

Stephanie: A one-way fight for love. This is Stay Happily Married episode number 263.

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

Stephanie: I'm Stephanie Lockwood, and I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. Can you try to make them stay when bye is what they really want to say? What do you do when your other half wants to leave, but you can't believe it's over? Perhaps the romance is waning, or it could be that the fights are escalating. Is there anything that can be done to help save your relationship when your spouse wants out?

With the growing rate of divorce in North America and the ease which people are using the term separate, it can sometimes feel like a battle to try and stay together amongst a crowd of those who don't. Liam Naden is the director of Growing in Love for Life which provides 21st century tools and coaching methods to assist individuals and couples in saving their marriages and improving their relationship.

With 25 books and counting Liam is author of the Amazon Kindle bestseller, "The Sexless Marriage Cure, How to Get Your Spouse (or You) Interested in Sex Again" as well as "How to Save Your Marriage When Your Spouse Doesn't Want To". Welcome to the show, Liam. I'm really glad you could join us today.

Liam: Hi, Stephanie. Thank you very much for having me on the show.

Stephanie: So this is an interesting topic that you have here, and it all seems like a very heartbreaking romance novel. Could you tell me exactly what the issue is out there that you're seeing with these relationships?

Liam: Right. Well, as you mentioned a little bit in your introduction, there are more and more people facing the issue of divorce. It's a growing thing and the fact that statistics are showing that, at least, 50 percent of marriages are ending in divorce. And there are also a lot of people not happy in their marriage or their relationship as well, and I think what it really comes down to the main issue is that really if people aren't growing together, they're growing apart and what causes that, another way of putting it, is if people aren't putting a focus on their relationship.

If there are too many other things that are creating a lack of focus on their relationship, too many other pieces, if they're not really understanding more deeply how their relationship works and who their partner is and in fact who they themselves are, all of this is going to lead to a deterioration in their relationship. And that's really the big issue, I think, is a lack of focus, the lack of communication.

Usually, it's worse for one person in the marriage or the relationship than the other. And that's why so often we get this situation when one person wants to leave the marriage and the other person is saying, "Why do you want to leave?" They don't really understand. So that's the basic issue I think.

Stephanie: That's a very interesting saying that you had there. If you're not busy growing together, you're growing apart. I think that perfectly summarizes the topic today here. Now is there a common tie among all the situations that you've seen that cause an issue like this where one person is wanting to leave, Does it stem from a certain source?

Liam: Well, there are lots of symptoms, I think, of marriages that are in trouble. And you can probably think of the obvious one. Maybe one of the persons is having an affair with somebody or has had an affair. And often there is a lack of intimacy that develops within the marriage, and other pieces start to come in, such issues with children or financial issues or lifestyle issues.

Maybe somebody is getting a new job, or they're talking about moving to a new location, the couple. So all of these really are some symptoms, I think, though. They're not the actual. . . Although they have these things in common, they're not the actual underlying issue, and I think the underlying issue that's common to all marriages that are struggling is really a lack of true communication.

Communication is this big thing, and many people think they are good communicators. I think a lot of people who are struck with the shock of their partner telling them they want to leave but are thinking, "I've really tried to communicate with them. I've really tried to make our marriage good. I've really tried to work on our marriage. So what's really gone wrong?"

I think the issue with communication is we usually have a very sort of a wrong viewpoint on what communication actually is. When you think about it, we're not taught anywhere how to communicate with our partner, it's really not part of our education system. What I mean by real communication is really to understand who your partner really is and what they need to be or need to feel and need to have to be happy and fulfilled.

And that's the thing. If you're not really understanding who your partner is and if you don't continue to develop an understanding of them because, of course, everyone changes over time. You're not going to be able to meet their emotional needs. You're not going to be able to communicate with them in such a way that they feel good in the marriage. The reality is when someone's not having their needs met and their emotional needs and they're not feeling good, they're going to go and start to look somewhere else to have those needs met. And that's, I think, the underlying problem.

Stephanie: So how common out of all of the people that you speak with would you say this issue is?

Liam: Well, lack of communication that's not just the people I work with, of course, the people that come to me they're usually in a situation where things have gotten to a point where they have to do something about it. Their marriage is looking like it's going to end if they don't do something about it.

I would say actually this lack of communication is probably common to eventually hit most people who are in a marriage or in a relationship, and I think there's so much to this whole area

of understanding the other person and learning how to communicate, learning how to find out who they are and what their needs are, that I think everybody can benefit from that.

I've said this many times to people in my programs and the other things that I do, but I think people need to remember that there's nothing that's going to have more of an impact on the quality of your life than the quality of your relationship. So when you really understand that, when you really realize that, you can have everything else.

You can have all the money and the prestige and a great job and a great house and everything, but if you've got a lousy relationship none of that matters. So people, I think, really need to refocus and realize that their relationship is the most important thing they have, and they need to make it the number one priority. And, of course, that's what happens, All of these other pieces come along, and we think they're more important but they're not. That's where things unravel.

Stephanie: And so for the person that wants out of the relationship, what's going through their mind when all of this is happening?

Liam: That's a very interesting one. It's not because you would think if the person who wants to leave, you think well they're the lucky one. You think maybe they've got someone else that they want to go to, but very often it's just as difficult. In fact, I would say usually it's not easier for them than it is for the person who doesn't want the marriage to end, and obviously what's really going through the mind of that person is usually they just want to give up. They just want to get out of the situation, and so it's often the case of the grass is greener.

They just can't cope anymore with the situation they're in, or they really basically see a better alternative somewhere else where their emotional needs are not necessarily better met, but they think there's a hope that they might be better met. So they have found somebody else and better off than that happens.

People have an affair and want to leave their partner, but very often they're just tired of their relationship as well, and this is where I find it's very difficult. People come to me and they say, "Look, I don't understand what's going on with my husband or my wife. They just tell me they want to leave. I asked them why, and they just say well it's nothing to do with you it's all to do with me, and I just want some space. I need some time on my own to think." So that's a very difficult situation to deal with, of course.

Stephanie: It's not you, it's me situation. Yes, that's a very popular one that we hear a lot on this show, unfortunately.

Liam: Right. Yeah.

Stephanie: So, as you said, it seems from an outsider perspective that the person wanting to leave is the simpler position to be in which obviously isn't the case, but it is something that I think comes as a shock for a lot of people on the receiving end. And so what is it like for the people who are wanting to save the marriage or wanting to save the relationship?

Liam: Right. Well, usually, I mean, obviously they might feel angry or frustrated, but I think the main feelings they have are really confusion and they're thinking, "Why is this person wanting to leave? I don't really understand what's going on and not only why do they want to leave, but usually why aren't they prepared to, at least, try to save our marriage?" Because usually or very often people say, "I don't want to be here" and the person says, "Can we go to counseling? Can we work on our marriage?"

The other person says, "No, you don't get it. I just want to leave, and I want time on my own to work it out. And so for the person who wants to save the marriage they're very confused and they also probably feel very rejected by that person and that brings in all sorts of feelings of, "Am I no longer an attractive person? Is there something wrong with me?"

The effect on self-esteem can be devastating. It can take people years to get over the rejection, if you like. And the other thing I see a lot of because a lot of people come to me. I have a couple of programs, and one of them is specifically designed for somebody whose partner wants to leave, and they don't want them to and some of the other things that people very often have or feel when they're the one who wants to save the marriage is helplessness. They just don't know what to do.

And the other thing is they feel panic, and these are big issues. And one of the things I really try and help people do is you can't panic. You don't need to feel helpless. But there is a process if you don't want your marriage to end. It's not just a question of saying to your husband or your wife, "Please change your mind" and then everything's fine.

So they need to get over these feelings of panic and rejection and, of course, what normally happens when people are confused or feeling rejected or in a panic or feeling hopeless is they start to do all of the wrong things to try and correct the situation. And usually they do things that on the surface they think would be good, but they usually make things worse.

And these are things like asking or even begging their husband or their wife to stay or, at least, to give their marriage another try. They do that and, of course, it doesn't work. Well, they get upset or angry or they start to threaten them or make them feel guilty. They might say to them things like, "If you leave I'm going to make it difficult for you to see the children" or "I'm going to tell the children and tell your friends or your family what a bad person you are for doing this."

So these things don't work at all, and also the other thing that people try and do is they try and get their husband or their wife, as I've mentioned earlier, to go to counseling or to work on their marriage with them. And as I've said earlier, that person doesn't want to.

One of the big things that people do, one of the main things that really doesn't work is they say, "Well, if I can only see really nice to my spouse and if I can really try and make them feel good and loved, then maybe they'll want to stay." And funnily enough that backfires as well, so yeah. It's really not the thing to do. I can talk a little bit more about some of the right things to do, but that one doesn't work.

Stephanie: So I know you somewhat answered my question already before when I was wanting to know is this something that happens over time? It really does sound that this is something that happens over time when this lack of communication and kind of keeping updated with your spouse and things that change. How much time needs to go by for this to become an issue and a source of contention that is big enough that someone wants to leave the relationship?

Liam: Well, the funny thing is that for the person who wants to stay and for the person who was being told that the other one wants to end the marriage, it often comes as a shock. I think the reality is that it always is something that builds up over time and if the person is really honest, they're going to see the warning signs were there some time before. I mean, people don't just have a fantastic relationship that's full of communication, deep intimacy, and real understanding of each other and they don't suddenly go off somewhere else and want to end that relationship.

And people, if they're honest, will realize that the seeds would have been there for some time, and the seeds really are all about this communication and intimacy things. That's the real place to look to see if you've got a healthy relationship, if your communication is really deep and honest, and if the intimacy is sincere. You'll know whether that's true.

So it's never sudden even it appears to be. It's always is something that builds up over time, and sometimes it can be a very long time and that's the other problem with this, not just marriage but life in general. We wake up ten years later and say, "What happened? Where did all of that time go? What have I been doing for the last ten years?"

And, of course, that's another issue about that's often the reason that people give why they want to leave a marriage is they have this reevaluation of their life or some sort of panic and think we often call it a midlife crisis, I guess. And they think, "I need to change something because I'm not happy and my life is just going away and what will I change? Qh, I'll change my relationship. That'll fix everything." And, of course, that doesn't work.

Stephanie: And even with divorce being so prevalent, the expectation to make a marriage work is still very high despite this statistic. Would you say this issue is a more recent trend among couples of today, married into the age of divorce, or is this issue something that still affects older couples, those who were raised in a time to believe that divorce wasn't an option and you make it work even you hate each other?

Liam: Yeah. Well, you know, I possibly go against what some people think in saying this, but I actually think it's a healthy thing we have such a high divorce rate because what that points to is that if people aren't happy, they're prepared to do something about that. And I think obviously and the people I've worked with, they want to save their marriage, and I think that's obviously the first thing you want to do is to really see if your marriage can be saved and you can rebuild a great relationship.

For many people quite honestly, they're probably in the wrong relationship and that's something I unfortunately have to say to people from time to time, or it's a conclusion that people come to anyway. But I think the expectations, just to really answer your question specifically, the expectations for marriage are very high, and I think it's no matter what age group we look at.

In fact, sometimes it's higher for older couples because they've been together for maybe a longer time and have higher expectations or they've really got more to lose. Their financial positions are often better. Their children have left, so they're more focused on having an emotional fulfillment in their life and if their marriage isn't giving it to them, they really want to demand that it does or they insist on moving on.

And, of course, this is all a recent trend, and I think it's been fueled by not only the greater freedom that people have, even our parents and certainly our grandparents' generation. And staying together even if you hated each other or it's a necessity for financial reasons, security reasons, raising the children.

But now people have a lot more freedom and, of course, people have, as I say, much higher expectation, and part of that is also driven by the media, I think. There's images everywhere and films and magazines about people who have these wonderful fairy tale marriages, and we somehow expect that's what we should have, and if we don't get that then we will look to find that somewhere else as well.

Stephanie: So obviously one person wanting to leave has a negative effect on the entire situation. If one person wants out, how can working to make them stay together be healthy for the relationship in the long run? Won't they just want to leave again in a few months when things aren't exactly as they wanted them to turn into?

Liam: Okay. Well, that's an interesting one because I think the key word here is working. And people have this impression of having to work to make their partner stay or to keep their marriage together they have to work on it. And the reality is you can never work on anything. You can never work on keeping or getting someone to stay in your marriage. All you can really do for work on is creating an environment in your marriage or and re-creating what used to be to get your spouse to actually want to stay.

I think this is why often people think when they fix their marriage, and then a few months later, as you say, it all happens again. A healthy relationship is a day by day thing. It's a bit like our physical body. If you can't do it once, if you don't do the right things every day to stay healthy and keep healthy, then you're always going to be at risk of, in the case of marriage, of it ending. So really it's a day by day thing. You can't just do it once and hope it's all good.

Stephanie: That segues into my next question then. For the spouse that's desperate to have one more shot at making things work and changing everything that's been going wrong or anything that there's issues over, what would your recommendation be to move forward and implement a solution?

Liam: Okay. Well, as I've said earlier, I actually have a complete program that covers exactly this, and it's simply designed to show people the right things to do and the wrong things to stop doing because most people, as I've said earlier, are doing the wrong things. So the first thing really if your spouse says to you they want to leave and you really want to save your marriage, you really want to keep things together, the first thing you've got to do is you've got to stop doing

the things that make you and your marriage a less attractive place for your spouse because you need to remember they want to leave because you and your marriage are no longer an attractive place for them to be. They can see another better alternative.

So whatever's going on at the moment in your relationship between the two of you is not attractive for them, and often or usually when someone tells their spouse they want to leave the reaction of the other person is to make it worse and they do things like being needy and that's very unattractive.

If you think about an environment where one's needing to save the marriage, one's needing you to be there, you don't want to be there and it doesn't make you feel good. It's very unattractive and other things that you need to stop doing is stop being upset. You need to stop arguing. You need to stop asking them to stay. You need to stop making them feel guilty or putting pressure on them as well to try to get them to work on your marriage.

A lot of people want to talk their problems through with their spouses that want to leave. Let's talk about it. That's not what the person wants to do so you need to think about all of these things that are going to make your spouse say, "This is an even less attractive place." And another thing I've mentioned to you earlier that you've picked up a little bit on is that you can be overly considerate.

If you think about it, if you're in a relationship with somebody and all they're doing is falling over you and trying to be really nice and trying to make you feel loved or feel good, that's all about pressure. It doesn't actually make you feel good. So a good rule of thumb to summarize this is to ask yourself if I was my husband or wife, if I was the other person and they were doing whatever to me, then would that make me feel better about being around the marriage or would it make me feel worse?

So that's the first thing, and the second thing you've got to do, and this is the thing that very few people do, is you need to forget about your relationship and you need to forget about the other person and you need to start to go to work on yourself. And you need to start asking yourself, "How can I be a better person that's going to be a more attractive person, not just to my spouse but to everybody else?"

And by attractive I just don't mean physically, but I mean what's going to give me an attractive personality? And to do that you've got to think where are you going in your life, and what are the possible aspects of your personality that you can really work on to accentuate? And what are the negative aspects of your personality or your nature, if you like, that you need to work on to improve?

And one really good way to do this is to write down all of the things that you would find attractive in a person that you would want to be married to and then compare it to yourself. Because the funny thing is that we seem to lose sight of this as people only want to leave a marriage because they don't find their spouse attractive. You've got to be honest.

If your spouse wants to leave it's because they're no longer attracted to you so you've got to think who is the person that I can be that they are going to be attracted to? They're going to suddenly say or realize that they would rather be with me rather than somewhere else. So that's the real key thing. It's not working on them, it's working on yourself, building your own strength, your own attractiveness, your own wonderful qualities as a person. That's going to make them stop and think maybe they're doing the wrong thing by leaving.

Stephanie: Now from your experience, this plan that you have to implement, how successful are these solutions in making either the spouse stay and refocus on the relationship and hopefully fall in love again?

Liam: Well, there is a factor as people are willing to do them funnily enough because it is a little bit counter intuitive and people, as I said, right at the beginning tend to panic or they feel helpless and so they tend to... If they commit to doing this and really having to fight to give it a try, usually when they start the program I have a lot of emphasis on helping them understand why it works and when people can see that, that makes a big difference and that does help them.

I think there are really only two reasons. If you're in a situation where your marriage is ending, there are really only two reasons why you will not be successful in saving your marriage. The first reason is you ultimately decide that you don't want to save your marriage, and that could be for a number of reasons. You could do all of this work and then you could realize that actually maybe I'm better off without that person and maybe it's better if we leave.

So that's the first reason and then the only other reason why your marriage would end is if you give up. People find that hard to understand and they say to me we've been divorced for three months, can I really save it? You can save your marriage five years later. You can save it when someone's gone off with someone else and built a new life. If that's what you really want and if you're prepared to do the right things and you're prepared to keep going until you get that result, that's really what it comes down to.

Stephanie: Wow. Okay. So for these solutions do you have any tools or any additional tools, I know you've listed a few like writing down a list of the attractions and what would attract to you in a partner, but are there any other tools that you have for helping to either resolve the situation or prevent it from happening at all?

Liam: Yes. So I think there are two basic groups of tools, if you like. The first thing is to do the things to keep working on yourself as a person, working on how you feel about yourself and even creating a list of things that you want from your life. This goal setting thing is a big topic, but the people who set goals and know where they're going in their life are very, very attractive to other people.

So you set some goals for yourself and your life, and you will find that your own self-esteem and your own attractiveness increases hugely. And another thing to list down is the fears that you have that are stopping you from being who you are and having what you want because a lot of people they also stay in a relationship often because they're afraid of what might be if they're not in that relationship.

So you've got to remove all of those fears which again are part of building your own strength, and I think one of the key elements to remember is really the relationship you have with your spouse, no matter what it is. Think of it in terms of it being a reflection of your relationship with yourself.

So you improve the relationship you have with yourself, and you're going to improve the relationship you have with your spouse. Absolutely the two go hand-in-hand. So people want to go and work on their marriage and fix the other person, but you don't have control over your spouse and you don't have control over your marriage, but the thing you do have control over is the only thing you need to have control over which is yourself. So that's where you need to put your focus to work on.

Stephanie: So it sounds like as much as this might be an issue for couples, it's something that really each person can work on together as a couple, but the solution starts at home with themselves.

Liam: Yeah, the funny thing is the people that I work with... Well, actually another way of looking is I've done a lot of study when I first started with my work was looking at people with fantastic relationships because we have all of these myths about relationships that we have to work on them. They get worse with time and all of that, but there are a certain number of people, a very small group of people that have fantastic marriages that after 20 years they're more into each other than ever.

And they don't have problems with communication, so what do they do? And the thing that those people do is they don't work on their marriage, they work on themselves, and I think that's where you need to put your focus on. If you are a really well balanced, happy, focused person who knows who you are and you've got great self-esteem and your spouse is the same, you're not going to have many of these issues, these problems that you need to deal with and when they come up you're going to deal with them on a very quick and easy way.

So it's not just the case of instead of or as well as working on the relationship. That's the place to start is all yourself, working on yourself.

Stephanie: Well, it sounds like this is all very sound advice. Is there anything else that any of our listeners should know before we let you go today?

Liam: Well, I think I've probably said quite a lot of things for people to think about. I realize that it's often very counter intuitive, but I hope people when they hear what I'm saying. I hope some of them will really take it on board.

Stephanie: Well, thank you so much, Liam, for being on the show today and sharing all of this information with us as well as our listeners. We very much appreciate it.

Liam: Thank you so much for having me. It's been brilliant.

Stephanie: To find out more about Liam Naden and Growing In Love for Life, you can visit his site on line at LiamNaden.com. That's L-I-A-M-N-A-D-E-N.com and you can also download a copy of Liam's Amazon Kindle best seller, "How To Save Your Marriage When Your Spouse Doesn't Want To" on his website, or you can actually visit Amazon.com.

Thanks again for joining us today and I hope you'll join us again next week. For more information about this show as well as any previous episodes, you can always visit us at Stayhappilymarried.com. I'm Stephanie Lockwood. Until next time stay happily married.

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