

DESIRE

All relationship problems are about desire. Think about it. They are about the degree to which one wants to be with someone. People usually end up at a point in a relationship where:

1. They think that their partner has lost the desire for an intimate relationship with them.
2. They think that they have lost the desire for an intimate relationship with their partner.
3. They think that the desire for a relationship has faded but they are not sure which of the above applies.

The discrepancy between each partners DESIRE for RELATIONSHIP is very obvious with distressed couples. This usually takes the form of what I term the IN-OUT-UNSURE relationship configurations. These refer to whether a spouse wants IN to the relationship, wants OUT of the relationship, or remains UNSURE about the relationship. From these three possible positions one can have six kinds of marriage:

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| 1. | IN – IN: | Where both partners want IN, |
| 2. | IN – UNSURE: | Where one wants IN and the other is UNSURE. |
| 3. | UNSURE – UNSURE | Where both partners are UNSURE. |
| 4. | IN – OUT: | Where one wants IN and the other wants OUT. |
| 5. | OUT – UNSURE: | Where one wants OUT and the other is UNSURE. |
| 6. | OUT – OUT | Where both partners want OUT. |

TYPE 1: THE IN-IN RELATIONSHIP

This is the predominant relationship in social life where both partners are committed to the relationship and therefore want 'IN'. This is not to say that there are many moments or phases when they feel unsure or even want out, but they are passing experiences and there is never any real strong desire to end the relationship. They feel and believe that their partner is their 'family' and is there pretty much for life. There is a sense of stability and security and a conviction that their future is together.

TYPE 2: THE IN – UNSURE RELATIONSHIP:

So if your are in an I-A relationship you will feel that you very much like and love your partner and that you are committed to the relationship but what you get back from your partner are mixed feelings. He says he wants the relationship but it is not really shown. He lives out the role of being your partner but you are never sure. He rarely communicates directly and unambiguously his love or commitment to you. Or if he does it is unconvincing. He always seems to have negativity about your relationship. If only this happened, or if only that happened, *then* he would be happy with you. So while he might be a good man there is a quiet disgruntlement and negativity that never makes you feel safe and confident about how he feels about you. He is distant, wishy-washy, negative, or he is 'hot and cold' all the time.

TYPE 3: THE IN – OUT RELATIONSHIP

If you are in an IN – OUT relationship this negativity is much more apparent. So while he still claims to be committed to you or wanting the marriage, there is little or no sense that he desires you, that he wants to move closer to you, that he values your relationship, or that he wants to communicate with you. All of his body-language and verbal language pushes you away or withdraws from you. He may be very hostile and abusive or he may be cold and detached. He will likely be very critical and though he does not come out and say he wants out unless he is in an argument, he communicates it over the small things. He picks at the relationship. In its more positive form he may not be at all abusive or neglectful, but he is emotionally gone – he gets his buzz and joy out of life from everything except you. So while there may be nothing that you could criticise him about publically (in fact most of your friends and family might think he is great) when he is with you he is withdrawn, cold, and dismissive.

TYPE 4: THE UNSURE – UNSURE ELATIONSHIP

If you are in an A – A relationship both of you are UNSURE but neither of you know how to address or change this. You just don't know how you feel, you want to be married and you don't, you are never happy, to sort-of put up with things and this inconsistent, weak, unpredictable, boredom has

infected your relationship. If he left in the morning you don't know would you be delighted or sad. You may be fed-up and listless about everything. And he is the same. Both of you sit on the fence of commitment and quietly fantasise about other people or of being free, but the years tick by and night after night, year after year you lie there thinking "is this all there is? I don't know if this is what I want?"

TYPE 5: THE UNSURE – OUT RELATIONSHIP:

The A – O relationship is further down the road of negativity where your partner wants out, as defined above, but this time you are not really bothered by that. You have grown fatigued and fed-up by his negativity, distance, and withdrawal from you and you just let him do his own thing, though you wanted IN some time ago, and very much wanted him to be close to you, now you realise that you don't care as much as you did. You miss him and want him at times, but just as often now you just don't know anymore. You think he has had, or may be having an affair, and this time around you are quietly relieved. You find you are happier when he is gone.

TYPE 6: THE OUT-OUT RELATIONSHIP

This is a relationship that can take two forms. It is either a temporary stage in an end-game where both partners have begun the emotional process of ending the relationship and are moving inevitably toward separation and break-up. Or they are a couple that have no wish to be close or intimate with each other but, for whatever reasons, choose to continue to live together. These reasons may be convenience, family, fear, insecurity, or pride. I have met and worked with many couples who exist in such a situation – some successfully and others disastrously.