



## *How to Make a Marriage Last*

*by Ken Johnston*

# **Coping With Marriage Problems**

*“Make a Marriage Last”*

<http://www.Relationship-Insurance.com>

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(Nobody likes to read this kind of stuff. We wish we didn't have to do it.)

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# Introduction to: Coping With Marriage Problems

To grow your love after marriage, you need a strategy that minimizes the damage done by those things that decrease the love. Coping is the answer. Immediately after feeling bad feelings, we suggest you ask yourself four easy questions, and make one of four wise choices.

## **The first of the four questions is: "What's happening?"**

The first question any time you have a bad feeling, is: "What's Happening?" The answer usually relates to that bad feeling you're having.

## **Then, ask: "How did I create this feeling?"**

Scientists tell us that we create our feelings by our thoughts. Coping question number two causes you to ask yourself what thoughts you're having that create this bad feeling toward your partner.

You don't need to know the answer to this question to cope with marriage problems. Experts use this question to help individuals who get stuck in their thinking. You can learn how to answer it if you want.

## **Then, ask: "Is this what I want?"**

You've created some kind of bad feeling that's associated with your partner. It's important to ask "Is this feeling what I want for my life?" This question keeps you grounded and in touch with what you want for your life.

## **Next, ask: "What Can I Do?"**

The full question is "What can I do to move closer to what I want for my life?" This question leads to four possible wise choices (Act, Ask Accept, Forgive). You'll go through the choices top to bottom to see which will move you closer to what you want. (More on the choices later.)

We don't know what else you want for your life, but we would guess you "Want a happy marriage that lasts."

## **The Payoff if You Cope Quickly and Effectively**

The payoff from the coping process is huge. Few people appreciate the enormous value of coping well. It's simple to learn, and the effects are immediate. The results are important. To learn more about coping, read on.

# Cope with Marriage Problems: Overview

Master the coping skills that will help you cope with marriage problems and protect your marriage. Coping is a major factor in building the love in your marriage.

The idea is to protect your love by coping with marriage problems that can arise from those terrible moments when you lovers exchange harsh words or hurtful comments. Coping is a great way to protect your love from any significant damage.

## When to use emotion, and when to use reason

Coping requires a switch from the emotional you, to the reasoning you. Some people pride themselves in always being emotional. Others take pride in always being rational and using reason. Both are cheating themselves.

Happy people use emotion when the emotions are positive; they use reason when the emotions are painful or negative.

If you build this simple habit of switching from emotion to reason and back again to cope with marriage problems, you'll automatically become a much happier person. You'll cope effectively with anything that happens in your life, as well as your marriage.

You'll also have a fuller, more satisfying and successful life, using your full capacities of both emotion and reason.

## Jump from emotion to reason to cope with marriage problems

Emotions and reasoning are in different parts of your mind, and even in different parts of your brain. The emotional part is great to use when people, events, or situations are positive, good, or happy. Feel the joy. Feel the win. Feel the love.

The reasoning side of your mind is best used to solve problems, answer questions, ask questions, and deal with adversity.

The simplest way to switch, then, is to use any bad feeling as a trigger to switch to "asking and answering" some important questions. Keep these questions with you; practice using them anytime you have a bad feeling. Then, when the pressure is on — and your marriage is under threat — you'll have practiced them and made them a habit.

You cope with marriage problems by *switching from feeling bad feelings to asking questions*.

## The Four Questions That Will Evoke Reason

We'll explore the four questions that will help you cope with the bad feelings from marriage problems one by one. They're carefully designed to produce the best possible outcomes. Here they are.

1. What's happening?
2. How am I creating that bad feeling?
3. Is that bad feeling what I want for my life?
4. How can I move toward what I do want for my life?

### 1. What's happening?

You cope with marriage problems by immediately asking yourself, "What's happening?" Actually, until you've mastered coping, you probably won't make an immediate switch. At first, the emotions will be too strong, and they will carry you into replaying, or reliving, or remembering whatever caused the bad feelings. (This is where the damage is done, and why it's so important to stop replaying the hurts, and so important that you cope with marriage problems to minimize the damage.)

*"What's Happening,"* is the first question because it engages the question/answering machinery in your mind, which is on the rational and reasoning side.

Generally, the answer to *"What's Happening,"* will be something like, "I'm feeling really angry." or "I'm feeling really hurt." or "I'm feeling really defensive."

*"What's Happening,"* helps you cope by focusing on resolving or fixing the situation, rather than continuing to feel bad about it.

### 2. How am I creating this bad feeling?

This question won't really be answerable until you learn about the Sage Model. The Sage Model is a model of the mind that allows you to see how you are producing a bad feeling. It may be something like attaching too much importance to something that could be seen as trivial. Or, it may be something like using your expectations or your rules to judge your partner.

Until you want to learn how you really are creating your bad feelings, it will be sufficient just to ask the question, even though you won't have much of a specific answer to yet yet.

It's important to remind yourself that YOU are creating that bad feeling, somehow. Maybe you don't know exactly how yet, but it is a good reminder that we all create our own feelings, by our thoughts.

It will also help you reaffirm that when you're ready, you can begin changing your thought process to minimize the number of bad feelings you produce for yourself.

### **3. Is this (the bad feeling) what I want for my life?**

If you are learning to cope with marriage problems, then it seems obvious that you don't want a life or a marriage filled with bad feelings. So, the answer to this is virtually always, "No. I don't want a life filled with bad feelings like this."

This question also has the added value of helping bring to mind what you *do* want for your life. In other words, you begin making all your choices with your *long term goals* and values in mind.

### **4. What can I do to move toward what I want for my life?**

This fourth question leads you into problem solving. Problem solving can be overdone, but when something is going wrong between you and your partner, you will cope with marriage problems better by asking questions than by dwelling on bad feelings.

## **Four wise choices to answer the fourth question: "What can I do?"**

To make coping simpler to master, we've limited your choices to four wise choices:

- A. If Action will move me toward what I want for my life, ACT.
- B. If discussion or negotiation will move me toward what I want for my life, ASK, or begin negotiations to resolve the difficulty.
- C. If Action or Asking won't help, I will choose to ACCEPT whatever it is I cannot or will not change.
- D. If Forgiveness will move me toward what I want for my life, I will FORGIVE.

### **A. ACT When action will move me toward what I want for my life**

If I did something wrong, I'll ACT to undo it. If I've criticized, I'll change to complaining. If I've displayed disgust or contempt toward my partner, I'll apologize, I'll display appreciation, I'll clean up whatever mess I've made.

## **B. If ASKing will help to cope with marriage problems ...**

I'll ASK. Maybe I need to negotiate some win-win resolution of a conflict. Maybe I need to ASK what I can do to resolve the problem. Maybe I'll ASK my partner to help me work on some issue.

Maybe I'll ASK my partner to please take out the garbage, or to please, in the future, put the toilet seat down.

## **C. I'll ACCEPT what I can't or won't change**

When neither Act nor Ask will do any good, I'll ACCEPT whatever I need to accept to cope with marriage problems.

ACCEPTance is one of your most powerful tools to cope with marriage problems. Acceptance also is a generous gift you can give to others and to ~~yourself~~.

Remember the ancient serenity prayer?

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
The courage to change the things I can,  
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

## **D. When FORGIVENess is called for, forgive**

Remember that accepting, forgiving, and forgetting are the most generous gifts you can bring to a marriage. They also will make you happier. They will make your marriage happier, and certainly will make it last longer.

By practicing on small bad feelings, you will quickly master the ability to use these four questions and four choices to cope with marriage problems easily, happily, and generously.

## **Coping Resources**

If you decide one day to join the team of people working together to make happy marriages, and make marriage last, you'll have full access to the audio/video coping course, and book two of the "Metamating Series," that teaches how to answer the second of the four questions: "How am I creating this bad feeling?"



# Question #1: What's Happening?

You can use the four coping questions anytime you have a bad feeling about anything. Once you've made the coping questions automatic, you'll want to practice coping with all the bad feelings you experience. Who knows? You might even become a happy, happy person.

Some people, unfortunately, experience lots of bad feelings about people, events, and things. If that's your situation, you might just start learning to cope by practicing on marriage problems and bad feelings about your partner. Let's explore the first question in detail.

## Immediately ask, "What's Happening?"

The first question: "What's happening?" helps you become hyper-aware of your bad feelings. Asking "What's Happening?" works like magic. Instantly, you're moved away from the emotional part of your mind (and brain) to the rational, reasoning part.

The question itself focuses your attention on you, your thoughts, and the feelings your thoughts are producing.

Many people report that they feel an instant clarity of thought, and relief from the bad feeling that prompted the question.

## Answers to: "What's Happening?"

You ask "What's happening?" in order to identify the feeling you're getting and the thoughts you were having when you got the bad feeling.

Some possible answers: "I'm feeling *really* angry toward my partner." or, "I'm feeling *disappointed* in my partner." or "I'm feeling really *frustrated* by my partner."

You'll often find a pattern to your answers. If you do, *pay attention*. For example, you might be constantly feeling angry, or sad, or disappointed, or unloved, or lonely, or resentful toward your partner.

If you keep having the same bad feeling over and over, many experts call this, your "favorite miserable feeling" (favorite, because you have it a lot).

When you can verbalize the bad feeling you're having and the thoughts you were thinking, you're ready for the second question.

Next: "How Am I Creating The Bad Feeling I'm Feeling?"

## Question #2: "How am I creating this bad feeling?"

The answers for this question are understood by advanced students of the *Coping* program, and also the experts working with people who are having trouble coping.

However, we recommend that everyone continue to use the question as one of the four questions in the coping process, because it reminds you that any bad feelings you have come from your own thoughts: *your thoughts produce your feelings*. We include it because it may make you curious enough to want to find out how you produce the thoughts you have.

So, after you've identified the bad feeling you're having (question number one), remind yourself that you are causing that feeling by the thoughts you are having (question number two).

### The Sage Model Is A Map Of The Mind

To answer that second question, you really need one more tool: the Sage Model, commonly called, "The Map."

The Sage Model is fully explained in book II of the *Metamating Series*, which is a series of six books you get when you Join the Team of other couples learning *How To Make A Marriage Last*.

The Sage Model is mostly used by advanced students and experts to coach people who struggle with accepting and forgiving their partner.

There is a graphic depicting the model (Appendix C). It can be intimidating when you first see it, but it turns out to be very easy to learn and use, with a little coaching. If you are reading this book on-screen, print it out so that you can look at it from time to time.

For our purposes here, we'll simply show how it can be used to help people cope with marital issues. When you finish reading through the story about Doris, you can see the places on the map that Doris examined for how she might cope with her bad feelings (look for the red arrow).

### Situation: Doris Couldn't Accept Her Husband Leaving Wet Towels On The Floor

After you've read the tips that follow, you'll see that eventually, Doris has to choose between accepting that her husband is going to leave wet towels on the floor — or — build up a pool of resentment and frustration toward the man she loves.

As Doris proceeded through the steps in the *Coping* process, she concluded that her wisest choice was to accept her husband and his bad habit with the towels. However, she just couldn't do it.

Doris wrote, "I know I have to accept it, but I can't do it. I can't accept living with a slob."

Using the Sage Model (see red arrow on map), her coach found at least four different ways that she could modify her thoughts. Doris could:

1. *give wet towels less importance* than she had been giving them (reduce her "importancizer").
2. *modify the scope* and see that wet towels was just one of hundreds of things her husband did, and it was enormously outweighed by the other hundred more positive things he did.
3. *expand the time component of the thought* until she saw that over the next 50 years of living together, the couple would face many more challenging and rewarding issues than wet towels.
4. *examine her assessment of her husband* as a slob, and see that he isn't really a slob; he just has this one sloppy habit.

Doris found one of these very easy for her to do. She changed her thought about the towels, and was easily able to accept this annoying habit in her husband.

This example illustrates the power of the map and a coach, to help a committed person like Doris become able to cope, even though the issue, at first, seemed beyond her ability to cope.

## **Don't get hung up on the Sage Model**

Some people think the Sage Model is the greatest creation they have ever seen. Others think it is "inane," "stupid," or "useless," and they don't use it at all.

You don't have to know the Sage Model — or how to use it — to learn the powerful skills of coping. It's useful for experts who coach people who get stuck. It's also a wonderful discovery for curious people who are fascinated to learn how they think.

We say that it's no big deal. Use it or not. The important thing is the four questions of *Coping*; the Sage model is really only interesting to help answer the second question.

The real coping work is done by questions Three and Four.

## Question #3: Is this what I want?

This coping question causes you to consider what you want for your life. Use it to see if the feeling you're creating is really what you want.

Usually, the answer to this question is "No. I don't want a life filled with bad feelings."

When that happens, you're aware that the bad feeling you're feeling toward your partner is at odds with your life goals.

You know that your thoughts create your feelings, so immediately you see that it is you and your thoughts — not your partner — who is responsible for your bad feelings.

### **What *do* you want for your life?**

Maybe you're one of those lucky people who has carefully chosen what you want for your life.

More than likely, you're one of the vast majority that has never taken the time or discipline it takes to clarify what you want to achieve in your life, and how you want to live it.

We suggest — when you get some time — that you examine your life, set some goals, and choose what you want for your life.

For our purposes, however, we know one thing that you would like: we know you want a happy marriage that lasts.

### **Bad feelings don't create a happy marriage that lasts**

Happy marriages that last are built on *good* feelings associated with your partner and your marriage.

Bad feelings toward your partner are something you don't want for your life.

Until you identify everything you want for your life, we'll go forward with that: You want a happy marriage that lasts a lifetime.

## Never lose sight of your goal

Notice that Coping question number three reminds you — every time you ask it — that one of the high priorities in your life is to have a happy marriage that lasts.

You can't let it slip away like a diet gone bad, or a gym membership gone unused.

Your goal is always with you, every time you have a bad feeling and every time you have thoughts that put your happiness or your marriage at risk.

You are reminded of it every time you ask the question: "Is This What I Want For My Life?"

That question helps you realize that you can resolve the bad feeling yourself. But, how?

Coping question number three leads you to the final coping question: "How can I move closer to what I want for my life?"

The next article helps you to choose a way that you can move closer to what you do want for your life.

# Question #4: "What Can I Do To Get Closer To What I Want For My Life?"

You see your partner's wet towel on the floor ... again. Ask Coping Question number four:

*"What can I do that will bring me closer to what I want for my life?"*

In other words, you consider the *consequences* of any choice you make. What can you do that will bring you closer to your goal of a happy marriage that lasts?

In reality there are unlimited ways to answer the question, but the Coping process helps narrow the choices, and only gives you four wise choices.

You can

1. ACT
2. ASK
3. ACCEPT or
4. FORGIVE

## 1. ACT when ACTION will bring you closer to your goal

Let's consider some actions you could take:

- You could scream, complain, nag, or whine about the newest case of the wet towel on the floor.
- You could pick up the wet towel and put in his underwear drawer to dampen his shorts.
- You could pick it up, put it away, and remember to criticize him for being a slob.
- You could pick it up and put it on the towel rack where it belongs, making no mention of it.
- You could ignore it and wait for him to see it, pick it up, and hang it where it belongs.

If you ask yourself, "What action could I take that would lead to my goal of a happy marriage that lasts?" you would probably rule out the first three actions.

You could choose to pick it up yourself without comment (number 4).

Ignoring it might make you unhappy, but if ignoring it is easy for you, then your choice may be not to act (number 5).

## 2. ASK when ASKing will bring you closer to your goal

If you decided that action wasn't your wisest choice, then consider question two: "Will ASKing or negotiating about this issue bring me closer to my goal?"

Let's consider how you might ASK to resolve the bad feeling you're having:

- "Would you mind picking up your towel? I don't want a wet spot on the rug."
- "Would you please pick up your towel? I'm your wife, not your mother."
- "Could we schedule a time to discuss how best I can help you remember to pick up your towel?"
- "Would you be willing to accompany me to the marriage counselor? Maybe she has an answer to what you are saying to me by leaving your wet towel on the floor."

If you chose anything but the first choice, you need to get some instruction in coping, because the other three choices will either lead to trouble, or are definitely overkill.

## 3. If ACTION or ASKing won't resolve the issue, ACCEPT what can't or won't be changed

The wet towel example should have been resolved by action, or asking. But, suppose you picked up the towel and put it away without comment. That's wonderful. Action taken, problem solved.

Now suppose you ended up with some bad feelings about having to pick up after your "slob" of a husband, who is "always" being "thoughtless" and leaving you to pick up after him, as though you were his "maid."

Actually, these bad feelings are no longer caused by a dropped wet towel.

The bad feelings you are having now are caused by your being resentful toward your partner because YOU CHOSE to pick up the towel and put it away with no comment.

When you review the questions about this NEW bad feeling, ASK yourself:

1. What's happening?

*"I'm feeling resentful toward my partner because I chose to pick up his towel."*

## 2. How Am I Creating This Feeling?

*"I'm having thoughts which accuse him of "always" being "thoughtless." My judgement is that he is a "slob." I'm feeling angry that he expects me to be his maid."*

## 3. Is This What I want For My Life?

*"No, I don't want a life filled with angry accusations and feelings of being mistreated."*

## 4. What Can I do To Get Closer To What I Want For My Life?

- Will ACTION take me closer to my goal of a happy marriage that lasts?
- Will ASKING take me closer to my goal of a happy marriage that lasts?
- Will ACCEPTING take me closer to my goal of a happy marriage that lasts?
- Will FORGIVING take me closer to my goal of a happy marriage that lasts?

ACTION won't resolve these bad feelings. The feelings aren't caused by the towel. You chose to put it away.

ASKING won't resolve these bad feelings. Your husband is no longer involved in these bad feelings.

ACCEPTING is a wonderful idea. You can ACCEPT your husband for "occasionally" being untidy. You can think about how you appreciate him for all the wonderful things he brings to your life.

## **4. FORGIVE when you can. Be as forgiving a person as you can be.**

Forgiving is always a great choice. You can FORGIVE your husband for his occasional lapses. You can forgive yourself for choosing to do a nice thing and then getting angry and resentful about it.

Someone said, "A happy marriage is the union of two forgivers." There is no greater gift you can give someone than forgiveness. Forgiveness also benefits you.

There's another useful quote: "Failure to forgive is the worst form of self-punishment." In other words, you don't forgive because the person deserves it; that may not be so. You forgive because forgiveness relieves you of the pain created by hanging on to anger, disgust, or hatred.



## To Summarize

In summary, ACT when action will resolve the bad feeling. ASK when negotiations will resolve the issue and your bad feelings.

When neither acting or asking will resolve the issue or your bad feelings, simply ACCEPT what can't or won't be changed.

If forgiveness is called for, FORGIVE to resolve your bad feelings.

## Coping successfully is the single most important thing in a happy marriage

It's been proven that marriages are killed by the little things:

- An angry start to a discussion, and the harsh words that follow, e.g. contempt, disgust, defensiveness, stonewalling, etc.
- Letting little things build into large resentments
- Failing to appreciate
- Failing to listen
- Failing to give the marriage the priority it deserves.

Coping is an all-purpose tool. It resolves bad feelings about little things and big things. It is the single most important tool that you and your partner can use to achieve your goal of a happy marriage that lasts.

There is a huge payoff for coping well. To learn about that payoff read the next article: "Payoff from Coping Well."

# The Payoff for Coping Well

If you cope with marriage problems immediately and completely, you'll have marriage magic.

- You'll have fewer and weaker bad feelings associated with your partner. You preserve your bundle of love.
- You'll avoid those ugly and hurtful fights that stem from distorted thoughts.
- You'll find it easier to stay positive. This keeps your positivity ratio higher.
- You'll find it easier to be optimistic. A Happier "now" gives you visions of a happier future.
- You'll find it easier to be appreciative. If you squelch the bad thoughts about your partner, you're open to be appreciative of the good things about your partner.
- You'll be slower to anger. You won't have the huge bundle or resentments that make people explode in anger at the slightest thing.
- You'll have happier memories. True and lasting love is based on shared happy memories. Your love will grow over time. Your marriage will be happier, and much more likely to last.

If you cope with marriage problems, you can achieve what others will see as "marriage magic."

## Fewer and weaker bad feelings toward your partner

Cope with marriage problems quickly by using the coping questions. The four questions and four choices will immediately resolve any bad feelings you were having about your partner.

The episodes of bad feelings will be far weaker because they won't fester and grow as you think, rethink, and relive any bad scenes with your partner. Your coping will minimize the damage that bad episodes do to your love bundle.

You'll have fewer episodes of bad feelings. Many bad episodes in marriages are caused by someone collecting all of the bad feelings from the past and over-reacting to small things in the present.

Those who've learned to quickly cope with marriage problems don't carry those big bunches of bad feelings forward. Thus, you'll be slower to anger, more loving, and the bad patches will come less and less often.

## **No Mistakes Based On Distorted Thoughts**

No one likes to think their thoughts may be distorted. However, those who learn the Sage Model quickly discover the ways in which they accidentally distort their thoughts.

For example, the husband who thinks, "She never wants to make love to me," quickly discovers his distortion in the word "never." If he reframes the thought to: "She doesn't want to make love to me as often as I want to make love to her," he takes the distortion out of the thought.

When he takes the distortion out of the thought, the bad feelings get resolved, and the issue appears in a new form, which has solutions.

## **Coping with marriage problems makes it easier to be optimistic**

Successful coping with marriage problems means that the marriage 'issues' that will arise will be resolved with win-win solutions. When a couple can effectively resolve their differences, it's much easier for each of them to feel optimistic about the future of the relationship.

## **It's Easier to Stay Positive**

Happy marriages have a mutual positivity ratio of 5 positives for every negative. If you cope quickly with marriage problems it's easier to stay positive and give your partner 5 positives for every negative.

Any discussions of marriage 'issues' must be begun and ended on a positive note in order to achieve a successful resolution.

By being more positive and staying positive, you're ready to successfully resolve any issues which require asking for what you want or negotiating win-win solutions.

## **Coping with marriage problems makes it easier to be appreciative**

Couples who don't effectively cope with marriage problems build resentments, frustrations, and angers that grow larger and larger.

You've seen it. We've seen it. Couples with large bundles of resentments are divorces waiting to happen.

When you've got a huge bundle of anger or resentment, it's hard to think positively about your partner and to express the appreciation your partner needs and deserves.

When you cope effectively, you resolve the bad feelings. They don't grow. You're free to notice the great things your partner does for you and your marriage. It's easy to be appreciative. It's comfortable to express that appreciation.

## **Cope with marriage problems and you'll be slower to anger**

People who've collected tons of bad feelings about their partners become explosive. They tend to have "hair triggers" and explode at the slightest hint of something they don't like.

People who cope with marriage problems don't build that bundle of resentment. They don't have "hair triggers." They don't explode easily. That makes it possible for them to begin and end 'issue' discussions on a positive note and not explode during the discussion at any imagined criticism.

When you cope with marriage problems quickly you might even become so slow to anger that you're "laid back."

## **Cope with marriage problems and you'll collect happy memories**

Love is the bundle of feelings associated with the memories of positive prior experiences of, about, and with your partner.

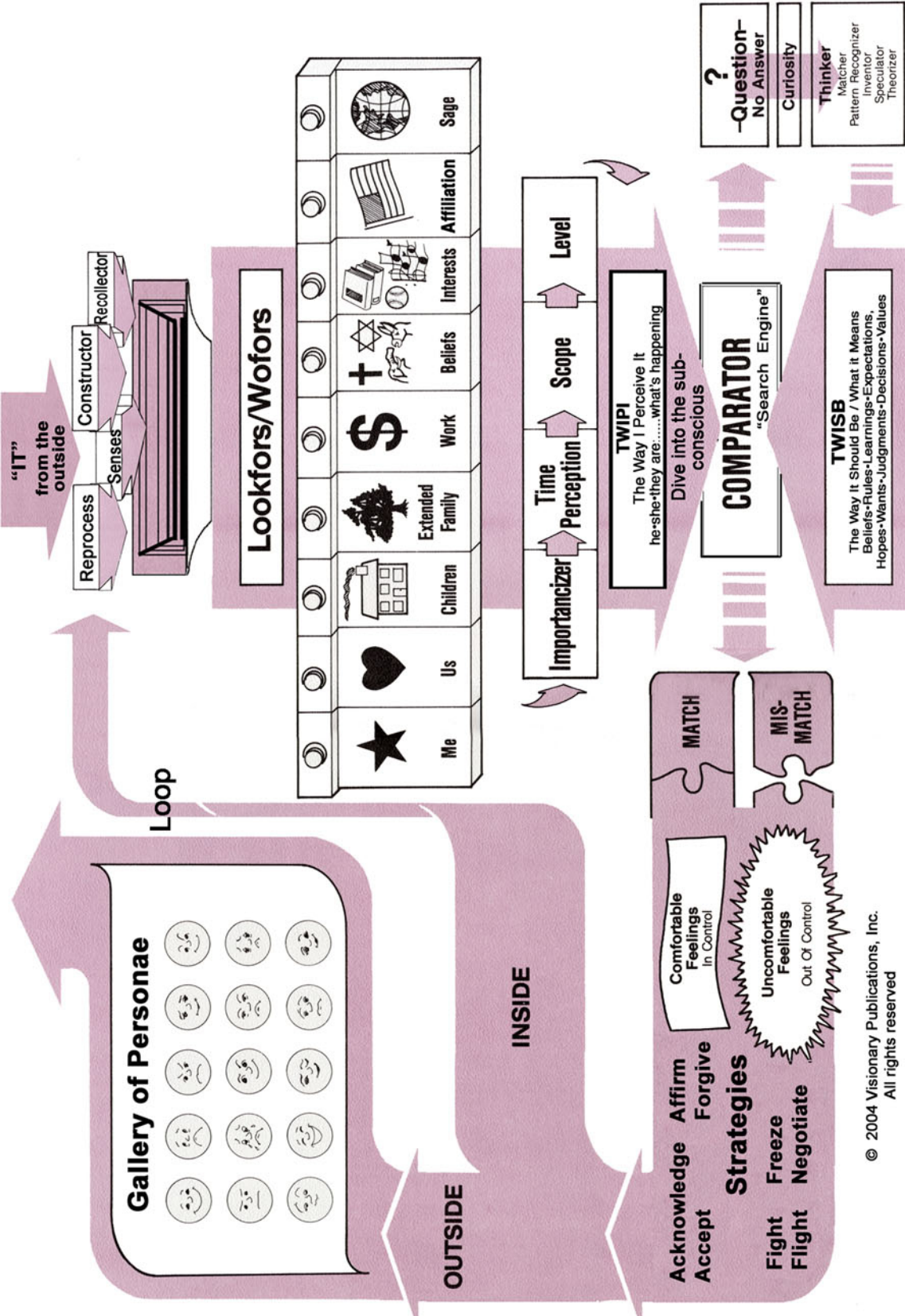
When you cope with marriage problems, you'll resolve the bad feelings immediately. You'll be much more open to creating good feelings of, about, and with your partner.

These good memories and feelings join the past memories of happy experiences of, about, and with your partner. Your love grows.

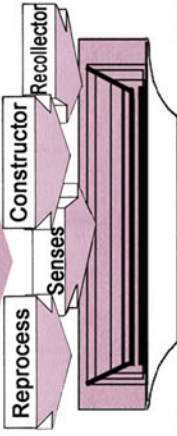
This is the end of the section of this site about Coping.

In summary, I'll say that there is nothing more important than effective coping if you want to build a happy marriage that lasts.

The entire in-depth training program of 6 Audio-visual modules, plus a complete text and workbook is available to members on  
<http://www.Relationship-Insurance.com>.

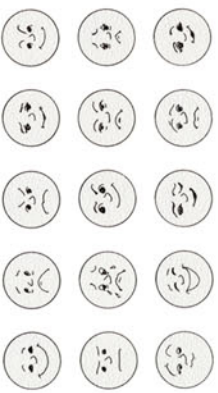


"IT" from the outside

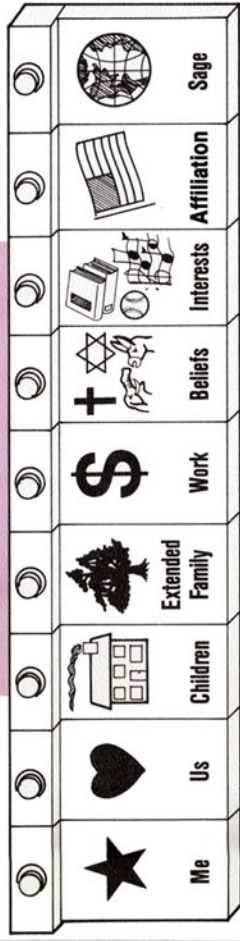


Loop

**Gallery of Personae**

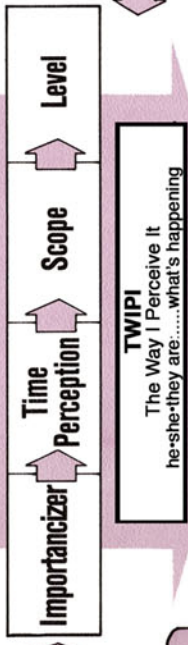


**Lookfors/Wofors**



INSIDE

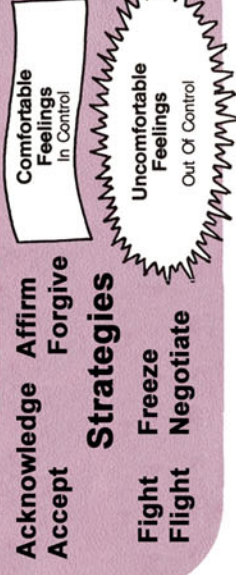
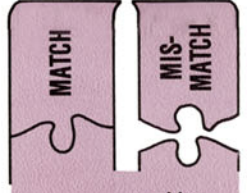
OUTSIDE



**TWIPI**  
The Way I Perceive It  
he-she-they are.....what's happening

Dive into the sub-conscious

**COMPARATOR**  
"Search Engine"



**? -Question-**  
No Answer

Curiosity

**Thinker**  
Matcher  
Pattern Recognizer  
Investor  
Speculator  
Theorizer

**TWISB**  
The Way It Should Be / What it Means  
Beliefs-Rules-Learnings-Expectations,  
Hopes-Wants-Judgments-Decisions-Values