

How to know if you're already on

# The Secret Path to DIVORCE

Larry Bilotta

**Whether you're married or engaged to be married; you need to read this article...it may save you from one of the most painful experiences you will ever go through: divorce. Read on to stop it from happening to you.**

Divorce is similar to falling in quicksand. It's a painful process that slowly increases its grip, leaving you with no way to escape and you never saw it coming.

Married couples are not the only people who could be in jeopardy of divorce. Believe it or not, engaged couples could be headed for divorce even before they tie the knot.

## Before and after the wedding

There is an invisible "course of conduct" couples go through before they reach the final stage of divorce. This is because of the major but often overlooked transformation couples go through on their wedding day.

After the church ceremony and reception, the couple goes on a romantic honeymoon to celebrate the beginning of their "new life together as one", which they have been led to believe will be full of love, excitement and romance. After the thrill of the wedding and honeymoon is over, the in-love couple experiences

something they thought would be easy. They begin to realize that the routines required for home and family are nothing like romance, but in fact, the complete opposite. Raising a family requires routine and predictability.

Maintaining a home with small children calls for the constant onslaught of cleaning and house work. Raising children and usually two full time jobs leave a couple in no state for exciting romance or spontaneity.

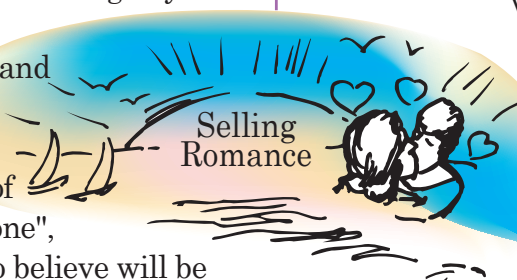
## Romance: An amorous adventure or an ambitious selling venture?

Advertisers in magazines and TV commercials sell men and women on the idea that they need to attract the opposite sex by looking and acting a certain way. During the romance stage of a relationship, men and women act on these ideas and do some selling of their own.

Women offer men an attractive face, figure, sexy behavior, love for excitement and fun, and the clear message that he is the smartest, strongest and best looking man in the world. Men sell themselves to women with the promise of financial

security, protection and by making her feel like the most important woman in his life. Their future is filled with anticipation, spontaneity, erotic

excitement, and most of all their BEST behavior.



Why? Because they don't know themselves.

### "Land Mines"

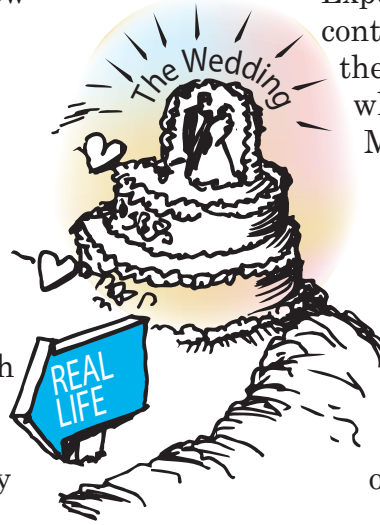
Since men and women do not know themselves or each other as well as they should, they walk into marriage with built in "Land Mines". These "land mines" are values that are in direct opposition of each other. People go into relationships with many different values that they may or may not agree upon. These values or "land mines" could be anything from religion to table manners. Because most couples don't have honest discussions about their values, or their way of doing things, these "hidden explosives" are just waiting to be tripped and a legally bound marriage is the perfect place for them to explode.

### The Secret Path to Divorce

The Secret Path to Divorce is a map. It is a simple picture designed to be a warning and a wake up call for those couples who were misinformed or choose to remain ignorant of what marriage actually requires. Look at the map and see if you can locate where your marriage is now to be sure you are not on the path to divorce. The map clearly reveals the signs of both a happy marriage and those of the path to divorce.

### Romance over-sells and marriage under-delivers

Every year in America, over 2,200,000 couples get married. During that time, 1,500,000 of those loving relationships end up in divorce court. So how did this happen to these couples who were once inseparable Couples begin the path to divorce in the of ideals of romance, they then begin to create Ultimate



Expectations of each other. They continue to spiral downward towards the steps couples take to divorce, which are also known as the 5 Melt Down Signs.

### The 5 Melt Down Signs

If you looked closely at any one of the 1,500,000 couples that divorce every year, no matter how different the men and women were, these Melt Down signs would be found in every one of them.

Melt Down Signs don't affect your marriage all at once. Instead, they slowly tear it apart, piece by piece, month after month and very few couples ever recognize what is happening to them until it is too late. When they finally do, they are not equipped to repair their marriage. Recognizing these Melt Down Signs well in advance can greatly reduce the possibility of your marriage ending up at the bottom of the path to divorce...and being another divorce statistic.

You can begin to understand where you are on the path to divorce when you understand these 5 Melt Down Signs:

- 1) Ultimate Expectations
- 2) Married And Struggling
- 3) Trauma Transition
- 4) Married And Miserable
- 5) The Point of No Return

### Ultimate Expectations

This is the earliest sign that you are on the Secret Path to Divorce. It is a secret path because no one would believe that having expectations about the person you married is a problem, but we are NOT talking about normal expectations here. We ARE talking about Ultimate Expectations.

Though these Ultimate Expectations are clearly stated here, in life they are not even understood let alone explained. Every man and woman has their own gender-related set of Ultimate Expectations.

**If you are a Woman, the Ultimate Expectation list for your husband includes:**

- 1) Patience under all conditions.
- 2) The ability to listen as if everything you said really mattered.
- 3) Compliments and encouragement about what you do, have done or are about to do.
- 4) Complete emotional support for what you value in life.

**If you are a Man, the Ultimate Expectation list for your wife includes:**

- 1) Staying just as sexy, playful and interesting as she was when you were dating.
- 2) Time that is free of any domestic demands so you can do what you really love to do.
- 3) Compliments and encouragement about what you do, have done or are about to do.
- 4) Complete emotional support for what you value in life.

**To Stay Off the Path to Divorce; Know Your Expectations**

The Ultimate Expectation list is what you really want and need in your marriage. If you are unhappy with your spouse, it's because these expectations are not being met. Why is it so important to know and understand these Ultimate Expectations? If you don't know them, you can't discuss them with each other. This lack of dialogue about the critical topic of expectations will cause the two of you to fall onto the path of divorce.



**A Woman's Ultimate Expectations:**

- 1) Patience under all conditions.

As a woman, you need to keep your family together physically and emotionally. Because men generally tend to

only take care of themselves, you'll try anything within your power to keep your husband connected with your family. For instance, you might try to bring your husband closer to your children by telling him to stay home instead of going out with friends. Your husband might insist that he needs some time to himself. He may become intolerant, rude or even mean because his need for free time is not being met. Since you expect patience from your husband, you also expect him to forgive your sometimes awkward attempts to bring father and children together through "nagging". When your husband fails to be patient with you, your Ultimate Expectations are not met and your stress level can go through the roof.

- 2) The ability to listen as if everything you said really mattered.

You have very sensitive emotions that are easily damaged by the smallest detection of negative voice inflection. To compensate for this condition, you want your husband to listen without judgment to everything you say; no matter how long it takes you to say it. You want him to be sincerely interested in every subject you choose to talk about. If there is one thing men struggle with, it is listening to their wives talk about subjects that men could not care less about, yet this is a serious need that women want their husbands to meet.

- 3) Compliments and encouragement about what you do, have done or are about to do.

You need positive, not negative feedback. You want your husband to look for the good in you, regardless of what you might be doing wrong. If your husband focuses on the negative things about you and the things you do, your need for compliments and encouragement is not being met. Negative comments only make a situation worse. If you do not receive positive encouragement from your husband, you will become emotionally starved for lack of encouragement and eventually feel resentment towards him.

4) Complete emotional support for what you value in life.

If you come from a childhood home where your father abandoned or ignored you, unfortunately, you are forced to pay the price... along with your husband. The price you pay is that you tend to be emotionally insecure and either put yourself down or put your husband down because of your past. There is still much you can do to reduce its effect on your marriage. You can start by knowing and understanding each of your value systems because you will be true to them in almost every situation. Because of this Ultimate Expectation, you expect your husband to honor your what you value in life-your value system.

### A Man's Ultimate Expectations:

1) Staying just as sexy, playful and interesting as she was when you were dating.

This Ultimate Expectation has much to do with the fact that as a man, you are physically wired to need sexual contact which keeps you going back to your wife for fulfillment. Your wife does not have this need for sexual contact like you do. Instead, she needs emotional connection which requires acts of kindness, conversation, encouragement and a genuine interest in her.

These are all the activities you did during the romance stage of your relationship, but that unnatural effort dried up quickly after the wedding. Most men say to themselves, why work hard? Romance was work, but we're married now. This is one of the strangest phenomena of romance and marriage. As a man, you want your wife to be as sexy, playful and interesting as she was

when you were dating, but don't realize that it was YOU who stopped the kindness, conversation, encouragement and genuine interest in her that actually made her sexy, playful and interesting. Unlike your wife's Ultimate Expectations, you can actually get this expectation met by what YOU do.

2) Time that is free of any domestic demands so you can do what you really love to do.

This is simply a man thing. Your wife doesn't need very much time alone, but you do. Typically, your wife might treat you like you're a woman and refuse to believe that you would ever want to be without her for any length of time. If your wife understands this expectation, she'd ask if you'd like to plan some time with your friends, do your favorite hobby or just get away from daily responsibilities for awhile. If she supports this need often, you'll want to support her emotional needs in every way you can.

3) Compliments and encouragement for everything you do, have done or are about to do.

If you are a man, you need even more encouragement than your wife does, but unlike your wife, you don't hint around for it. It's not a manly thing to do. You want your wife to tell you how she noticed the good things you've done, past and present.





If your wife says she can't do that because none of it is good, she is not meeting your need for encouragement. This often

leads you to resent your wife for not meeting this need. The more your wife looks for the good in what you do, no matter how small ("Honey, I really like how organized you made your work bench."), the more you will

give her the rewards in her Ultimate Expectations list.

4) Complete emotional support for what you value in life

In the same way that your wife needed her father, you needed yours, but it's for a different reason. You watched your father as he related to your mother and other women. If you came from a home where your father respected women, enjoyed conversation with them, listened attentively and showed respect, it will be no problem for you to do the same. On the other hand, if your father lived for himself, ignored you and your mother and you didn't really notice this when you were young, you will have a difficult time trying to go against this "model life" that your father gave you. The most concise resource for learning how to deal with clashing childhood value systems is the Invisible Lifestyle article mentioned on page 4.

**Stronger Spouses = Higher Expectations**

The stronger and more dominant a spouse's personality, the higher their expectations are and the more sensitive they are to their Ultimate Expectations not being met. There is usually one dominant and one softer and more passive personality in most marriages

because, as the saying goes, "opposites attract."

With a stronger personality, a spouse appears more direct, to the point, strong willed and decisive about what they want. These "Hard" men or women have higher demands, shorter fuses, can become easily upset and are much more willing to vent their unhappiness directly at the offending person.

Soft personalities, or "Softhearted" people on the other hand have milder personalities, and can endure more and endure it longer. Softhearted people are patient, flexible and willing to listen. When things get bad, they usually run from direct confrontation and give the silent treatment because they cannot deal with conflict.

Between men and women, the one most likely to have unmet Ultimate Expectations is the woman. She is also the one with the most dramatic reaction to it. The vast majority of divorces are filed by women. When the woman is the Harder and more dominant person, the couple is usually already on the path to divorce; especially if she married to a Softhearted man. This is because Softhearted men married to Hard natured women are clueless about why their wives get so upset, so very quickly. No matter what these men do, they can't seem to understand or supply their wives' Ultimate Expectations. If your marriage is just the opposite of this example, for information on how to deal with your Hard husband or Softhearted wife, go to [www.softheartedwoman.com](http://www.softheartedwoman.com).

**Mommy and Daddy don't always know best**

Of the one 1,500,000 marriages that degrade into divorce each year, neither member of the couple knew anything about the Ultimate Expectations list and one of them became strongly determined to get a divorce. He or she was just too far along on the path.

The kids pay the price of their parents' break up for the rest of their adult lives. The couples were so caught up in seeking relief from their own pain that they believed their children would just have to understand.



The most important thing to remember when you are considering divorce is this simple truth: Once you cross that line on the map called The Point of No Return, your children's long-term emotional security is threatened. The damage your divorce will inflict is not so much evident in their childhood years, but during their teens, and especially in their adult lives. It will negatively affect every aspect of their lives from their confidence, to their job performance, to their own marriage and children. When it comes to children, the sins of the fathers truly are passed on to the sons. When you cross The Point of No Return, you will no longer have the capacity to think of your children's life-long emotional security as your top priority. You put your own feelings ahead of theirs. You must because you reached The Point of No Return.

Employment recruiters know because they interview these children, now adults who are looking for jobs. Adult children of divorced parents feel insecure and constantly try to appear confident, but perceptive people can sense their confidence as artificial. Its source is the traumatizing experience of their parents' divorce.

These adults end up with relationship problems at home, work and in their social lives- for the rest of their lives. On the other hand, a job applicant with parents who stayed together, gave their children a positive, tangible example of what good parents look like and today these adult children give off a "vibe" of personal security that is genuine.

They don't have that edgy, uncomfortable feeling found in the company of adults whose

parents were divorced. Parents who stay together create this security in and for their children.

If you're not already divorced, you can still spare your children that life-long grief.

There is a way you can both get off The Secret Path to the pain, and keep your family together. You can take the higher road - and in this day and age - the road less traveled.

If you feel you are already at The Point of No Return and have read this far, you may not be at that point after all. The following references are here for no other reason than to impress upon you what your children will face because of the decision to go the divorce route when there is another alternative.

*"Unhappily married adults who divorced were no more likely to report emotional or psychological improvements than those who stayed married." (1)*

*"Teenagers in single-parent families and in blended families are three times more likely to need psychological help within a given year." (2)*

*"Compared to children from homes disrupted by death, children from divorced homes have more psychological problems." (3)*

*"Children living with both biological parents are 20 to 35 percent more physically healthy than children from broken homes." (4)*

*"A Child in a female-headed home is 10 times more likely to be beaten or murdered." (5)*

*“Children of divorce are four times more likely to report problems with peers and friends than children whose parents have kept their marriages intact.” (6)*

*“Following divorce, children are fifty percent more likely to develop health problems than two parent families.” (7)*

### Men Without Skills

Women need to communicate more than men; they need to connect emotionally and their standards for relationships are naturally higher than those of men. Women’s Ultimate Expectations are more likely to remain unmet earlier in the marriage than men. The reason for this is because men have no skills on how to live with women, therefore, they don’t know how to meet their wives’ needs. The vast majority of men have not read any books on the subject of understanding women, have not taken any courses, and therefore will go right to the default setting. That is, they will repeat what their fathers did. If a father worked six days a week, didn’t talk, watched TV and ignored his wife, then that is what his son will do with his wife, for he believes it’s normal. Once again, for a full explanation of these phenomena, read the article mentioned on page 5.

### Married and Struggling

This phase on the path to divorce is quite innocent by anyone’s standards. All newly married couples expect to have little fights and disagreements from time to time, which is precisely why couples easily mistake this for being normal and don’t suspect they’re already in the early stages on the path to divorce. It is during this phase that your marriage meets the fork in the road.

Instead of taking the path to divorce, after several real life challenges, couples need to

look at the map and take the gold path that good marriages are built on. This path leads to clear expectations, open discussions without fear and encouragement to be who you really are. Most, however, don’t know that these skills can be learned, so many couples take the path of least resistance and begin to experience much more than little disagreements and misunderstandings. Their dialogue about even the smallest issues becomes highly stressful and fraught with tension.

It is difficult for couples to see the signs that they are in the “Married and Struggling” phase. At this point, most couples just hope for things to change for the better and for their Ultimate Expectations to be met. The problem is that their expectations are seldom met because open discussion never takes place.

### Trauma Transition

This landmark event takes place on one certain day. It happens because the couple has been Married and Struggling for too long. Ultimate Expectations have not been clear and they have been ignored for a protracted period of time. On this particular day, everything seems to be fine, but then something goes wrong. It could be something that seems insignificant: the pets, money, children’s grades, an oil change...it rarely has anything to do with the event occurring that day. Trying to find the core issue is like searching for the match that started the fire that burned down the city. The issue that took place on that day set off the land mines



buried under all those unfulfilled Ultimate Expectations. Once the Trauma Transition occurs, a whole new, darker energy invades the marriage. War has been declared, without being announced, and there won't be a happy ending.

### Married and Miserable

Since the day of the Trauma Transition, there no longer are some good days and some bad days. Every day with their spouse is a bad day. The kids can feel it, the friends and relatives can feel it, but the couple goes about their daily routine acting like everything is somehow normal. Now the couple will experience even more land mines of clashing values and Ultimate Expectations. Often, the stronger willed spouse has become so demanding and negative about their relationship that their mate could never fulfill their spouse's Ultimate Expectations.

There are two ways for a couple to live out the Married and Miserable part of the path. The first and most frequent is a life of dead existence. Hopelessness is written on their faces, and is evident in their expressions and tone of voice. The goal of their lives is just to exist and endure their lot in life. They may not openly complain, but they both appear to live their lives without cause or hope.

The second way couples can live on the Married and Miserable path is what can be described as guerrilla warfare. In this case, the couple has the energy and determination to fight to be right. They focus on and often try to win over friends and relatives by spouse-bashing in front of the people who know them. This creates temporary relief for this spouse and makes their mate look bad in the eyes of others.

### Taking Away Your Pain

The spouse who is most affected by not receiving their Ultimate Expectations is hurt, confused, angry and starving to meet their own needs. They have nowhere to turn except the next available person who can take away their pain.

These spouses look for support and relief. They might go to their own children, same sex friends who offer "getaways" from the "bad" spouse, relatives such as mothers or sisters who offer sympathetic understanding, but most often, it is an available person of the opposite sex who has all the necessary ingredients to take away the pain. This is the recipe for an affair.

Not much needs to be said about affairs. They make hot news in the media and endless material for TV shows and movies. We have all seen and read enough about affairs. But what you did not know is that an affair is simply a predictable step on the dark path. Affairs are not shocking or at all unexpected when you understand the Secret Path to Divorce, but an affair can prolong the Married and Miserable phase for years until it is exposed. Finally, the miserable couple reaches that emotional point at the end of the line...The Point of No Return.

### The Point Of No Return

The Point of No Return is at the end of the Secret Path to Divorce. This is the final result of every Melt Down the couple experienced.

They entered the marriage with a set of Ultimate Expectations that were never discussed. They then wandered blindly onto the Secret Path to Divorce and found themselves struggling but were not alarmed because things always seemed to get better.



Struggles continued to mount and the stage was set for the Trauma Transition. Married and Struggling couples were catapulted by the Trauma Transition into the Married and Miserable phase. Month after painful month, Married and Miserable couples endure a life which creates almost every conceivable type of strange behavior like crying without cause, drinking to forget, affairs, destruction of property, buying sprees and reckless money mismanagement. Finally, pushed beyond their emotional limit, (usually the woman), she or he says "I am done! I want a divorce!"

The event that pushes a spouse past The Point of No Return is similar to the Trauma Transition, but it does not have to be a big dramatic fight. It could be a quiet and bitter conversation. It could be a single spiteful note that was sent and received. No matter what the form, the spouse who feels most deprived of their Ultimate Expectations makes the decision that this is the end of the road. Once this point is reached, no counselor, pastor, parent or friend can convince the spouse to the contrary. That permanent line of separation has been crossed. The marriage is over.

Now that you understand the path that leads couples to divorce, it should never be a surprise to you again. Remember this: until The Point of No Return is crossed, there is still hope, there are still possibilities, there is still potential for a better life no matter how bitter you've become. (The exception to this statement is physical abuse which enters the field of criminal law.)

### Going To the Professionals

Because friends and relatives do not understand the Secret Path to Divorce, they don't know how to deal with it. They

are of very little help to a struggling couple. When these friends and relatives are around a Married and Miserable spouse, they become extremely uncomfortable. Their first thought is to tell the couple to "seek counseling", which is the safe and standard answer.

People are usually talking about marriage counseling. This profession has gained a reputation. USA Today reported in a June 1999 issue "Fans of marital counseling are saying disturbing things: Research shows that it doesn't work as well as we once thought and it might not last. Many psychotherapists hang out their shingles with no real training in handling the traumas of two clients at one time. It is designed for women who want to talk about feelings and men want no part of it."

Across the country, people view going to a marriage counselor as a sign that you are a personal failure. They think that they should have been successful at marriage, but they failed. Now they have to admit it to the whole world by seeing a marriage counselor. This may be one of the reasons marriage counseling has failed to deliver on the promise of a solution...couples are not allowing the counselor to help them.

The best way for you to research marriage counseling for yourself is to ask people around you how many marriages they know that were saved by marriage counseling. How many couples are happily married today because a marriage counselor came to the rescue? If you ask those in the profession, you will find that they actually do not like working with couples. They would much rather work with husbands or wives separately. Unhappy couples on the path to divorce are way too difficult for most marriage counselors to handle.

A second alternative that couples resort to is their pastor, priest or rabbi. If the couple likes the person who preaches at their place of worship, they might seek him out. Unfortunately, these people of the cloth have marriage counseling as only one of their many duties. Most are not trained extensively in how to deal with troubled marriages. Ask and you will find that the majority of full time religious servants are drained by the process of counseling couples. It seems that faith-based couples do not want to apply their personal religious beliefs to their own behavior with each other. Something negative has gripped them and will not let go, much to the frustration of their religious leader.

You might tend to think a caring spiritual leader the couple respects, combined with their own faith in a higher authority, would be what it takes to bring the couple to a peaceful resolution. If this were true, the results would confirm it, but a research study by the independent Barna Research Group shows the divorce rate among faith-based marriages to be as high as the population at large.

No man or woman who marries wants to believe that divorce is the step they must inevitably take.

The sooner struggling couples can get off this destructive path, the sooner millions of kids can live in the best environment: A home with both parents supporting and encouraging their kids.

*-Larry Bilotta-*



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Bilotta".

- (1) 2002 by the Institute for American Value
- (2) Peter Hill "Recent Advances in Selected Aspects of Adolescent Development" Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry 1993
- (3) Robert E. Emery, Marriage, Divorce and Children's Adjustment" Sage Publications, 1988
- (4) Dawson, "Family Structure and Children's Health and Well-being" Journal of Marriage and the Family
- (5) The Legal Beagle, July 1984
- (6) Tysse, Burnett, "Moral Dilemmas of Early Adolescents of Divorced and Intact Families. Journal of Early Adolescence 1993
- (7) Angel, Worobey, "Single Motherhood and Children's Health
- (8) U.S. Census Bureau