is madly in love with that person that your spouse has told you all kinds of terrible things about you. Maybe he or she may have said things like, "well you're not good in bed or I tried to be sexual and you just turned me down again and again" or maybe "you're too controlling' or maybe 'there's no way to make you happy". I mean, they could say a gazillion different things. Most of those things are said just to justify what they're doing even though they probably really believe it as they say it. It's still is coming from somewhere in the subconscious and giving them the ability to do what they're doing by vilifying you.

Yet at the same time it's important for you to listen to that. What is my spouse saying? And then, let me introduce you to three letters that may help you understand some things. They are R-B-S. They stand for the reason-behind-the statement. Now, you can't always know what the reason is behind what they're saying. But sometimes, you can. And if you listen to what he or she is saying, if they say some terrible thing about you. Ask yourself this question, what is the reasoning behind that? Is it just because he or she needs to vilify me? To justify what he or she is doing? Or is he or she trying to tell me something about my behavior.

For example, particularly in cases where your spouse says, "I don't want to be with you because you're controlling and dominating". The first thing you're tending to do is to defend yourself. That's not my motive, that's not what I mean, I don't want to cause you that problem and we understand that your motives may be extremely good, or maybe sometimes not so good. But if your spouse is saying that what it the reason behind that? What is it that you're doing? Or that you're saying that's evoking those kinds of emotions in him or her where they feel controlled and therefore feel frustrated, stifled, they feel as if they have no freedom, almost as if they're in some kind of emotional jail when they're connected with you.

Now, if you listen for that, the reason behind the statement, then you start looking for the things that you do. What is it that I say? What is it that I do? How do I act that might lead him or her to feel that way? If you can begin to decipher the reasons behind these statements, and some by them of course, you're going to find don't have much meaning at all. "Oh, I'm leaving you because you weren't very good in bed and my lover is." Maybe you weren't good in bed, maybe you were, maybe he or she is just saying that to justify the behavior. So look for what's really there. Look for the gems that can give you the insight into what he or she is thinking and feeling. Now, from this point on, in this particular segment or chapter, I'm going to address several different kinds of things that people face in their marriage problems.

Now, they'll be some that will not be applicable to you. Therefore, you can skip through the ones that don't really apply to you. But I'm going to go through these, one at a time, so that you can see if this is the situation you're facing, here are some things that you need to understand.