

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.



Intimacy Retreats

This is Episode number 34 of Stay Happily Married, "Intimacy Retreats."

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

Today's episode of Stay Happily Married is brought to you by the Rosen Law Firm. For more information, visit us at Rosen.com.

Lee Rosen: I'm Lee Rosen. I'm your host. Welcome to the show. I'm here on the telephone with Richard and Diana Daffner who are both licensed sexologists and teachers of tantra tai chi. Diana also holds a master's degree in counseling. They live in Siesta Key, Florida, which is where we're talking by phone. And they conduct a private practice down in Florida and they also do retreats, intimacy retreats, and they do them in a number of different locations. We'll talk about that.

Diana and Richard, welcome to the show. I'm glad you could be with us today.

Richard Daffner: Thank you, Lee.

Diana Daffner: Glad to be here.

Lee Rosen: You know, the whole retreat idea I'm just fascinated by and I'm really excited to have a chance to talk to you about it. I think it's a sort of scary thing for someone who has never done it before and doesn't know much about it. Are the people that are coming to your retreats, are they newbies to the world of marriage retreats or is this something that there are people that just love doing this and do it all the time?

Diana Daffner: I would say a combination. It is definitely out of the box, even in the realm of marriage retreats. The ones that Richard and I lead are a

little bit less conventional, I would say, than what most therapists are aware of. But often what makes a marriage successful is when the couple does bother every year or every couple of years to attend some kind of a workshop to deepen their connection or learn more about how to do marriage, because we don't get much training in it.

Lee Rosen: So your -- yeah, I agree completely. There should be something with a marriage license, like an instruction manual or something. But you say yours are a little less -- I don't know if you used the word "convention." But give me a sense of what's out there and tell me about what's different about what you guys do.

Diana Daffner: Well, there are some workshops -- there's lots of marriage workshops. I think if people googled for marriage workshops they'll find things. Ours are all Intimacy Retreats; that's our website is IntimacyRetreats.com. And many of them deal with how to communicate, how to argue better, how to listen to one another, because that's a huge issue in relationships is understanding what one person means when they say something.

Ours is a little different in that not only do we also have some practices involving communication, but we also address sexuality. And during the weekend workshops, these Intimacy Retreats, we actually send people back to their rooms to engage in a private practice that is indeed sexual. So they have a wonderful weekend.

Lee Rosen: It's working for me already. Yeah. I'm ready to book my time. Now, you send them back to the room with their own spouse, yes

Diana Daffner: Oh, yes.

Richard Daffner: Yes.

Lee Rosen: Just checking. Just checking.

Richard Daffner: We're very much into monogamy. I think another significant difference -- I'm sure another significant difference is that we really focus on romance and making a conscious effort so that the couple can spend the time alone just focused on the relationship. And so they're generally at beach resorts where they can take long walks on the beach. We try to focus them around full moons. People might not be aware of it when they come but when you take a full moon walk on the beach it brings more romance. So we're very romance and fun oriented versus trying to fix something.

Lee Rosen: Wow. Well, everything you've said so far really is very appealing. There's sex involved, there's full moons, there are romantic beaches. Where have you had them in the past?

Diana Daffner: Well, we just came back from a workshop we led in Tulum, Mexico. We're going back there for a week-long winter retreat, a whole week on the Tulum beach in Mexico. And the rest of the workshops this winter will be in Florida. We have held them all across the United States, but we live in Florida and so we primarily do them here and at various parts of the state, and then occasionally in other states. There's one coming up -- the next one coming up is in Pompano Beach, which is near Fort Lauderdale.

Lee Rosen: Right. So now do you feel like, given that yours is -- are there people that go to some workshops because they're really in trouble, and then other people that go to maybe your workshop because they're doing well but they want to take it to the next level? Or does your workshop attract people in all sorts of different situations?

Diana Daffner: I would say primarily the doing well and want to take it the next level. If the relationship is really in trouble I do ask people to speak with me personally before they go ahead and sign up on the Internet for it, just to make sure that it is appropriate for them. And we do have people -- just this weekend we had a couple who there had been some betrayal and she sought us out because she was having a lot of difficulty in forgiving and moving forward and the workshop she said was transformational for them.

And so I would say primarily people are in a good place but maybe their love life, their sex life needs a little charge or encouragement.

Richard Daffner: That's all very true. And also there's certain situations where one party or the other is not going down the therapy road; they're just not going to do that. So this is a nice middle ground. This is much softer landing. Or it's not as threatening; go to Siesta Key, go to Pompano Beach, fly to Mexico. It's not so threatening.

Diana Daffner: We actually call them "vacation workshops." And they're not therapy. They're very therapeutic but they're not therapy in the sense that nobody has to reveal what's personally going on for them in their relationship. It's not group therapy. It's not personal therapy. And it's not about fixing one person or the other. It's not about even fixing the relationship but adding something to it and in some cases maybe restoring, refreshing, and bringing us back to why we married in the first place, often.

Lee Rosen: So when you're in one of the retreats and we're coming to the group meeting and then we're running back to the room and then we're coming back to the group meeting, is there a lot of discussion of what's going on when we're back in the room?

Diana Daffner: About what went on in private, you mean?

Lee Rosen: Yes.

Diana Daffner: There might be sometimes some sharing. Mostly just checking in to see if people actually did their -- we call it "homeplay," not homework.

Lee Rosen: "Home play," okay.

Diana Daffner: But no one has to share anything personal that they don't want to at all. That's not the main focus of the workshop. And then when we're together in the group we're giving them -- we keep them busy with new understandings and activities that have them really be face-to-face with their partner and fall in love again or celebrate the love that they already know that they have.

A lot of couples come who are in great -- their relationship is great. And it's great because they go to things like this.

Lee Rosen: Right. This is just their idea of a great way to have a vacation and take the relationship to another level. What kind of people are coming? First of all I guess what's the age range, typically?

Richard Daffner: Well, the age range is -- well, we'll stay with the word "typical," but we certainly have had five decades in one workshop of ages, i.e. from the 20s to 70s in one workshop, so it can be very broad. But we basically have two primary client profiles and that would be the 35 to 45 year old couple, they've been together 10, 14, 15 years, they've got a couple kids at home and are taking their first holiday in 10 years -- first holiday without their kids. So they have a strong bond but they've sort of forgotten a little bit about themselves and the relationship and they're looking to reconnect.

Lee Rosen: And then what's the other group?

Richard Daffner: The other group really with the same M.O., if I may use that term, but they're older. They're the empty-nesters. So they're reinventing themselves, similarly to the younger couple. So that's a 55 or 45 to 60-year-old group.

Lee Rosen: Got you. Now, do you find that the people -- the different couples that are in the group stay connected? Do they talk once they go home at all?

Diana Daffner: You mean with the other couples?

Lee Rosen: Yeah. Do they bond as a group?

Diana Daffner: Sometimes. It's not our main focus but I do hear from people sometimes and they say, "Oh, yeah, I've still been in touch with so-and-so." But it's not our -- in fact, I know just yesterday when the group was leaving I saw some people were exchanging cards and "call me." But the focus is primarily on you and your partner the whole time more than trying to create a whole group bonding.

Richard Daffner: We don't have a lot of group sharing. We do go out to lunch together and that's nice and there's a group camaraderie on a certain level. But there's not -- because there's not sharing, and a lot of time from mutual circumstances or identities to blend that's not a focus at all of this.

Lee Rosen: right. So breakfast and dinner are on your own and the group comes together every day for lunch and then these meetings during the day?

Diana Daffner: Well, the weekend workshop format means we start Friday evening, which is actually after dinner. They usually start Friday evening, they have homeplay that they do that night or in the morning. They come back at 10:00 to the workshop space and we're together as a group until mid-afternoon; there's a lunch break and then we're together through mid-afternoon. And then they have the late afternoon and the early evening for more homeplay and then their dinner. And then they come back for a Saturday night at 8:30 and have an evening program and then we meet again on Sunday at 11:00 in the morning.

So it's not intense in terms of time because I know Richard -- I mean, I'm the person I can go to a workshop and listen and kind of spend hours talking to people and just being with them. But Richard would feel very contained in that kind of situation and a lot of guys are like that. So we designed it to something that we would enjoy and we find that it really, really works well. In Mexico the schedule's a little bit different because we're there for a whole week.

Richard Daffner: So to answer the original question, there's only one lunch that we share and we give the couples a lot of time in between the workshop sessions to really incorporate our teachings. We'd rather give a

couple one thing to take home than a lot of workshop time and notes. In fact, notes just don't happen in our workshops.

Diana Daffner: Right. It's not a notes-taking kind of event. We have a book that's coming out and I will mention -- we haven't mentioned the word "tantra." Tantra is an Eastern word and we draw on a lot of different cultures in addition to our Western understanding of marriage to teach about the energy of sexuality and the energy of love. And we have a book coming out called *Tantric Sex for Busy Couples*.

Lee Rosen: Okay. Sounds very practical

Diana Daffner: Right.

Richard Daffner: Absolutely. Practical is I would say the driving force of our workshop. We're here to really train people, give people a new concept and idea of how they can enhance their marriage and their lives together.

Lee Rosen: Do you think that there are things that happen in the relationship, in the marriage, that are unique to your format, to this retreat format, that really wouldn't happen if the couple went through a traditional couples kind of counseling situation?

Diana Daffner: I'm not sure what you're asking but we get feedback frequently from couples that they -- they don't have to tell us whether they've been in counseling or -- they don't have to give us any personal information, but sometimes people will say, "We did counseling for a year and this one weekend was so much more effective in getting us where we want to get to." Which may or may not be true for everyone.

Lee Rosen: Right. That's exactly what I'm asking. It does sound like your approach makes -- there are some couples that this is probably the answer, not just what you're offering but the format you're offering it in probably has a very different impact than sitting in a counselor's office for an hour once a week for months and months and months.

Richard Daffner: Put it this way. For the couple that's in therapy, for the price of admission to our retreat it's well worth testing if our work, our discipline if you wish, can enhance what they've already done. And sometimes we'll get an a-ha with us that could take months and months through therapy. So it could be a phenomenal balance; it could also be a cure that couldn't happen in therapy.

Diana Daffner: We also work individually with couples who, for whatever reason -- maybe the dates don't work for them or they find themselves in Florida at a certain time and we're available. So we also do private retreats for couples. And the word "retreat" is really true. It's a sense of taking them away for the time that they're doing the work with us that they're really not thinking about all the other aspects of their life.

Lee Rosen: Now, let me -- this is a crazy question but I'm in North Carolina. And we do a lot of interviews on this program, so we'll talk to folks sometimes, like folks in California. And a lot of my friends in North Carolina listen to some of the things that the therapists in California might say and they'll feel a little bit like this is just not comfortable to me, this is a little too new-age maybe. If someone comes on your retreat and they're a lawyer or a doctor or a computer guy or whatever from North Carolina are they going to be comfortable with what you're offering or are they going to feel like, "Hey, I'm out of place"?

Diana Daffner: I would say if they're brave enough and courageous enough to sign up, or if their partner convinces them that they want to come, that they may have some trepidations -- I don't know if that's the right word. I know a lot of people get here Friday night and they don't know what to expect. It's like, okay, they're trusting that it's going to be okay but they really, really don't know. They're just kind of putting their toe in the water. But by the end of the weekend and throughout the weekend it's so comfortable, it's so safe.

And even though it's a little foreign, a little new-agey in that sense, it's so meaningful and so practical that they settle right in. And the homeplay being so wonderful that they're always so happy. I know it sounds funny for me to say it, but we have a high rate of people who just want to come back again and they're thrilled when they leave.

Lee Rosen: Right. It does sound like you're very lucky to get to have such a positive job. The work you're doing sounds like a lot of fun and you're helping a lot of people and feeling very good about it.

You talked about spouses being convinced to come. Is there a tendency to see maybe wives more than husbands or vice versa convincing their spouse to come to one of your retreats?

Diana Daffner: You know, you're probably going to get a different answer from Richard or from me because we don't really have statistics. Richard, what would you say?

Richard Daffner: I would say it's probably 60 percent -- the person who registers probably is going to be 60 percent female versus 40 percent male.

Diana Daffner: And I would say -- well, I would say I don't have a clue for sure because -- and he's better at just giving a number. But we get lots of women who have some experience. I'd say they've done some yoga, a little meditation, and the idea that there's some spiritual connection that they're yearning for with their partner attracts them. Maybe they've read my writings on the website, which is IntimacyRetreats.com. So they have a feel; maybe they can't put it in words but they have a feel for something they want and they think this will bring them there.

But we also have a lot of men who come from another place, maybe, where they hear it's about sexuality and they want it for their relationship, or maybe they themselves have some knowledge in this area from their own readings or trainings.

And so we really aren't very scientific about it. But it is mixed; it's not totally one or the other.

Lee Rosen: How many couples are at an average retreat?

Diana Daffner: They're small. We keep them to about an average six or seven couples at the moment. Maybe some day they'll be huge. So the maximum, we usually cut it off at about -- depending on where it's being held, the size of the space. So 10 couples will often fill a space and we'll often cut it off at that.

Lee Rosen: Right. But that sounds like a good number of people where everybody will feel comfortable and it's not overwhelming. That's very interesting.

Richard Daffner: The particular format that we're working under now will not lend itself for more than 10 to 12 couples.

Lee Rosen: Right. Now, you have retreats -- I just want to make sure I know, you have some Florida retreats coming up in the next month or two and then you have the Mexican one coming up in a couple of months. Is that right?

Richard Daffner: Correct.

Diana Daffner: It is correct. We have Intimacy Retreats in Florida two or three weekends a month. We have quite a variety; we offer a lot of them. Some of them are in our home town, which is Siesta Key, Florida, and others are up near -- this year it varies but this year we'll be in,

as I said, Pompano Beach near Fort Lauderdale, later in the year up near St. Augustine. So it kind of -- and also up near Tampa. We kind of bounce around to different resorts.

Lee Rosen: Do you get a lot of Floridians or do you have a lot of people flying in from all over the country?

Diana Daffner: Both.

Lee Rosen: Both. A good mix.

Diana Daffner: And every time we say, "Gee, we've been only getting Florida people," then the next workshop will have people with no Florida people and everyone will be from out of town. So it varies.

Lee Rosen: Right. Well, I really feel like I know a lot more than I did a few minutes ago. Is there anything else we really ought to know? Obviously we ought to come to your website. And you have mentioned it but I want to make sure I do again. It's IntimacyRetreats.com. But what else does someone need to know about what you're doing in order to make a good decision about this?

Richard Daffner: Well, we provide safe place for couples to learn about relationship and learn a little bit more about their feminine aspects and their masculine aspects and how they can blend the two. I mean, the work is phenomenal. I mean, until I started reading and training in this area I never knew that heart was part of the sexual act. It's not out of my consciousness; sex is only below the waist. Now we train people to blend their sexual energy and their heart energy and the sexual experience geometrically explodes to be just such an intimate, loving situation.

Lee Rosen: Right. It sounds wonderful.

Richard Daffner: So really it's a phenomenal growth process that I encourage every couple to take part in. I mean, it's huge.

Lee Rosen: Right. Well, Richard and Diana, I really appreciate you being a part of the show and filling us in on things. Thank you so much for being with us.

Richard Daffner: Thank you, Lee.

Diana Daffner: Thank you, Lee.

Lee Rosen:

I'd like to -- obviously I want to thank Richard and Diana for joining us. They did a super job. I feel like I have learned a tremendous amount about what a retreat might really be like. And I've always wondered about it and it's a little bit of a scary thing to jump out and try something like that, so it's nice to get the inside scoop on how it all works.

If you would like to find out more about Richard and Diana's retreats, the website again is IntimacyRetreats.com. You can also call them; they have a toll-free number (877) 282-4244.

Now, as we mentioned, there are three retreats coming up in November in Florida. And obviously they go on all the time down there in Florida, although I will tell you when I hear, "Oh, they come all the time," I think, well, then I'll just get to it when I get to it. If you're wanting to enhance your marriage it seems to me that you ought to go ahead and sign up now, not wait too long.

I am sitting here thinking about it and, boy, every aspect of it sounds appealing to me. It's a vacation without kids. It involves sex. I'm having a hard time seeing where making my marriage better might not be something I ought to do in November and just make it happen because there just doesn't sound like a downside to it.

They also have a program coming up on the Mexican Riviera in January. I have been to Tulum. Beautiful, beautiful area. Definitely I can only imagine how much better that makes the retreat. So if you don't go to Florida, maybe the Mexican Riviera would be the spot for you.

Thank you so much for listening today. I hope that you have gotten as much out of this as I have. I would love to hear any feedback you have about this program or any of our shows. You can call our comment line at (919) 256-3083 or feel free to e-mail us at comments@stayhappilymarried.com. Let us know how we're doing. We love to hear from you.

I'm Lee Rosen. Until next time, stay happily married.

Thank you for joining us today on Stay Happily Married. If you'd like more information, please visit us on the Web at stayhappilymarried.com. We would love to hear your feedback or comments. Please e-mail us at comments@stayhappilymarried.com or call us at (919) 256-3083. Until next time, best wishes.