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Family & Relationships

Restoring Relationships: Five Things to Try Before You Say Goodbye
Peter M. Kalellis
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The average couple spends only twenty-two to twenty-four minutes a week communicating with each other, say some specialists. That includes the time used to ask questions such as, “When will dinner be ready?”

This book is designed to help couples on the verge of divorce reclaim their marriages by improving five main areas: communication, surrender, forgiveness, unconditional love, and productive anger control. If one partner is willing to do the work required the relationship will have a good chance at reconciliation.

Kalellis provides examples of troubled couples from a wide range of backgrounds including childless couples a few years into their marriage and those married for many years with grown children. The problems they face span from a gradual loss of feeling for each other to heartbreaking infidelity. These examples show how his five steps worked for real couples facing some of life’s most difficult situations.

Take the example of Tom and Wanda. After raising two sons, Wanda wanted out of the marriage. Tom began counseling on his own despite Wanda’s refusal to join him. After nine weeks of working on improving his own behavior and persevering, Wanda finally broke down and joined him. It was another two months before they felt their marriage was something that would survive. This example exhibits a main point of this book: rescuing a failing marriage is long, hard work, but by persisting and being positive, one partner can bring about positive feelings in the other that can change their mind about quitting.

Restoring Relationships also provides readers with exercises and lists of items to consider while studying each chapter and section. For instance, the cheating spouse received a list of things to do to help him sort out his feelings about the situation. Kalellis recommended that he break off contact with his lover for ninety days to give himself time to clarify his emotions. In the meantime, he was to be emotionally and physically available to his wife, be

aware of any avoidance patterns like ignoring needs or “forgetting” to do chores, and allow time for his spouse to come to terms with her emotions as well. Infidelity is one of the hardest situations for a marriage to overcome, but by helping both spouses work out what they contributed to the situation and giving them the tools and exercises to begin rebuilding what had fallen, this marriage was able to survive.

Kalellis, a former Seton Hall University psychology professor and author of more than twenty-five books, brings forty years of marriage counseling experience to this textbook on reconciliation. Sometimes the text is uninspiring, but the examples and exercises are thought provoking and interesting. “To get the most from this book,” the author says, “consider reading it slowly, underline parts that appeal to you, summarize other parts and read the summaries again later.”

Christine Canfield