

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



What should you do in a marriage when your emotional pain doesn't go away? Should you ignore it? If so, for how long? Should you try to escape the pain through alcohol, infidelity, binge TV watching, and the like? These provide temporary relief, yet all the while, the marriage is slowly dying on the vine.

A Different Way to Look at Pain

Dr. Brand¹ worked with leprosy patients in India and America for most of his adult life. Leprosy (Hansen's disease) represents an attack on the nervous system. Pain that would

otherwise warn individuals that they are in jeopardy does not occur. Because they don't feel their injuries, they don't treat them.

In poorer regions of the world, rats chew on fingers and toes while a person sleeps. People's hands get burned in cooking fires because there is no warning signal to prompt the brain to move the hand. Grim stories of deterioration are also found in richer nations. In all cases, a pain-free existence becomes a living hell for those who contract the disease.



Dr. Brand's goal was to create an artificial system to warn of danger. He and his team tried audible signals, blinking lights, and other innovations, but to no avail. Patients would either ignore the painless yet annoying signals or turn them off. This resulted in more physical deterioration.

Outcome. Five years and millions of dollars later, the team abandoned the project. Though nobody wants it, Dr. Brand concluded that pain is God's gift to us. Why? Because nothing grabs our attention as does the sensation of pain. It

compels us to take corrective action for our own good.

The Story of One Divorced New Yorker



This understanding applies to marriage. Listen to one divorced New Yorker who routinely ignored his wife's complaints.

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?' ²

This man blames the demise of his marriage on the fact that nothing moved him – he felt nothing. His wife’s complaints had no impact on him. Because he did not respond to her pain, she left the marriage to escape it.

Conclusion



Emotional pain in marriage, on the one hand, can discourage and exhaust you. On the other hand, it is a clear signal that your relationship needs attention. Rather than being viewed as a sad fact of life, it should be viewed positively as a warning signal to take corrective action before it is too late.

If this is your situation, Dr. Newberger can help. Call to speak with him today.

Return to [previous page](#).

¹ Paul Brand and Philip Yancy, *The Gift of Pain*.

² [Link](#)