



Emotional Wealth Secrets

The Housemate Syndrome

Are you living together like housemates? Feel taken for granted and not really in a loving relationship? What happens when you blame your partner for what happens to you – nothing!

When women talk about feelings men hear it as complaining. When men try to offer suggestions, women get irritated as they don't realise that he is trying to help her. As a result, one partner may simply shut down to prevent further conflict, believing that keeping quiet will help to calm things down. Any partner who needs discussion and immediate resolution of an issue will tell you this method absolutely does not work.

Level 1 – Deepest intimacy

Do you remember when you first got together with your partner, when you started your relationship and were "in love"? Do you remember what you used to talk about? You talked about everything, right? You couldn't get enough of each other. You got together whenever you could. You talked long into the night and were forever on the phone whenever you were not together. You would talk about yourselves and your past relationships, your hopes and your dreams, your disappointments and your failures – everything!

That was because you believed that your partner wanted to know everything about you - hungered for more! "Tell me more", is what it used to be like, "I want to know more about you." You felt safe that no matter what you said, your partner would love you and not judge you.

Level 2 – Shallower communication

Then something changed somewhere along the line. Love waned and it probably started like this: She brings up a topic she wants to discuss and he retorts, "Not tonight dear, I'm tired." The negative response is different to what she is used to. "OK", she thinks, "I'll leave it till later and we'll talk before midnight!" But when she raises the topic again his answer is, "Oh, don't be so ridiculous". This second negative response causes her to decide not to raise that particular topic again. She decides that she will be more careful from now on, choose carefully what she says and when so as not to get a negative response again.

A few days later, he notices a difference in her and enquires, "Are you OK?" "Yes", she answers sharply. "Are you sure, you seem a bit different?" he persists. "Yes, I'm OK", she barks back. He also is a little taken aback by her negative response. From now on he also becomes selective about asking, about speaking, lest there is a negative response. And so begins a decrease of intimacy - of telling each other what is going on inside of head and heart – because now there is the risk of a negative response.

Level 3 - The bedroom

Soon difficulties in the bedroom begin. She is now harbouring resentments against him - hurts that haven't gone away because of his earlier negative responses. He is also feeling some confusion and resentment, noticing that she is slightly distant and starting to snap and bicker more. Her short sarcastic responses really hurt. They are intended to hurt, of course. Both are starting to feel that the relationship is not as deep and connected as it used to be.

Soon he approaches her for sex, just to get back the intimacy that he feels is going astray. He is seeking reassurance that this relationship is still OK. He wants to feel close again in the way he knows how. But she is feeling the distance too, and so is not responsive to his approach. She wants to sort the issues out as she knows how. She wants to talk about the hurts, the way she feels when he snaps at her, before she feels ready for sex. So she says, "No, not tonight". Several more answers of, "No, not tonight", and he stops asking because he doesn't like to be rejected. She notices that he stops asking and starts to feel more hurt, even more rejected than she did before. Now she feels she has the evidence that he doesn't find her special any more. She interprets his action of avoiding sex as, "He doesn't find me desirable or attractive because he doesn't want to have sex with me anymore". Soon her inner voice asks loudly, "What is happening, is there someone else?"

Level 4 - Housemates

As housemates there is no emotional intimacy in the relationship any more. Neither he nor she is talking about feelings, only about things like money, holidays, and the kids. It is no longer safe to talk about feelings, about themselves, as there is too much risk of a negative response. She feels that she is walking around him on eggshells. He rehearses things in his head that he would like to say to her, but then never says them in case she goes hysterical. There is no sex and a decreasing level of trust. Resentments, suspicion, and confusion are rising, as the petty arguments and the bickering increases. The Housemate syndrome has arrived.

Choose not to be a victim of The Housemate Syndrome

Partners need to recognise that they have become merely housemates when they start to feel insecure, unfulfilled and empty. Often they yearn to get back to that deep place of intimacy they had at the beginning of the relationship but don't know how to get there. This is where counselling can help. Counselling teaches an effective communication model enabling couples to talk to each other about the things that hurt. The model creates a safe environment where each person feels heard and understood by the other, resentments disappear, and a reconnection is made. Counselling facilitates this process in only a few sessions and insecurities about the relationship begin to evaporate as effective communication begins.

Do not fall victim to The Housemate Syndrome – get help for your relationship soon.

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