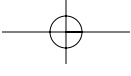


STRAIGHT TALK FOR  
**MEN**  
ABOUT  
**MARRIAGE**

What Men Need to Know About Marriage  
*(And What Women Need to Know About Men)*



**MARTIN G. FRIEDMAN**

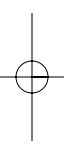


“I was groping—there had to be more to my marriage, my life, than this! *Straight Talk for Men About Marriage* is whittled-down truth, eloquently spoken. It is not a quick-fix, but a concise road map, showing what’s possible and how to get there. It has helped me rediscover my strength, focus and courage. I heartily encourage any married man to read this book and begin this vital journey.”

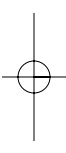
John Brady, Attorney

“Finally, the book about love...written for guys who’d rather watch the game. Marty Friedman offers straight talk and great advice for men who want to have great marriages. When it comes to understanding women, Marty’s the man.”

Michael Levin, Author, *Stone Cold Sober*



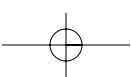
“I recommend Marty Friedman’s *Straight Talk for Men About Marriage* without reservation to anyone who wants to learn about communication, relationships and marriage, and who wants to turn his or her problems into breakthroughs.”



Michael Ray, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University; Author, *Creativity in Business* and *The Path of the Everyday Hero: The New Paradigm in Business*

“Here’s a revolutionary thought for guys who aren’t happy at home: What if no one’s really at fault in your marriage, it’s just that the damn marriage didn’t come with instructions—or at least instructions that made any sense to us guys. When it comes to getting solid information about what men can do to get the marriage they want—and keep their wife happy, too—Marty Friedman wrote the book. In fact, this is it!”

Laren Bright, Author, *Laughter: The Best Meditation*



Straight Talk for MEN About MARRIAGE:  
What Men Need to Know About Marriage  
(And What Women Need to Know About Men)  
Copyright © 2005 Martin G. Friedman



Published by Little Moose Press  
269 S. Beverly Drive, #1065  
Beverly Hills, CA 90212  
[www.littlemoosepress.com](http://www.littlemoosepress.com)

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication

Friedman, Martin G., 1948-

Straight talk for men about marriage / Martin G. Friedman.-- 1st ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-9720227-5-9 (alk. paper)

1. Husbands--United States--Life skills guides. 2. Marriage--United States.  
3. Man-woman relationships--United States. I. Title.

HQ756.F747 2005

306.872--dc22

2004021701

Printed and bound in the United States of America (Acid-free paper)

Cover and book design by Patricia Bacall

Author photo by Bob Hankins

Cover illustration by Veer Images

To the woman who walks with me,  
and to the one who lights the way.

---

## **Real Men Don't Read Books on Relationships They'll Read This One!**

Why? Because this one doesn't pull any punches. It doesn't tiptoe around the issues with nice-sounding psycho-talk; it addresses the issues head-on.

### **What do men want in marriage?**

- More sex
- Less criticism

At least those are near the top of the list.

But this isn't a macho, pound-your-chest kind of a book. It deals with the issues of marriage and relationships with intelligence, strength and sensitivity, yet it shows men how to be fully masculine in their marriages.

Marty Friedman gets to the heart of the matter: Guys want good marriages and relationships, just like women do. Really. It's just that their approach is different. And that's the genius of this book; it looks at marriage in ways men and women can relate to and DO something about.

One more thing: There's a section in here for women that gives you an insight into how men think. It's sort of like peeking through the keyhole into the boys' locker room. You might be surprised at what you see and hear. However, you will begin to understand what it all means and how you can use it to make things better between you and your guy.

So, why are we talking about guys as "them" instead of guys as "us" here? Because most men probably aren't browsing in the relationship section. (And those of you men who are, boy have you picked up the right book to help you understand and make your marriage better.) So, if you're a wife or sweetheart who would like an enhanced marriage or relationship, getting this book into your man's hands is up to you.

***Straight Talk for MEN About MARRIAGE*** stands on a bedrock of practical experience. It's written by a man whose 20-year marriage started to crumble and who had the guts and the will to look at it. What he learned has revolutionized his marriage and his life. It can do the same for yours.

# CONTENTS

---

## **CHAPTER ONE: THE CHALLENGE OF MARRIAGE**

*You, Me and Marriage* .....1  
*Men Suffer in Marriage—But Don't Want to Talk About It* ...7  
*Men Are Cut Out to Take Action...* .....12

## **CHAPTER TWO: CREATE A VISION FOR YOUR MARRIAGE AND LEAD THE WAY**

*Reach for a Powerful Marriage* .....19  
*Make a New Commitment to Your Marriage* .....20  
*Your Marriage Vision: A Powerful and Alive Marriage* ....22  
*Create an “H” Marriage—Not an “A” or an “I” Marriage* ..24  
*The Ultimate Purpose of Marriage...* .....29  
*Marriage and Emotional Security* .....32  
*Use Your Marriage to Learn About Yourself* .....33  
*A Three-Part Vision* .....37  
*The Search for Love in Marriage* .....41  
*You Won't Get the Love You Are Looking  
for From Your Wife* .....42  
*Base Marriage Commitment on Integrity, Not Duty* .....44  
*Commit to Grow Together, Not Just to Stay Together* ....46  
*Commitment Evolves Over Time, and It Can't Be Forced* ..48  
*Put Your Wife First and Your Children Second* .....50  
*Commit to Fidelity and Sexual Exclusivity in Marriage* ....54  
*If You Leave Your Wife, the Next Woman...* .....58  
*Stand for Honesty in Your Marriage* .....61  
*Stand Fully in Your Masculine Power (It's OK to Be a Man!)* 66  
*What Does It Mean to Be “Masculine” in a Marriage?* ....70

# CONTENTS

---

## **CHAPTER THREE: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN ISSUES**

<i>Where Are You Going?</i> . . . . .	73
<i>To Have a Meaningful Life and Marriage</i> . . . . .	75
<i>Deal With Your Wife's Criticism: Take Responsibility for Your Own Growth</i> . . . . .	79
<i>The Things You Loved Her for at the Beginning Drive You Crazy</i> . . . . .	84
<i>You Chose Your Wife Because</i> . . . . .	87
<i>We Marry to Heal Our Childhood Injuries and to Learn</i> . . .	89
<i>Your Wife Won't Satisfy All Your Desires</i> . . . . .	93
<i>Choose to Learn From Your Reactions Rather Than to Run Away From Them</i> . . . . .	98
<i>Practice the Art of Self-Discovery</i> . . . . .	100
<i>Learn to Be Vulnerable: It's Attractive to Your Wife and Vital for You</i> . . . . .	107
<i>Become Comfortable With Intimacy</i> . . . . .	113

## **CHAPTER FOUR: TUNE IN TO YOUR WIFE**

<i>Find Out What She Likes and Needs</i> . . . . .	117
<i>Treating Your Wife as an Equal</i> . . . . .	121
<i>Friendship Will Help Keep You Together</i> . . . . .	124
<i>Your Job Is to Promote Your Wife's Well-Being</i> . . . . .	125
<i>If You Want It to Work, Learn to Listen</i> . . . . .	128
<i>Speak Your Own Truth</i> . . . . .	135
<i>How to Say What You Mean—And Not Cause Trouble</i> . . .	137
<i>Your Defensiveness Decreases Your Power and Increases Her Criticism</i> . . . . .	142
<i>If Your Wife Is Aggressive Toward You</i> . . . . .	145

## CONTENTS

---

<i>Criticisms Are Often Requests in Disguise</i> . . . . .	147
<i>Have the Guts to Stay and Fight— But Fight With Integrity</i> . . . . .	149
<i>Watch for the “Key Moment” and Turn the Conflict Around</i> . . . . .	155
<i>Pull Your Own Weight</i> . . . . .	157
<i>Men Have Sex to Connect— Women Want to Connect Before Having Sex</i> . . . . .	159

### **CHAPTER FIVE: FOR WOMEN: SECRETS OF THE MARRIED MAN’S MIND**

<i>Men in Marriage</i> . . . . .	161
<i>Changes in Marriage</i> . . . . .	165
<i>Valuing Men</i> . . . . .	166
<i>Criticism and Change</i> . . . . .	168
<i>Taking Care of a Man</i> . . . . .	170
<i>Communicating With a Man</i> . . . . .	171
<i>How to Talk to Your Man About Your Relationship</i> . . . . .	172
<i>Communication and Intimacy</i> . . . . .	173
<i>Appreciation and Power</i> . . . . .	176
<i>Relationships and Fantasies</i> . . . . .	178
<i>Managing the Relationship</i> . . . . .	181
<i>Men, Marriage and Sex</i> . . . . .	185



## CHAPTER ONE

# The Challenge of Marriage

### YOU, ME AND MARRIAGE

Let's talk, married man to married man.

As we begin, I'd like to tell you a little bit about me and how I came to advise men on marriage.

The first thing you should understand about me is that every word in this book comes from my own experience as a married man. I'm not going to advise you on anything I haven't lived through myself. In my opinion, a man becomes an "expert" on marriage only by personally overcoming its challenges. Anybody who tries to teach others how to be married without having done it himself is a fraud. So, I offer you this book as the fruit of my own struggles in marriage. And you may be surprised when I tell you that my struggles continue. My marriage has always been tempestuous, and I expect the same in the future. So, please don't put me on a pedestal as the "successfully" married guy who's always blissfully happy with his marriage.

Let me tell you more about how I came to know what I know. A few years ago, I never dreamed I would write a book about marriage. During my twenty-two-year marriage my wife and I have raised three children, weathered our share of challenges and managed to keep our family together. But I certainly did not consider myself an "expert" on the subject of marriage.

I have worked as a management consultant for more than twenty-five years, teaching communication skills and management-employee

## Straight Talk for MEN About MARRIAGE

---

relations to clients worldwide. I've also been practicing Siddha Yoga Meditation for nearly thirty years. Although these experiences have helped me to develop good communication skills and to work well with people, I am neither a trained therapist nor counselor—nor do I want to be! I'm a man who has gone through a lot to become a happier (married) person.

### MY WAKE-UP CALL

In recent years, my wife became very excited about her new Ph.D. program in Transpersonal Psychology. She had many new friends and much excitement in her life. My life, on the other hand, had settled into a routine—I'd go to work, come home, have dinner, hang out a little and go to bed early. The next day, I would get up and start it all over again. The routine didn't seem bad; it was simply the way things were and I had grudgingly accepted it. Much later, it occurred to me that I was following my father's example for how to be a husband and father: sacrifice, give your all to your family—and suffer; silently, if possible.

Everything suddenly changed one evening when my wife and I were on a short vacation in Napa Valley in California's wine country. In the midst of a contentious, upsetting conversation it became obvious we had grown so far apart that we were in imminent danger of splitting up. In fact, it was clear that, emotionally, she had already left me.

What happened in the next couple of days changed my life. Through two days and nights of talking, crying, listening and silent periods of reflection and prayer, I saw things clearly for the first time. I saw, in an incredibly plain and lucid way, what marriage could be. I saw the potential for mutual growth and support; how marriage could be "holy" in its own way if both partners could love and respect the other fully, yet with each remaining completely responsible for one's own growth. To this day, I don't know where

## The Challenge of Marriage

---

that “vision” came from, but it was as clear as anything I’ve seen. I saw a way to create a new marriage for us, and perceived how honesty, commitment and vulnerability could be part of our foundation.

I also realized that my life had become stale and that I had stopped caring. I was sleepwalking through life. I had stopped growing and had ceased to be an interesting partner to my wife. It was painful, but I woke up to how little passion and love I had in my life, despite realizing how much my wife meant to me. For the first time, I committed to do the necessary work to change for the better.

I had spent years, off and on, going to personal counseling sessions with a wonderful counselor. I always considered myself an active and willing participant in those sessions, but I guess I wasn’t ready to face some of the “big” issues I needed to face. This time I was determined to return to individual counseling with a new commitment, and I found the experience completely different. I was enthusiastic about the process and passionately committed to uncovering whatever was blocking me from my own “truth”—that is, my own enjoyment and love for life.

I began the inner work to make my marriage the prime focus and to pursue my vision for my wife and me as equal partners in our marriage. I discovered that I wanted more from all aspects of my life, and that I was settling for a lot less and being a “martyr” in the process—just as my father had done. I soon negotiated my way out of a high-paying, high-pressure job that had dulled my senses and into a severance that allowed me some time off.


During my time off, I continued to do my “inner work.” I experimented with a new approach to life. I learned to loosen up and enjoy dancing, which I’d never been able to do. I learned to cook a little, to enjoy gardening and to just cherish being alone. I also continued counseling and working to strengthen our marriage. My wife went through a number of life changes too, and she looked at a number of painful things about her own life. Gradually it dawned on me that

## Straight Talk for MEN About MARRIAGE

---

I was becoming happier, and that I finally had a passion for a new career that was my true “calling”—to share my new understanding of marriage with others. I did a great deal of research on the history of marriage and I read a good bit of the conventional wisdom, too.

I started a business, *Men in Marriage*. I began to help men through seminars about marriage and relationships, and to consult with individual clients. I also began to talk to women about how men function in relationships. Again, everything I relate here to others is something I’ve personally experienced or learned and applied. I am not trusting in a theory or in other people’s ideas.



What about my marriage today? We still have conflicts and periods of highs and lows—that’s married life. But it continues to be a rich vein of insights that fuels growth in my life. My wife and I have drawn closer and developed a much deeper commitment. I feel more love and excitement in my life today than ever before and we are much, much closer.

When I tell you that I understand the troubles men have in their marriages, I hope you will believe me that I can relate to your marriage, that I’m in the trenches with you. This is an unusual book; it is written for men, but not merely from a “therapeutic” viewpoint. I hope you will value what I tell you, because I know it works. I’m giving you sound advice, right from the heart.

I’m going to take a wild guess here that you are like most married men. You want your marriage to be easy, to be set, and not have to worry about it. You want your wife to be fun and to accept you for what you are. You want good sex and you want your home to be a place of refuge. And you don’t want to be forced into putting a whole lot of energy into “fixing” yourself or your marriage. You may think you are the only one with a difficult marriage, that other guys surely must have it easier. Very few of them do. The only reason you don’t know this is that men don’t talk about these things to each other. Around other men, we like to act as though everything’s fine. Like most men, there may be a large gap

## The Challenge of Marriage

---

between where your marriage is and where you wish it would be.

You've undoubtedly already put a lot of your energy, time and heart into your marriage. You may be frustrated or even in despair about the course of your marriage. However, whatever its condition, your marriage has potential; marriage is *the* element of your life that can lift you to experience love, change you for the better and provide comfort and support. Some part of you knew that when you got into it. But did you know how hard it would be?

Marriage is challenging. You question whether it's possible to have passion, companionship, good sex and comfort with just one woman for the rest of your life. And you wonder whether you can withstand your wife's emotional ups and downs—she makes you crazy sometimes! Maybe you even question whether you are cut out for monogamy, much less for the married lifestyle. There are plenty of beautiful and available women out there, and the worse your marriage seems the more you look at them.

Children don't turn out to be the answer to a difficult marriage, either. Studies show the hardest time to be married is when you have school-age children. On the other hand, as Franklin P. Jones said, "The most difficult year of marriage is the one you're in." With all the chaos, stimulation and temptations of modern life, divorce may begin to seem like a good option. But there are alternatives. This book is designed to give you power—the power to have a better marriage and a better life with your wife.

We men feel powerless around the subject of "relationships." In fact, we don't even want to talk about relationships. We can be focused and passionate about work, politics, gadgets, sports, sex (not necessarily in that order) or many other things, but not about "the relationship." By contrast, women love to dissect relationships, contemplate them, reflect on them, despair about them and generally obsess about them. But for men, the most dreaded thing a wife can say is, "Sit down; I want to talk about our relationship!"

## Straight Talk for MEN About MARRIAGE

Wife: “We need to talk about our relationship...”

Husband: “Do we have to do it now?”

Wife: “Yes.”

Husband: “OK, but there’s a game starting soon that I want to see.”

Wife: “Fine. So, what do you think about our relationship?”

Husband: “What?”

Wife: “What do you think is going on with our relationship? We see each other every day; you must have some opinion about it. How are we doing?”

Husband: (Clueless about what to say; what if he says the wrong thing?!) “It’s going OK, I guess...”



Wife: “Are you kidding? Don’t you see the trouble we’re in? Don’t you see that our relationship right now is sick?”

Husband: “Sick? What are you talking about? You’re making way too big a deal out of this. What do you want out of me? Do you just sit around and look for ways to criticize me?”

(At this point, the wife begins to enumerate the various ways the relationship is “sick” and why the husband’s behavior is the root of many, if not all, of their relationship problems. The husband sits there in a daze, knowing he will be unable to watch the game until he takes his punishment.)

Women do seem to have better built-in relationship skills—they speak and understand the language while we can’t even find the dictionary! But that’s OK. You will learn in this book how to have a relationship that works for you—without having to compete with your wife on her home turf of relationship discussions. You’ll learn some new ideas and beliefs about marriage and men and women that should make a big difference in your life and marriage. Now, let’s continue to dive into the topic of marriage—past, present and future.

**MEN SUFFER IN MARRIAGE—  
BUT DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT**

*“Marriage can be compared to a cage: The birds outside are frantic to get in and those inside frantic to get out.”*

—Montaigne, 1588

Ah, marriage...heaven and hell and everything in between. I have done an informal survey of the men in my seminars and audiences, as well as among men I met elsewhere. When I ask men for their top two complaints about their wife or long-term lover, I'm amazed at the degree of agreement in their responses. Way over ninety percent say roughly the same thing: “Not enough sex, and too much criticism.” A great many men are frustrated by the lack or quality of sex and shamed by the constant criticism by their wives. We will deal at some length later with each of these. But the strange thing is that most men are suffering in their marriages to a large degree, yet won't, or can't, do anything about it or even talk about their suffering. For some reason, men will soldier on in pain and not change anything about their marriages unless their wives tell them to.

As I look around at married men I know, they generally fall into two camps. One group is composed of men who actively dislike their marriages. These men are either completely alienated from their wives or they burn with resentment. Men in the other group are generally OK with their marriages, yet they are suffering and flailing a bit because they want more out of it but can't figure out how to manage this. I want to tell you how you can have a marriage that works for you, regardless of where you fit. But, first we will have to take apart the way you view marriage and your commitment to it.

Everyone who's dissatisfied thinks his marriage is the only one that's troubled. Nobody else's wife, he thinks, could be so emotional... so changeable... so demanding... so hard to satisfy. Everyone else must have a good marriage, because yours has holes


## Straight Talk for MEN About MARRIAGE

---

in it! But is there such a thing as a “good” marriage? Every marriage has a range of experiences built into it, good and bad. Marriage is like life itself—joyful, scary, maddening and challenging. It includes inevitable suffering, like all human existence, yet contains the potential for the greatest love and satisfaction. Marriage is masculine and feminine energy combined to create a unified whole. Every time you think it’s set, your marriage changes. It’s as slippery as mercury; how can you ever hold on?

The book you are reading is written to change and empower your values and beliefs about marriage. The way you experience marriage is largely determined by the beliefs and values you hold about it. In

countries where arranged marriages still flourish, men and women have very different views than people in the West.



People in those countries don’t expect to find romantic love and personal fulfillment from marriage—to them, marriage is a matter of companionship, survival, division of labor and child rearing. For Westerners raised on images of romance and “happily ever after,” marriage is generally believed to hold the key to happiness. If it doesn’t pay off that way, trouble ensues. And the situation is more difficult for men today than ever before. Through hundreds of thousands of years of evolution, we have evolved with the physiology and mindset to act as warriors, to be men of action and accomplishment. But in 21st-century marriages we often feel powerless, befuddled and frustrated. How did we get to this difficult place? There are many answers, but let’s start with a look back.

### WHERE HAVE WE BEEN AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Marriage is difficult today in a way that it never was before. For thousands of years men and women got married to produce children, create financial security and have companionship throughout life. A man took care of his wife and children by providing financial

## The Challenge of Marriage

---

and/or physical security. A wife took care of her husband and children and was in charge of the house. In this stable arrangement, husbands and wives alike usually found their expectations met. If not, the couple usually stayed together anyway. Marriage roles were so clear-cut and widely accepted for thousands of years that they required no discussion—even though they placed both men and women into often painful, constricting boxes.

Part of the reason marriages used to be so stable was that women lacked the economic power and confidence to live comfortably on their own. Forty years ago, divorce laws made the dissolution of marriage more difficult than it is today. And our social institutions and popular media proclaimed the pleasure and supremacy of a stable, long-lasting family unit. (Think “Leave It to Beaver” and “Father Knows Best.”) Men stayed in marriages because they were *supposed* to. Women stayed in marriages because they *had* to. Divorces were relatively rare.

We men have had it really good until very recently. In nearly every recorded culture throughout history, men have enjoyed extensive marital power through tradition, religious doctrines, money and law. For at least four or five thousand years, men could easily fulfill the role of a husband, yet still attend to matters “outside the house”—do our work, hang out with other men and, at times, even have sex with other women. For most of recorded history, men never expected to have romantic love through their marriages, and many men were known to get their sexual satisfaction and intimacy through visits to a prostitute or courtesan. As long as we provided for our families, the law and the institutions of society were on our side.

The old equation for marriage was simple: *The husband provides security, and the wife takes care of the husband, children and household.*

Until very recently, marriage primarily enabled procreation, survival, security and family. Husbands and fathers were often remote, lofty, powerful figures scarcely involved in the emotional life of their

## Straight Talk for MEN About MARRIAGE

marriages and families. Although it sometimes happened during the course of the marriage, men were not expected to enter into an intimate, interpersonal relationship with their wives. The husband, as well as being the provider, was expected to be an upstanding and relatively virtuous member of society. But in practically every culture in the Western world, for many centuries—and continuing still in many parts of the world—one's wife was considered by society and law to be little more than property. Though suffocating in many respects, such an arrangement provided a stable marriage and family environment, and met the simple needs of most husbands and wives.

Toward the end of the 19th century, the way people looked at marriage began to change. The primary reason was that people began to believe that romantic love was the *necessary prerequisite* for marriage. Books, popular songs and, later, movies sent out the message that romantic love is wonderful and that every married person deserves to have romance with his or her marriage partner. Men were told to pick a woman for love and, significantly, took an oath to be responsible for maintaining love and passion throughout marriage.

Along with the rise of romantic love, man's supremacy was weakened. Women began to gain increased legal rights in property and divorce settlements, and, of course, they began to enter the workplace in unprecedented numbers during the first part of the 20th century, especially during World War II. Gradually, men's secure place in the home was threatened and the clear, traditional role of "husband" became obscured in the murky waters of social change.

By the 1950s and 1960s, recently married men may not have realized as much but they were standing on shaky ground. They were still trying to hold on to a 19th-century conception of marriage in a new, postwar framework. Large numbers of men were locked into a soulless job; yet at home were still expected to be strong, confident and manly while providing everything for their families without complaining.

## The Challenge of Marriage

---

When I meet men from the World War II generation, men in their 70s and above, I am struck by how differently they think about their marriages. The men of the Depression and World War II knew what to expect from their marriages: companionship, loyalty, sex and stability—but not necessarily much else. When I listen to many of them talk about their fifty- or sixty-year marriages, they don't talk much about "fulfillment" or "intimacy" or "support." They talk mostly about companionship and friendship, and about a simple division of labor in the home.

In the World War II generation, a man expected to stay married and provide for his family, regardless of the situation, and he expected his wife to take care of the home and of them. And like countless generations before, the marriage lasted and the man "wore the pants" in the house, at least ostensibly. The World War II generation was surely the last purely patriarchal one in the United States.

In many ways, compared to current standards, marriage up to 1964 may have been quite unfulfilling to both husband and wife; but the role of each in marriage seemed clear. Yet an earthquake was beginning to rumble beneath the shaky, ancient edifice called marriage. The changes that began in Western society in the 1960s, such as feminism, sexual freedom and political instability, combined with the decreased power of governmental, religious and educational institutions to weaken marriage and make divorce a more acceptable and common option.

When the upheaval of the '60s and '70s threw marriage roles into question, men felt pressured to change. The problem then, as well as now, is that men lacked a clear picture of how to create a long-term relationship or marriage in this new world. How can the old marriage model thrive amid modern circumstances such as an "empowered" wife, relaxed divorce laws, women with careers and often diametrically different sexual expectations.

## Straight Talk for MEN About MARRIAGE

Men desperately need a new understanding of the husband's role, and they need some new skills to create a workable, thriving marriage. In an effort to please women, many men have tried to become "New Age" and more "feminized" and have fallen into a quagmire of weakness. Others have held on to the antiquated view of the strong, silent, macho husband, watching their marriages crumble as their wives demanded more even though they couldn't, or wouldn't, change.

I have written this book convinced that marriage is important to men, and that any man can learn what it takes to make marriage more fulfilling. Men are put together differently; we usually have to learn relationship skills that most women naturally possess. Women may criticize us as "competitive," "closed-off," "inexpressive" and "unfeeling." You've probably heard some of these criticisms leveled at men. One thing I don't do in this book is "male bashing." There is too much of that in our culture already. (Just watch television commercials and sitcoms to learn about how dumb and useless men are supposed to be.) Contrary to what you hear, males bring valuable things to a marriage. Most importantly, the power to take action. Strangely, men under-utilize this power in their marriages.

Let's look a little deeper at how you can apply your natural power of action to your marriage.

### **MEN ARE CUT OUT TO TAKE ACTION (BUT MOST MEN JUST REACT TO THEIR WIVES AND THEIR MARRIAGES)**

It's amazing that so many married men are unhappy with their marriages and feel stuck and resentful yet do very little to change things. We men usually don't act at all on our marriages until our wives make it impossible to avoid the issues any longer. After they rattle our cages, we may act—grudgingly. Our wives drag us to

## The Challenge of Marriage

---

counseling. We trudge into “relationship workshops,” or we try to sit still for books, tapes, videos or endless “relationship talks,” all the while wishing we were somewhere else. Worse still, when we do listen, we are told that we are the problem! No wonder we avoid looking at our relationships or marriages.

Men are naturally inclined to act, to build tangible and intangible structures and to solve problems—but when it comes to our marriages, we’d rather ignore what’s going on around us and turn on the television. Time after time I talk to women who come to my seminars and speeches and tell me that their husbands are ignoring them and their children. One woman told me that her husband plays four or five hours of golf each day, ignoring his wife and children; another said her husband retreats to his office and stares at a computer screen all night, every night. You and I know that many times when we find something to do it’s to build our businesses or careers. But many other times it’s because our wives are so critical and unappreciative of what we do that we’d just as soon not be home. But what price are we paying? At my seminars for men I often see the “walking wounded”—men who are walking though life without emotion or interest. They have become estranged from their wives and from their own energy and interest in life. When I ask them how their marriages are, invariably they tell me that their wives have just about given up on them, and that they have given up on their own marriages. Were they aware of their marriage problems? No! Not until their wives began to shake the bars of their cages through threats to leave them.


Let’s make this personal: your inaction, or focus on other things at the exclusion of your marriage, is only driving your wife farther away and making you unhappy. What recourse do you have? Take the natural power of action inherent in men and pour it into your marriage to build it up and make it better. Overcome your fear of change and of dealing with your own feelings. Your fear is in the way of your potential for aliveness and power. Start now. Resolve to deal with



## Straight Talk for MEN About MARRIAGE

your internal issues and get your power back—all in the context of your marriage.

Besides the simple power of action, men have much more generally unacknowledged natural talent that can be useful in a relationship. Men can define a problem and solve it with laser focus. We have the power to dream and put our dreams into concrete action, and to make powerful commitments and stick to them. We are able to keep our distance from the daily swirl of feelings, because our biology allows us to focus intensely on our “prey”—whatever it may be. Men have the power to stand for something great and to fight for it with resolve and unswerving power. Add to these quali-



ties the primitive male instinct to protect and care for our wives and families—whatever the cost to ourselves. If you want your marriage to work for you, you’ll need to put all of these male strengths to work in your marriage and add some new ones that you may think of as “feminine”—but aren’t. The results will be overwhelmingly positive.

Any man who isn’t confused and intimidated when he tries to determine the proper role for a husband at the beginning of the 21st century just isn’t paying attention. Acknowledge any of your fears and feelings of powerlessness or alienation in your marriage and you’ll find you are not alone. What you feel is real, and it’s understandable. Giving up isn’t the answer. The answer is to take an active role in the marriage and to get your power back.

There are ways to make it work. But you will have to put your energy and skills into some things that may be new to you. It’s worth it—you don’t want to be one of those sad, forlorn men we all know: miserable, bruised guys who have stubbornly clung to their macho, closed-off ways only to lose their wives and families through painful divorces.

The men who will feel powerful in their marriages in the 21st century will be those who give up the old equation of marriage and

discover the power inside themselves, rather than in their traditional role as a husband and father. You can start this process by looking honestly, relentlessly and compassionately at yourself and your marriage. The power you need to make your marriage succeed already resides within.

### A WORD ABOUT WOMEN AND POWER

Over the same years that women obtained more legal, political and social rights, romantic love blossomed in the popular imagination. These two parallel trends didn't occur by accident. It seems very likely that the rise of women's rights caused the ascension of romantic love. Once women possessed more power and significance in their own right, they became more interesting to themselves—and to men. From the point of view of sexual and romantic tension, women's power was, and is, a good thing. On the other hand, women may also become more threatening as they seem to need us less and are less available for mothering and nurturing.

Women are learning how to use their new power in the workplace, at home and in society at large. As this process continues, they will be testing the bounds of what it means to be female and more unwilling to play old, traditional female roles. If the purpose of marriage is to learn to love, then you will benefit most if you see your wife as a powerful equal—just like you and worthy of your love.

Powerful women can upset the traditional balance of marriage. When women enter the workplace, they often access their male power to get things done, and they may have a difficult time turning it off when they get home. They may come home tired, wired up and cranky—just like the man after a day at the office. The wife may be unable or unwilling to take up her old nurturing role, and this can be threatening and upsetting to her husband. As a society, we are a long way off from solving these issues. Some women are returning to their homemaker roles. Others are electing to raise their children



## Straight Talk for MEN About MARRIAGE

first before making a career. However it plays out with your own wife, you will find one reliable solution: find your own power and you will feel less threatened by hers.

You will feel diminished by your wife's power only if you are not feeling powerful or not having some of your needs met. If your wife's attention to her own career or other interests is affecting you negatively, tell her, without blaming or criticizing, how you feel and what you need. Get together and figure out a way to budget time and focus to feed your marriage. But be careful not to force your wife to take care of you at her own expense. This attitude will only weaken you and cause her to move farther away.



Support your wife's ability to become her genuine powerful self. Don't hold her back. Authentic personal power is compatible with love and family life, so long as it is accompanied by genuine communication and cooperation and respect.

As a loving mate, it's your job to help your wife become a more powerful person. If this seems difficult, remember: it's said that power is the ultimate aphrodisiac!

It is possible to have a fulfilling marriage, and it's worth the effort. However, you may need to change the way you have been looking at marriage and its place in your life. Actually, you may well need to alter your understanding about commitment, sex, conflicts, love and the purpose of marriage itself. Helping you make that change is what this guidebook is all about. Here is the bottom line: If you are willing to do the work on yourself, you can tremendously influence the course of your marriage. If you aren't, you may as well prepare yourself to face a difficult or failed marriage.

Your marriage is a huge part of your life, and it can offer much happiness and growth. If your marriage is generally OK, the principles in this book will help you make it better. If you are suffering in your marriage, this book will help you gain a measure of confidence and build a road map to get your marriage on track. These ideas are

## The Challenge of Marriage

---

offered to inspire and guide you to create a marriage that brings you love—a feeling of aliveness and power.

I do not have all the answers. I know that the right answers for you will ultimately come from you. I offer this book as a guide to those men who sincerely want to reach for a life of aliveness, power and love. I hope it provides you with some guideposts on your journey and I truly wish you well in your exploration. Now let's get specific about what to do so you can begin to create the kind of marriage you want. Read on to learn the three important steps you must take.



**Martin Friedman** has transferred a successful 25-year career of speaking and consulting in the corporate world into a rewarding career consulting and speaking to men and women on revitalizing their marriages. His career transformation took place when his wife pointed out that their marriage was, for all intents and purposes, over. How he responded to the 2x4 between the eyes created the basis for his new life and career. Prospering in his marriage of over 20 years, Marty is one happy guy. He lives in Northern California.