

# The Purpose of Marriage - Part I

By David C. Roche

So why do we get married? We say it is because we fall in love.

Actually, we don't fall in love to get married; we get married to fall in love. We get married to buckle down and do the work necessary to develop true love with our partner. We find true love by fulfilling the real purpose of marriage- completing childhood. More specifically, each of you needs to help your partner heal their childhood wounds. In order to accomplish this, each of you must grow and develop to become the complete human beings you were born to be.

So let's go back to the beginning: childhood.

When we are born we are totally complete, joyful human beings. We've had all of our needs met for roughly nine months in the womb and now we are ready to face the world. We begin our journey of development with the help of our caretakers (usually our parents, but they could include grandparents, older brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, etc.). We have six very distinct stages of development and we have very specific needs in each stage. These stages are:

- **Attachment** (0-18 months)
- **Exploration** (18 months-3 years)
- **Identity** (3-4 years)
- **Competence** (4-7 years)
- **Concern** (7-13 years)
- **Intimacy** (13-19 years)



At each stage we depend on our parents to meet all of our needs and help us successfully develop and therefore progress to the next stage. When we need affection, we need it now. If there is too little affection, we feel abandoned. If there is too much affection, we feel smothered. If our parents don't get it exactly right, our needs go unmet and we develop what psychologists call a childhood wound. We are all wounded to some extent at each stage of our development but there is almost always one particular stage during which we get particularly stuck (this is usually the same stage at which your parents got stuck when they were children- yes, it is a vicious circle). The healing of this major wound becomes a top priority in our unconscious mind. Our unconscious is relentless in pursuit of this goal because it believes that this wound must be healed or we will die (no, I'm not being dramatic, our unconscious really thinks like this).

In addition to the six development stages, we experience socialization. This is the process through which our parents take us so we can survive in the world. As I mentioned earlier, we are born fully joyful, complete human beings. Our "core" self is complete and intact. This core self can be divided into four functions: thinking, feeling, sensing, and acting. These are our avenues of connection to the outside world. As long as our thoughts are free, our feelings flowing, our bodily senses intact, and our muscles flexible, we are whole.

But this wholeness doesn't last. With the best of intentions our parents teach us the ways of the world in their words and in their deeds. We see or hear societal rules: men don't cry, sex is bad, women shouldn't be too smart or too athletic, and much more. Our unconscious takes these messages very seriously as a matter of survival and we shut down some parts of our core self. Males shut down the ability to express feelings because they learn that expressing feelings is wrong for a man and they will die if they continue. Females shut down natural athletic talent because girls aren't supposed to be doing that. Many children, male and female, are told that parts of their bodies are bad or naughty so they decide to suppress their natural sexuality in order to survive. These are but a few examples of the thinking, feeling, sensing, and acting areas that we bury so deep we forget they even exist.

With unmet childhood needs causing our unconscious mind major pain and socialization causing us to bury parts of our true selves, we take on certain additional positive and negative character traits to protect us from further wounding and to compensate for the repressed parts of our original selves (these repressed parts are called the lost self\*). So the personality that we present to others includes certain characteristics of our original being that were not lost and new character traits that we developed to fill the void. We identify some of these new

compensatory characteristics as negative and defend ourselves against them by burying them or simply denying their existence.

So we leave our childhood with unfinished business (a childhood wound that requires healing) and our unconscious mind enters adulthood with a very specific agenda (to heal that wound and become the complete human beings we were born to be). Along the way, we have cut out and buried major parts of our true personality and adopted other personality traits (some so negative we deny them) to help ensure our survival.

The solution to all of this lies with the partner to whom we are attracted and will eventually marry.

My next article, "The Purpose of Marriage Part II" I will examine the effect that our childhood has on the selection of our partner and on our own behavior during this very important relationship.

## The Purpose of Marriage: Part II

By David Roche

**I**n my last article, I talked about the real purpose of marriage: completing childhood. I read an article recently in which a priest was being interviewed about marriage. He said when he first started to study marriage many years ago, he felt the purpose of marriage was procreation, education of children, and allowing people to get rid of their sex urge (his words, not mine). He went on to say that, after Vatican II, the Church told couples that they were also creating a community of love. This probably represented the best thinking at the time yet it is insufficient for the success of these very important relationships. I'm not placing blame on the Catholic Church. No one understood the dynamics of marriage back then. I'm hoping that a better understanding of marriage now and in the future, may mean that more than 5% of marriages will be truly successful.\*



### **I ended my last article with the following conclusion:**

We enter adulthood with significant childhood wound(s). We have cut out and buried major parts of our true personality (our core self) and we have added personality traits to ensure our survival, some of which are considered so negative that we deny having them. Our unconscious mind enters adulthood with a very specific agenda: to heal the wounds of childhood and become the complete human being we were born to be. The solution lies with the partner we are attracted to and eventually marry.

Consciously, we begin looking for a partner with all the right attributes. These attributes could be physical, they could be likes or dislikes similar to our own, or they could be values or certain skills etc. Unconsciously, we are maniacs with a mission: to find that special someone who will heal our childhood wounds and help us become complete. But our unconscious agenda is more complicated than that. Our childhood wounds were created because certain needs were not met by our parents (or caretakers) and our unconscious is now looking for the same type of person to heal these wounds in our adult life. It's not good enough to finally get the hugs we need; we have to get these hugs from

a non-hugger. It's not good enough to get the praise and admiration we crave; we have to get this praise from one who is critical. Our unconscious has in mind the exact type of person who must meet our unmet needs and heal our childhood wounds. This person embodies both the negative and the positive attributes of our parents (although the negative attributes are more important because these are the ones that caused the wounding in the first place). Harville Hendrix calls this image of the ideal mate that our unconscious has formed our Imago. So with this Imago in mind, our unconscious begins the search.

Yet something more interesting is taking place. In addition to possessing both the negative and positive traits of our parents, our Imago just happens to possess the parts of our core self that we are missing. Wow, not only does this person present the promise of unmet needs fulfilled, they are going to make us whole again!

So you think the choice of a partner is a conscious one? Have you seen the list of attributes that dating services ask you to fill-out when looking for a future partner? Do you hear yourself when you tell your friends what's important to you in a mate? It sure sounds like we are in command. The truth is your conscious mind doesn't have a chance; the unconscious is driving this train! Don't think that this is a rational, intelligent choice made by a rational, intelligent human being. This choice is being made by an unconscious mind that is stuck in a time warp, still trying to get childhood needs met.

Because we lack the knowledge and understanding of this unconscious agenda, we enter the first of five stages in a relationship ill-equipped to manage the situation. These five critical stages are:

- 1. Romantic Stage**
- 2. Power Stage**
- 3. Awareness Stage**
- 4. Transformation**
- 5. Real Love**

Most of us enter the first stage of a relationship, the Romantic Stage, unaware of our unconscious agenda. We fly through this stage in a state of euphoria only to hit a wall during the Power Stage. Only 5% of marriages actually get out of the Power Stage (aptly called the power struggle) and move on to Awareness, Transformation, and True Love.

## **The Romantic Stage**

You can thank your unconscious for the overwhelming impact of the Romantic Stage: that feeling in the pit of your stomach as she walks across the room and your eyes meet for the first time, that feeling in your soul that you've known this person all your life but you've just met them today, that awkward silence as you search for something to say while spilling coffee in your lap. Most of us have been there, some more than once.

Romantic love is the creation of the unconscious mind. The unconscious mind has its own agenda. The unconscious is looking for that person who has the negative and positive traits of both our parents combined. Remember that cute guy in English class that you thought was good-looking but there didn't seem to be any chemistry. There was no Imago match. How about the first time your unconscious mind found a match? The feeling was truly euphoric, wasn't it? The stronger the match, the more excitement, the more chemistry, the more lust...the more everything. Your unconscious

has found the perfect person to heal your childhood wounds and allow you to finish childhood. It rejoices in the hope that you will become a joyful, fully alive human being once again.

Chemicals are actually released in your body to create this feeling of euphoria and this desire to be with this person forever. Some of them have familiar names: dopamine and norepinephrine (giving us a rosy outlook on life, a rapid pulse, increased energy and a sense of heightened perception) endorphins and enkephalins (enhancing our sense of security and comfort).

You see this person as the potential love of your life. You deny the negative traits that caused such a stir from your unconscious; you actually don't see them (the chemicals help). Whatever core parts of yourself you buried and your new partner has in spades, excite you and fill you with the sense of completion (remember Tom Cruise in the movie Jerry McGuire saying "you complete me" to Renee Zellweger?). That's the additional feeling you get from your Imago. If you're a guy who buried his ability to feel, you can't get over how wonderful this person is because she expresses her feelings so well (you get this feeling of completion but you don't consciously know why). If you're a woman who has buried her ability to think conceptually, you just can't believe the way this new guy can think strategically and communicate concepts so clearly.

With the promise of need fulfillment and the elimination of our childhood wounds, we focus on the needs of the new love of our life. Their wish becomes our command. We don't think about ourselves at this stage, we know the meeting of our needs lies just around the corner. We focus on our partner's needs. We deny their negative traits and we credit them for the euphoric feeling that we have from the new chemicals in our body.

I should mention that the strongest Imago matches go both ways. He has the traits of both her parents and also the core parts that she is missing. She has the traits of his parents and the core parts that he is missing. A match made in heaven...until it turns into hell.

Our Imago match is a perfect hurting machine. We are incredibly, uncontrollably attracted to a person who has the uncanny ability to wound us like our parents once did. They have all the right weapons and will hurt us in our most vulnerable spots. Additionally, you have been taught since childhood that certain core parts of your self are bad and along comes this person who openly flaunts these core parts. This is why our unconscious helps us through this initial stage with some pretty serious chemicals that mask what's really going on. Without this feeling of euphoria, we would have absolutely no interest in this hurting machine.

The chemicals stick around just long enough for us to totally fall for our Imago and commit the rest of our life to this new partner. The Romantic Stage is not the real love we seek but we think it is because the feeling is so incredible. Real love comes much later and only to the very few who successfully navigate all of the stages of relationship. I am told the Real Love Stage makes the Romantic Stage look like kid stuff. I can't wait to get there.

Inevitably, the Romantic stage comes to an end. The chemicals wear off and reality sets in. That's when we begin the Power Stage. And that's the subject of my next article.

\* I'm sure you've heard the divorce statistics: 50% of marriages end in divorce, over 60% of second marriages end in divorce. But the reality is that 95% of marriages fail to achieve what we're all hoping for, to find real love.

# The Purpose of Marriage Part III: The Power Stage

By David Roche

Some of you may be too young to know of Don McLean's classic song, "American Pie". Most of you will remember this great tune and the chorus "Bye, Bye Miss American Pie...." but do you remember the first verse?

**A long, long time ago  
I can still remember  
How that music used to make me smile  
And I knew if I had my chance  
That I could make those people dance  
And maybe they'd be happy for a while.  
But February made me shiver  
with every paper I'd deliver.  
Bad news on the doorstep  
I couldn't take one more step  
I can't remember if I cried  
When I read about his widowed bride,  
But something touched me deep inside  
The day the music died.**

I remember the day the music died. It was when my first Romantic Stage ended and I had no idea what was going on.

So many marriages could be saved and so many couples could find real love in their lives and return to the beautiful state of relaxed joyfulness that was lost, if only they had the knowledge and understanding to help them through the unknown waters of relationships. If only they understood why we really choose our partners and the real purpose of marriage they wouldn't get trapped where most couples do: in the Power Stage.

In [The Purpose of Marriage II](#) I mentioned that the Romantic Stage is supposed to end. I'm sure that was bad news to many. However, given that the real purpose of marriage is the healing of childhood wounds and becoming whole, the Romantic Stage has to end so we can get to work and fulfill this purpose.

Some time after several months in the Romantic Stage (usually around 9-12 months), commitment shows up and we decide this is the real thing. Our unconscious concludes that its initial job is done. We have been locked together with the help of all these wonderful hormones but these hormones are wearing off and we are starting to see our partner in a different light.

Actually, there are three distinct sources of conflict that characterize the beginning of the Power Stage ([Harville Hendrix](#) likes to call this stage the "Power Struggle" because that's what it is for too many of us). First, the wounding machine that we call our partner starts reinjuring some very sensitive childhood wounds, not meeting our needs just like our parents. Second, those wonderful traits our partner exhibits start getting on our nerves. What do you expect? These are the same traits that we find reprehensible in ourselves. Third, we stop denying the negative traits of our partner and actually see that we married a person with the negative characteristics of both our parents combined. Compounding this is the fact that all of this happens on both sides of the relationship.

We know that something has gone terribly wrong. Our partner has changed from that loving, wonderful human being that we knew just months ago. Have we committed to the wrong person? Is

this what a relationship is supposed to be like? Is this all there is?

On a positive note, I've experienced two Power Stages in my life. I entered the first totally ignorant about marriage, got stuck for several years, and the marriage ended in divorce. I entered the second with a lot more knowledge about myself, my needs, and about the real purpose of marriage. I'm actually still in the Power Stage as you read this and it's a wonderful place to be. With constant dialogue, my beautiful wife Diane and I are healing each other slowly but surely and we are growing tremendously as human beings. We are becoming whole and finding real love.

### **The Power Stage: Ways to Get Through It**

Marriages fail because couples get stuck in the Power Stage and either divorce, which is one type of exit, or turn their energy to other interests (job, children, hobbies, etc.) which is another type of exit. Some couples just settle for things the way they are. All of this could be avoided if we just were more knowledgeable about marriage and its real purpose.

All relationships hit a wall sooner or later. I encourage you to increase your knowledge so that you can anticipate the walls and get past them. You can't eliminate the walls or the work that you need to do but knowledge will help you know what to do when you get there. I suggest some reading from the bibliography that follows this article. I highly recommend the first book, [\*Getting The Love You Want, A Guide for Couples\*](#).

I also encourage you to take the time to learn about the unmet childhood needs (and wounds) that you brought into your relationship. Obviously, you can't go back in time but there's another option. Inevitably, one of you will do or say something to the other that will really hurt (this is natural). Some will sting far more than would seem rational and this is a sign of a childhood wound. The hurt lingers because when the childhood wound is reopened, decades of pain come along with it. The next time this happens, recognize the childhood wound and talk to your partner about what you think you need to heal it.

Another useful technique is to make a list of your needs and share them with your partner. Diane and I did a needs list within the first three months of meeting each other. We refer to them often and update them on occasion. Meeting your partner's needs is an important step toward achieving one of your unconscious objectives: to become whole.

Finally, never criticize. Our unconscious reaction to our needs not being met is to adopt the destructive techniques that worked as a child. We do the adult equivalent of crying, screaming, and throwing tantrums. We criticize. When that doesn't work, we treat our partners in the negative ways our parents treated us (of course we deny this because these behaviors are too awful to admit to). When we want warmth and affection from a partner who is acting cold and aloof like our parent(s), we treat them coldly and keep our distance until they get the message (which usually doesn't happen). It's just not in us to ask for what we need. Criticism is the unconscious way we express an unmet need. Try asking for what you need; for what has been missing in your life since childhood. It might be hard for your partner to meet that need but the results will be far better than the current approach. Instead of complaining to our partner about what is wrong or what is missing, simply ask for what you need. Instead of "You're never home on time for dinner", how about "What I would like is that you're home on time for dinner more often." Ask for what you need and never assume your partner knows your needs.

## **Bibliography/Recommended Reading**

*Getting The Love You Want*  
A Guide for Couples  
Harville Hendrix, Ph.D.

*The Couples Companion*  
Meditations and Exercises for Getting the Love You Want  
Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. and Helen Hunt, M.A., M.L.A.

*Keeping The Love You Find*  
A Personal Guide  
Harville Hendrix, Ph.D.

*Giving The Love That Heals*  
A Guide for Parents  
Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. and Helen Hunt, M.A., M.L.A.

*Hot Monogamy*  
Patricia Love, M.D. and Jo Robinson

*Keeping Love and Intimacy Alive in Committed Relationships*  
David Schnarch, Ph.D.

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