

## Stay Happily Married

A resource for married couples.

Creating a happy marriage is possible and this site is dedicated to providing resources to help couples who want to stay together. By providing information about qualified marriage counseling, we hope to encourage couples to get the help they need. The site also features articles, other websites, books, and workshops which offer the tools needed to create happy, lasting marriages.



## Creating More Intimacy

*This is Episode number 15 for Stay Happily Married, "Creating more Intimacy."*

*Welcome to Stay Happily Married, your source for weekly updates on the latest tips and advice to build a happy and healthy marriage.*

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Lee Rosen: I'm Lee Rosen; I'm your host. Welcome to the show. I'm here today in the studio with Sherri Hughes, a certified life coach and hypnotherapist who has a private practice in Raleigh, North Carolina.

How are you, Sherri?

Sherri Hughes: I'm great, thank you.

Lee Rosen: Now, Sherri, if I understand correctly, you work with individuals and with couples, working to help them create a better life personally, professionally, and spiritually; and you have techniques that help clients overcome stress, anger, and other blocks that affect their lives and marriage. Do I describe your practice pretty well?

Sherri Hughes: Yes, absolutely.

Lee Rosen: Now, how long have you been practicing?

Sherri Hughes: I've been in practice for about 12 years and I see a variety of clients. A lot of them have to do with making their relationships better, either in marriage or wanting to date and get married, or just struggling with relationships professionally in the work world. So I work a lot with people in their relationships.

Lee Rosen: All about people getting along with people.

Sherri Hughes: Absolutely.

Lee Rosen: Right. I have a lot of people living in my house and it always makes me want to just go be by myself. Relationships are a lot of work.

Sherri Hughes: Yeah, but worth it.

Lee Rosen: Worth it; that's what they tell us, anyway. So you're well-equipped. The topic today is "Creating More Intimacy" and it sounds like that's really your special thing. That's what you focus on.

Sherri Hughes: Yeah, it is. And I find a great deal of enjoyment in working with couples and helping them through the struggles and realize that there is an easier, softer way to live together and to make each other's lives more happy and manageable and the life together as a couple certainly more intimate and loveable.

Lee Rosen: Well, now let me ask you. I would assume that the longer someone is married the more intimate you become, that over time the intimacy grows. You think that's a fair assumption?

Sherri Hughes: No, I don't believe so. I think people need to be taught how to grow intimate over time. What I find is that the daily frustrations of life and work and children and outside interests kind of takes a toll on a lot of marriages, and basic communication skills aren't always taught when we need them and it's sometimes after the fact that we learn these things. So that's one of the things that I do is teach relationship skills and better communication skills to draw couples closer together.

Lee Rosen: So do you sort of feel like the longer we're married the more life takes over and we really get -- I don't know -- distracted? A) Do you believe that? And B) I'm wondering if you think that's a big cause of marriages failing.

Sherri Hughes: Yeah, I find that time often plays a toll on marriage instead of enhancing it and it is a lot of the outside distractions. I don't think anybody sets out intentionally to do that, but then they wake up one morning and realize how distant they are from their mate and how unsatisfied they are and then they don't know what to do about that; they don't know how to make it work from there. So that's when outside help is really valuable for these couples.

Lee Rosen: Do people try -- you said they don't know what to do. Are there sort of common things that people try to do that don't work?

Sherri Hughes: Well, unfortunately, when it gets to a place of complete dissatisfaction I find that one or both of the partners look for happiness outside of the relationship. And that's when it definitely becomes a power game and a struggle and it's hard to get past that. So that's one of the sort of last results, but I do see that often.

Some of the other things they try is being nicer. But usually being nicer at a resentment level they do it kind of out of frustration than real heart's desire and so it's not done for the right reasons. But I do find -- "I'm trying. I'm trying to be nice to him," while they're both at a pretty high resentment level. So they have to work through those resentments first before that nice level can be effective.

Lee Rosen: Now, when you say people start looking for happiness outside of the marriage, are we talking happiness like affairs and that sort of thing, or are we talking golf and flying lessons?

Sherri Hughes: No, I think infidelity is a big part of that.

Lee Rosen: Really?

Sherri Hughes: Yeah.

Lee Rosen: So they feel like lack of intimacy -- "I need more in my life."

Sherri Hughes: "I need somebody to understand me."

Lee Rosen: Right. Right. And so one thing leads to another and here we are.

Sherri Hughes: Yeah.

Lee Rosen: Well, first of all, how do folks come to you? Is it usually one spouse showing up or is it the couples showing up? How does it usually happen?

Sherri Hughes: Well, usually when it's a marriage it's both showing up because within a marriage -- if that's the problem, I certainly like to work with both parties to get the full effect of what I do. And if one person kind of learns new skills and the other doesn't, it really creates an imbalance even more. So I certainly like to work with couples.

If it's somebody that's divorced or just dating and not in a permanent relationship, then certainly I will work with that one individual and help them discern a little bit more about what they want and what they're looking for and heal some past hurts.

Lee Rosen: Do you get into situations where one spouse comes in and says, "I really want my husband to come but he won't come"?

Sherri Hughes: I think that's happened occasionally. What I do -- then I call the husband myself and invite him in for one session by himself or with his partner. And I usually try that before I'll give up on him, you know?

Lee Rosen: Right. Right.

Sherri Hughes: Because sometimes the wife may just say that. You don't always know how much effort she put into that. So I'll invite him in for just a session, "Please show up. I'd like to hear what's going on with you and tell me your side of the story."

Lee Rosen: And do they usually come?

Sherri Hughes: Yeah, they do.

Lee Rosen: They do, okay.

Sherri Hughes: They rarely turn that down.

Lee Rosen: Right. So now when you have the couple with you and you're going to help them through these issues, let me ask you first of all, are we talking about weeks, months, years? I mean, I think a lot of people when they think about going to see a counselor think, "Oh, my goodness. I'm going to be doing this for the rest of my life." Is that the case?

Sherri Hughes: No, certainly not the rest of their life. But I do have a minimum. I like to see clients at least three months because I think it takes that amount of time for healing to occur and forgiveness to occur and then to learn new skills on top of that. So that's my minimum and then I go from there. If they still feel they need some assistance I will certainly work with them past that. But from my experience it does take a minimum of three months to get the full effect, to really make lasting results.

Lee Rosen: Now, you've used the term "resentment" a lot. Are you talking about resentment for the lack of intimacy? Is it people that are upset that things aren't the way that they want them to be?

Sherri Hughes: Yeah, absolutely. And a lot of times it's unspoken resentments. They can't quite verbalize what's wrong but they know something's wrong, or they're not quite happy with their partner but they have a difficult time to describe that, or they may be really angry and have

a resentment but don't know what to do with that. So that's one of the areas that I work on and being able to verbalize what's wrong, what doesn't feel right. And then, okay, how do we make it different?

Lee Rosen: So, now, do you have an idea of the steps you're going to go through with them right from the beginning? Do you have a general sense of how this is going to --

Sherri Hughes: I usually do, yeah. I usually follow certain procedures; and just from doing this for so long I have certain exercises that I take couples through and worksheets that they work on themselves and that type of thing. But I'm always open to the individual couples and what they're looking for.

Lee Rosen: Right. Is working through the intimacy issue and dealing with this resentment, is it possible to do that without the help of someone like you or is it just too hard to do without a third party being involved?

Sherri Hughes: Well, I sometimes think they get to the point where it is it makes it much more difficult to work on your own because it takes somebody standing back from the situation, not emotionally involved, to see the real true picture. And when you work on issues like this yourself you're still caught up in your own resentment, your own emotional needs, and it's hard to see where each other is to blame or what you need to change in yourself. So I think it's more difficult without an unbiased third party involved.

Lee Rosen: So what do you do with people that come to you? How do you help them through these issues?

Sherri Hughes: Well, I have a lot of techniques that I use. I first try to get them to recognize what the issues are. Why is there lack of intimacy? Why haven't you been working on this? What led you to this point? And try to get them to really look at the situation.

And then from there I do worksheets with clients; I'll send them home with worksheets to bring back for the next session of tell me how you feel about this, and what's working, and what's not working? And one of the things I often do is try to focus on the good in the marriage, what is still working and what is still good about being together.

Lee Rosen: Now, you have an idea about steps, like 10 steps that you work with. Am I right?

Sherri Hughes: Yes, I do.

Lee Rosen: I've been looking at your website and getting information. Tell me -- walk me through -- well, first of all, what are the 10 steps for?

Sherri Hughes: Well, these 10 steps are what I've gained from working with my clients, the experience I've learned through them of what works and what doesn't work, and the couples that I've seen turn their lives around and what was most effective. So I put together these 10 -- they're 10 suggestions, I guess. And not everybody is going to incorporate them all; some will find some steps more usable than others. But I think the more you use them, the more effective the recovery in the marriage can be.

Lee Rosen: Well, we have time. Let's walk through the 10 steps. I'd very much like to understand them better.

Sherri Hughes: Okay. Well, the first one I would say is purposeful communication. And just take the time to create a space in your life to understanding yourself and your partner at a higher level. Not just the resentment level, but a really deeper, more intimate level.

Lee Rosen: I sometimes think that, especially men anyway, that we just sort of believe that our spouses are supposed to understand us and we're supposed to understand them. And what you're saying I guess is that it really has to be more deliberate.

Sherri Hughes: Absolutely, yeah. I think that's one of the fairy tales we want to buy into. "Well, if he loved me, he would understand me." And that's not true. He still probably loves you dearly but the communication is missing.

Lee Rosen: We don't understand you at all.

Sherri Hughes: Well, that may be true too.

Lee Rosen: What's number two?

Sherri Hughes: Forgiveness. It's one of the greatest tools to use in creating a loving, healing bonding between two people and it's a great opportunity to operate from that unconditional love. I find a lot of times people need to forgive themselves first and then forgive their spouse next.

Lee Rosen: Right. You know, it's interesting because I feel like everywhere I turn lately I hear "forgiveness." That is maybe almost a trendy thing today, but it's been around forever.

- Sherri Hughes: It has, yeah. And unforgiveness is really what creates the resentments. Unspoken, unacknowledged, and then people are just naturally angry at each other and the other usually doesn't even know why.
- Lee Rosen: Right. And I love your -- not just forgiving others, but forgiving yourself; that sounds pretty powerful.
- Sherri Hughes: Yeah, it is, tremendously. And that will affect all your relationships in life, being able to do that.
- Lee Rosen: Yeah. Suggestion number three, what is that?
- Sherri Hughes: Have some fun. We get so tied into being serious and how bad things are, but I think creating common interests -- whether it's taking walks together or a hobby or a sport -- is very significant in a healthy relationship. And just providing these times for joyfulness, playfulness, hang loose and not have to work on anything.
- Lee Rosen: And everybody is so busy today running from here to there, and then when they're not busy they're watching T.V. or playing on the computer.
- Sherri Hughes: There you go. And I think the having fun part is also important in having a good sex life together. And enjoying each other on that intimate level is something that we only share with a partner or a spouse in life and it creates that relationship to be more special.
- Lee Rosen: Right. What's the next one?
- Sherri Hughes: So then we go to suggestion four and it is developing a spiritual life together. And this may sound kind of trite, but -- it's not that you have to have the same beliefs, but being able to honor each other's beliefs. But the more you can have similar beliefs it does draw you together in more of a bonding way.
- Lee Rosen: Okay. And then that's number four. What's number five?
- Sherri Hughes: And I think this is really, really important. It's honoring the difference between a man and a woman. And oftentimes we think because a man doesn't do this that he's insensitive or he doesn't care. And I know men feel the same way about women; "she's too needy," or she's too this. And we have to learn that that's part of the dynamics of being male and being female and to honor that and just know that nothing's done vindictively; it's just who we are as individuals.



- Lee Rosen: Appreciate the differences and not --
- Sherri Hughes: Appreciate them, absolutely.
- Lee Rosen: -- not let them build more resentment. Interesting.
- Sherri Hughes: Absolutely. And then I think there's also a very synergistic effect to marriage. When two come together to work together and to co-create, it makes it stronger as you are as individuals and I think that's really important to remember as you move through life together.
- Lee Rosen: Now, I know the next one is be your partner's best cheerleader. What do you mean by that?
- Sherri Hughes: Well, it's supporting your partner on the day-to-day struggles; work, kids, just being there for each other. Be a support unconditionally. And you may not agree with the solutions or what's going on, but each other has to know that you're there for each other too.
- Lee Rosen: Right. Good advice. And what's the next one?
- Sherri Hughes: Trust and honest. And that sounds a lot more easy than it really is. I think the honesty part in particular, we tell people enough of what we want them to know but we don't always tell them the full story, and I think that is very damaging in a marriage. We have to be willing to put ourselves out there, to let the other person really know us in a very non-judgmental way, and I think it's really, really important to do that.
- Lee Rosen: Now, we have made it through your first seven. I'm now anxious to get through the last three and hear what you have to say about them. Number eight, what is that one?
- Sherri Hughes: Well, that one would be maintain some self-identity. Have time to spend with your girlfriends, with your guy friends. Have time to read on your own or take walks by yourself or things that you find enjoyable without your partner necessarily being a part of all that. And I think that away time makes the together time much more special.
- Lee Rosen: And number nine?
- Sherri Hughes: I think viewing the relationship itself as a separate entity from each other; so you have the husband, you have the wife, and then you have the relationship. And focus on what is best for the



relationship, not each other as individuals because that will change your decision making process.

Lee Rosen: Good advice. And the last one, number 10?

Sherri Hughes: And I think this is important also. You need to take personal responsibility for your own life and your own happiness. You can't expect a partner to make you happy if you're not happy with yourself. And not to always look for him or her to bring that into your life; you need to do that for yourself first.

Lee Rosen: So, now, how do these suggestions play into your role when you're working with a couple?

Sherri Hughes: We get to a place in the coaching that these skills and suggestions are introduced. Initially I just try to observe what's going on and make them aware of the situation and then we start talking about how to make it different. So you can't change it if you don't recognize it.

Lee Rosen: Right. Got to figure out what went wrong before you can really make it better.

Sherri Hughes: Sure. And they come in often not knowing that. It sounds like that's something they should know, but they don't always. They may have different ideas about what's wrong or not working or who's at fault.

Lee Rosen: Right. Well, I think people get so bogged down in the daily situation, and like you say the resentment, that they really lose sight of the larger picture pretty much completely. I mean, I think it's fortunate that they're able to get themselves together enough to come and talk to someone like you because I think that's a huge step that it's awfully hard to figure out that that's what you need to do.

Sherri Hughes: Yeah, you're right. It is.

Lee Rosen: I suspect we have a lot of people listening today that they wouldn't - - I wouldn't be listening to this show if I wasn't worried about my relationship. Unfortunately, people look at a site like *Stay Happily Married* -- and I think everybody ought to be listening, but I think the reality is the people that listen are the people that are worried.

Sherri Hughes: That are in trouble, yeah.

Lee Rosen: Yeah. So I think that's good, but I think it's still another big step to come in and see someone like you. If you're talking to someone and

you know they're struggling with their marriage, they're not happy with things the way they are, and they're listening right now -- you're speaking into their ear right now -- what is the step that they should take next in order to make a difference in their life?

Sherri Hughes: Well, the first thing I would say is just trying to get a clearer picture of what's wrong. And I also will offer to the listeners a free 15-minute consultation by phone. So if any of the listeners just want to talk about where they are or how I can support them or who would be able to support them, I would be happy to speak with them. You just need to call my number, (919) 272-1454.

Lee Rosen: And I'll put that information in the show notes --

Sherri Hughes: Okay.

Lee Rosen: -- as well as a link to your website. So someone could arrange with you and do a free consultation and I guess you would really be able to say to them, "Well, I can help you," or, "I can't help you, but here are the names and numbers of some --"

Sherri Hughes: Here are some resources, yes.

Lee Rosen: Right. Right. That's terrific. Do you have a website also that you make available to people?

Sherri Hughes: I do. It's [www.thejourneybeginswithin.com](http://www.thejourneybeginswithin.com).

Lee Rosen: Okay. And I'll put a link to that in the show notes. Now, my review of your website -- what I noticed is that you have a report that you can download, "The Top 10 Secrets to Happiness."

Sherri Hughes: Yeah.

Lee Rosen: Okay. And that's different than what we're talking about here?

Sherri Hughes: It is. It's more about that personal happiness, how to find that within yourself. And it's certainly things that you could share as a couple too, but it's designed on a very, very personal, intimate level with yourself.

Lee Rosen: Well, Sherri, I really appreciate your joining us. I feel like you've given us some good advice and some good things to be thinking about and working on. I'm very pleased that you were able to take the time to come and join us in the studio.

Sherri Hughes: Oh, thank you so much. It's been my pleasure.

Lee Rosen: And a special thank you to Sherri Hughes, and also a special thank you to all of you that have joined us today and were listening. I hope that you've taken some things away from this program on creating more intimacy that you can put to work in your relationship.

Again, you can contact Sherri, you can call her office directly; and as she mentioned she has a 15-minute consultation that you can have at no cost to you. The number at her office is (919) 272-1454.

Thank you so much for joining us today. I hope that you will join us again next week. If you have comments about this show or any show, we would love to hear them. Feel free to call our listener comment line at (919) 256-3083, and the e-mail address for comments is [comments@stayhappilymarried.com](mailto:comments@stayhappilymarried.com). Until next week, stay happily married.

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