Troubled Marriages and the Holidays

<https://www.mentalhelp.net/blogs/troubled-marriages-and-the-holidays/>

Being in a troubled marriage is hard at any time. Over the holidays it is even harder. There is such a spotlight on relationships and the myth that everyone is happy pervades society.

The month of December may involve, and even require, survival skills for the holidays. Whether the couple is facing a high level of conflict, infidelity and betrayal, or feeling distant and unconnected, the sadness, pain and loneliness are intensified.

Here are some of the survival skills that are suggested for ways to piece together some peace during the holidays.

🡪 Remember that you are in charge of your own buttons, your mouth and your behavior. You don’t have to be part of an escalating argument. You can choose to be more peaceful, maybe detaching with love.

It really does take two to have an argument and you can choose to tell your spouse that you are “taking a bye” over the holidays. You will be glad to spend time together when things are easy but this is not a time to fight or disagree about issues.

That can come later and, maybe with the new year, a new perspective.

Sandy found ways to quietly say to Stan that she knew that they had a lot of things to talk about. She knew that he was unhappy about her lack of interest in sex and how busy that she was with the children and her friends.

She reminded him that she also had concerns; however, until Christmas was over, she was going to take a moratorium on those discussions and look for peace in the family.

Sandy told Stan that she planned to write down her thoughts about both of their concerns when she was upset or thought about things, but would wait to address them until after the holidays were over. She hoped that he could do the same and could accept that she was not going to talk about problems until January 2.

🡪 You must be good to yourself. Treat yourself with love and tenderness. Love and tenderness may not be coming your way from your spouse, so you might have to be extra loving to yourself. Gift yourself with long baths, interesting and soothing music, warm tea, time with close friends.

🡪 Think somewhat objectively about this time in your marriage. It may be a really rough spot, and yet, not unlike others you have been through. Take comfort if that is the case. Remember what helped you get through those times and then out of them. See if some of those same things might work this time around.

Bill remembered that he and Clare had been in this lonely and distant place before in their marriage. He remembered how hard it had been for both of them. They were not talking about anything important and felt more like strangers passing in the night. When they did talk, both were so hurt by their partner’s behavior that they sounded more critical and angry than sad, which only added to their pain.

Bill also remembered that the ice seemed to break when they worried a bit together about their oldest son. They were able to talk and worry together about what was going on with him and the focus was off of their relationship. As they slowly got their son back on track, Bill noticed that their friendship was also returning.

🡪 Create a safe spot for your children. Your children did not ask for, nor did they cause, the problems that you two are experiencing. Find ways to keep their holidays from being tainted or spoiled by what is going on between the two of you. Ask your spouse to do the same.

🡪 Focus on the present. Do what you can to keep from catastrophizing and moving farther down the road than is healthy. Take it one day at a time. There is always a tomorrow. These will be the only holidays this year. Do what you can to enjoy them, even if it is only in small doses.