

### **What is wrong with some women?**

It is a sad fact that women initiate most marriage counselling or therapy. Many men arrive at couples counselling reluctant if not resistant to the entire process of getting help. Men's need to be in control of things and to maintain privacy, (if not secrecy) in their relationship makes marriage counselling an uncomfortable experience for most. However, despite this, I have found, over many years of work, that women come for counselling with some familiar attitudes and behaviours. If you were to ask me what are the typical problematic types I would suggest that there are seven types of women that experience or cause marital distress. They are:

#### 1. The Accommodating and Dependent Woman:

This woman spends a great deal of her life accommodating to her partner's moods, demands, and needs. At a deep level she is dependent on her husband for approval and measures her worth by the degree to which she can make him happy. She is a dependent person and finds it almost impossible to act independently. Even if she is being abused and treated badly in the marriage, which will still seek to accommodate to her partner because she has not developed the confidence to have an independent mind. A dependent woman flowers in a loving and positive relationship but can be badly treated if she is married to a distant or indifferent husband. He can take advantage of her dependence.

#### 2. The Narcissistic & Controlling Woman

This woman sees herself as the boss in the marriage and will treat her husband with near disdain. She runs the house and the home and all information tends to be relayed through her. She often has a simmering rage beneath her everyday competence and her husband and children will walk on eggshells around her. She often treats her husband as if he is one of the children in the family and spends her time criticising and putting him down. She is attracted to agreeable men who will let her get away with her dominance and disrespect. The woman is narcissistic because, above all, she values how others see her and prides herself on the social and family approval she gets for having her family turned out well and for the status she achieves in life.

#### 3. The Histrionic & Emotional Woman

This kind of woman is forever engaged in some sort of emotional drama. Her reactions to things tend to be over the top. She gets too upset about little things that go wrong, and then gets over enthusiastic when things go right. Everything is a bit over the top. She is actually very needy of approval and therefore gets very upset if this is not forthcoming from either her children or husband. She loves attention and will organise parties and events. She will be on the phone for hours with family and friends and loves to go out when she gets the chance. She will often be flirtatious and gregarious and as a result is well liked. The next person she meets can quickly become her best friend. However, underneath her gregarious and outgoing nature she is very insecure.

#### 4. The Compulsive Perfectionist Woman

This woman wants everything to be perfect – her house, her children, her husband, etc. She has rules in the house that she expects to be obeyed. Everything has its place and she gets irate if people in the house fail to put things where they are supposed to go or do things they are not supposed to do. She has her list of things to do which becomes her programme for her day and it can take precedence over everything else. She usually sees her husband as lazy or, at worst, a slob. Nothing he does is right and she may have given up on him ever doing anything right. Her perfectionism means that few people can live up to her expectations. He is as obsessive as she is compulsive. In other words, she thinks and obsesses a lot in her head about all the different things that have to be done. She will be awake in the middle of the night planning out schedules and days. Events like Christmas or summer holidays can turn into a nightmare because she gets so overwhelmed with trying to get everything to work out perfectly.

#### 5. The Unstable Woman

This woman is “all over the place”. Her relationships, life, and sense of her self are all shaky and unstable. She never feels secure in her life and is forever creating distressing crises and dramas out of even the littlest of things. She is moody and unpredictable and can be an affectionate gentle woman one day and a 'raving lunatic' the next! Her emotions are unstable and her husband and children are forever trying to calm her down and telling her not to get so upset. She tends to expect the worst – even when things are going well. As a result she will tend to blow things out of proportion at times because of her deep-seated suspicion that things are going to go wrong anyway. She can be very depressed is often tearful and yet can enjoy social occasions and events with enthusiasm and relish.

#### 6. The Quietly Bitter woman

This woman has a chip on her shoulder that she conceals brilliantly. She acts in a friendly and co-operative way most of the time to disguise her cynicism and bitterness. Her dark side is never acknowledged or revealed but is felt and experienced by those close to her who may have been on the receiving end of her smiling sarcasm, her humorous hostility, or her below the surface resentments. She plays the victim and when she does express her anger it is because of what is being done to her. Behind closed doors she is irritable, sarcastic, undermining, and spiteful. She is spare with her compliments and finds genuine shows of affection to be very difficult. She can act affectionate or loving but those around see through her superficiality. At the same time her husband or children will often be afraid of her because of her ability to turn on them if they threaten to expose the real truth.

#### 7. The Avoidant Woman

Some women live a life of avoidance – seeking to avoid confrontation, intimacy, and full engagement with their husbands and family. They prefer not to talk too much and get very uncomfortable if problems in their relationship come to the surface. They would prefer to have either a superficial or distant relationship. Many women are very happy in a relationship that provides status and security – for example they are happy that their husbands are seen to be respectable and they are financially secure, but the relationship itself may be as thin as cardboard. However, this suits the avoidant woman. Alternatively she may be very happy in a distant relationship where herself and her husband just fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Intimacy and authentic involvement is too much for her. The fact that she and her husband are not friends or companions matters little to her because security and safety are all she needs. Many relationships like this can come crashing down quickly after a crisis.