

# SOLUTIONS

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## Are you Sabotaging your own Happiness?



One of the quickest ways to bring down your mood is to compare yourself unfavorably to someone else. Mark Twain went as far as to pen the statement, "Comparison is the death of joy." The tendency to rate ourselves against our peers is human nature, however, it's a habit worth breaking for several reasons. Let me start with a few of the most significant:

### **No good outcome, ever!**

Comparing can only go one of two ways. One, you become envious or feel inadequate, which devalues self. Or two, if it's downward comparison to someone less fortunate, we devalue them on some level. Neither makes us happy and both can lead to resentment.

### **What you are comparing yourself to is inaccurate or incomplete information.**

Whether you are comparing physical features by way of a magazine, or family vacations on social media, you are seeing an edited moment. To compare your unedited self/life is not only unrealistic, but emotionally unhealthy. Steve Furtick said it this way, "The reason we struggle with insecurity is because we compare our behind-the-scenes with everyone else's highlight reel."

### **It doesn't get you anywhere.**

Thinking about how someone else might parent better than you, be better looking, or have more money, only depletes your energy. Focusing on others distracts you from your potential and zaps your motivation for self-growth. Redirecting your thoughts to your own values and asking yourself questions like, "How do you want to be remembered?" is a much more effective tool in keeping yourself on track to the kind of life you want.

If comparing is how you evaluate your worth, you will always be losing. It's impossible to be the best in every category, so someone will always be better than you. Plus, comparison puts focus on the wrong person! Instead of trying to be as good as or better than others, redirect your energy on being the very best version of yourself.

So the next time you catch yourself using another person as a measuring stick for your success, remind yourself how sabotaging this habit can be. Instead, chose to take control and put your energy back into yourself and your own unique life path.



# UNDERSTANDING DIVORCE

Most people who get married envision it being “forever.” How long is “forever?” 30 years? 7 years? I recently came across a statistic that says the average length of marriage is 15 - 18 years. Divorce takes its toll on everyone involved (the children, the in-laws, friends), and wreaks havoc on emotional, physical and financial wellbeing. Then why is it so common? Here is a list of some of the most cited issues:

**Marrying for the wrong reasons:** (for money, because you had a child together, because you believed this person would never cheat on you) I’m not saying that you should simply marry for love, but to go into a marriage with an agenda keeps you from seeing the problem parts or diverts your attention from other areas that should be evaluated.

**Being absorbed in the parenting role:** Basically getting so focused on the children that we forget to focus on our partner as someone who deserves to have affection and attention. We play with the children but not with each other.

**Poor conflict resolution skills:** Being able to resolve conflicts does not mean that couples have to agree on everything- it’s how you listen and acknowledge each other. I’ve seen many couples over the years and one of the things I see all too often is complaining and criticizing met by defensiveness and “keeping score.”

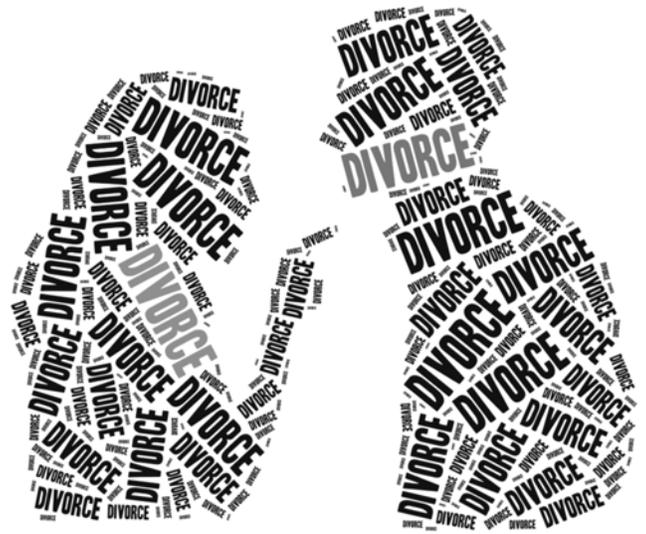
**Money woes:** This doesn’t necessarily mean a lack of money, it is the difference in the expectations on how the money is managed, spent, and saved.

**Lack of intimacy:** Intimacy involves so many forms of romantic and playful exchanges- holding hands, hugs, flirtatious texts, and (of course) sex. No matter the phase of life- raising small children, or later in life-medical complications or lack of interest due to hormone changes, intimacy should not be ignored. Intimacy is the key ingredient that separates a marriage from other relationships. If intimacy isn’t there, the result is, “we live like roommates.”

**Expecting your partner to fix it:** We all enter into relationships with some amount of baggage — whether it be from childhood issues or problems in our previous relationships. But if you are looking for your partner to fix it, you may think you have found “the key” in the beginning of the relationship only to be met with disappointments down the road. The truth is, to have a healthy partnership you have to go into the relationship with your own sense of responsibility and security.

**Values don’t match:** Our values are harder to change than our behavior. If you think about the 3 things that are most important to you about life, for example, family, financial responsibility, and good work ethic, and your partner is really different from you in these areas (meaning they are spontaneous about money and like to sleep all day), then you likely will feel disconnected and uninterested. Not to mention, your partner will too.

Obviously there are many other reasons why relationships don’t last — these are just a few of the most common. The thing about this list is that most of these things can be changed! I don’t mean your partner can change; I mean both of you. You can learn new skills, change your expectations, and learn to meet your partner’s needs even if you don’t understand them or need the same things. It’s not easy, but it can be done. And usually it takes getting help from an outside source — reading relationship books, meeting with your pastor and/or seeking therapy together. At Solutions Counseling & EAP, we can help!



*For caring and confidential help for personal and family problems, call Solutions Counseling & EAP.*

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