

# Why Try to Save Your Marriage If It Causes You Pain?



Marital pain signals it is time to divorce, right? As a general rule, the answer is no! Several years ago, award-winning author Philip Yancey and world-renowned surgeon Dr. Paul Brand co-authored a book entitled, "**Pain: The Gift Nobody Wants.**" For many readers, it transformed their view of pain – from something to be feared – to something we should be grateful for. This is a perspective couples should take to heart.

## **Briefly, the Background to This Startling Perspective**

Dr. Brand worked with leprosy patients in India and America for most of his adult life. Leprosy (Hansen's disease), it turns out, represents an attack on the nervous system. Pain that would otherwise warn individuals that they are in physical jeopardy does not exist. They feel nothing.

In poorer regions of the world, rats chew fingers and toes while a person sleeps. Hands were burned in cooking fires because there was no warning signal to tell the brain to move the hand immediately. Equally grim stories of deterioration are found in wealthier nations as well. Although the details differ, a pain-free existence becomes a living hell for those contracting the disease.

Dr. Brand and his team of specialists received a grant from the U.S. government to combat the loss of physical feeling. Their goal was to create an artificial system to warn of danger. They tried audible signals, blinking lights, and other innovations

but to no avail. Leprosy patients would either ignore the painless, sometimes annoying signals or turn them off, resulting in more significant physical damage. The truth is that nothing grabs one's attention as pain does.

The project was abandoned after five years of work, thousands of hours, and millions of dollars spent. Though nobody wants it, Dr. Brand concluded that pain is God's gift to us. *It compels us to take corrective action for our own good.*

## Relevance to Marriage

What should you do in a marriage with emotional pain that doesn't go away? Ignore it? If so, for how long? Try to escape the pain through alcohol, drugs, infidelity, gambling, binge TV watching, etc.? These provide temporary relief. All the while, the marriage continues to deteriorate.

## The Story of One Divorced New Yorker

*I smoked dope every day for twenty years. I thought I was pretty slick. I could smoke while working. I could get high and still run my company. I could pour concrete. I could roof a building. I felt like I could do anything. But it ruined my marriage. I didn't even realize it until years after my wife left me. But the dope ruined my marriage because it made me content. Nothing could bother me. Her feelings didn't bother me. Her needs didn't bother me. The dope put an emotional cover over what should have been obvious. I told myself that if I didn't see the problem, then it didn't qualify as a problem. All I ever did was give her advice. I never asked for it. I never once felt the inspiration to say: 'Darling, I know there's something wrong. What can I do differently?'<sup>1</sup>*

This man ascribes the demise of his marriage to the fact that nothing bothered him. The lack of personal pain and the lack of recognition of & reaction to his wife's pain is what did that marriage in.

## Conclusion

Pain may be an experience nobody wants, but our lives are better for it. It seizes our attention and compels us to respond. Ignoring or dulling the pain can be fatal in our bodies and in marriage. Wise couples value and react to their discomfort by quickly addressing and correcting it.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.humansofnewyork.com/post/152031235481/i-smoked-dope-every-day-for-twenty-years-i>