

"REAL" & "PRACTICAL"

# What Your Mama Didn't Tell You About Marriage!

HOW TO GET RESOLUTION IN ARGUMENTS  
AND FINALLY HAVE PEACE & PARTNERSHIP  
IN YOUR MARRIAGE

BY IMANI AIESHAH

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AND FINALLY HAVE PEACE AND PARTNERSHIP  
IN YOUR MARRIAGE

KBX Enterprises, Atlanta, GA

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*What Your Mama Didn't Tell You About Marriage*

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this book to you, yes you, and the shifts you desire in your marriage. When everything is stripped away, that is why I do this.

I also dedicate this to my husband, Ostus, who continuously lifted me up and kicked my behind in gear to support me getting to where I am today. I also want to send love to my 3-year-old daughter, Sovereign, who inspires me every day. Thank you for affectionately acknowledging when mommy was working and giving me the time to write.

Last but not least, I want to dedicate this book to my Business Coach, Auguste Crenshaw, who “saw” me before I fully saw myself.

## FOREWORD

When I first started working with Imani, my husband and I had been separated for over a year and I was ready to try and fix our marriage...

At least I thought I was ready.

Over the 10+ years that we had been together, my husband and I developed a lot of practices that weren't helping us build a strong relationship, and our poor communication skills were at the top of the list. Once I started my sessions with Imani, I quickly realized that the main reason I was struggling to communicate with my husband was because I had no idea what *I really wanted*, so I couldn't effectively tell him what *I needed*.

At the time I didn't realize it, but the reason I wanted to try to rebuild my marriage was not because I truly believed that what my husband and I had was so special that I couldn't live without it. It was actually because of some underlying fears that I didn't even realize were hiding below the surface. After just a few sessions with Imani, I was being challenged to think about myself, and my life, in a totally different way. I was forced to answer some hard questions that I had been avoiding for a long time, and I kept having breakthrough after breakthrough – in areas that I didn't even think I needed help with!

Not only did Imani help me identify exactly what I wanted from my relationship with my husband, but she also helped me uncover some pretty major mindset issues that were impacting my relationship with my husband, my relationships with my kids, and even the growth of my business!

I can't lie and act like I always enjoyed doing the work Imani had me do, because I didn't. It wasn't easy, and it definitely wasn't pretty (I can't tell you how many times I rolled my eyes or burst out in tears during one of our coaching sessions), but it was personalized for my specific situation (not some cookie-cutter ap-

proach) and it was absolutely necessary!

Since working with Imani, my communication skills have improved, and for the first time in my life I am clear about what I want, I know how to communicate my needs and desires, and I finally believe that I deserve to be happy. I am no longer waiting for someone else's permission to get what I know I deserve; I'm taking control of my life and making sure that I'm intentional about pursuing happiness each and every day!

When I hired Imani, I thought I was getting a coach to help me fix my marriage, but what I ended up getting was someone who would walk alongside me during one of the roughest times of my life. Through her unique coaching style and relentless pursuit of truth, peace, and RESULTS, Imani provided the support and guidance that I needed to finally be able to walk in my truth. I know that I will NEVER be able to repay her for this, but I hope she knows that I am eternally grateful for her love, her support, her patience, and her transformational coaching!

Domari Dickinson, Positive & Purposeful Parenting

*“Marriage is an opportunity to be at a  
heightened state of awareness &  
consciousness of self, spouse, and thus, the  
marriage.”*

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## THE INSIDE SCOOP

*My job is a demanding one. I wish when I came home I could kick back and relax, but I can't! Things still need to get done. Apparently, the laundry is one of them, but you'd think he'd do that. At least sort it. I've got a new project at work that means I'm brining work home, but he sometimes acts like he's the only one with a job.*

*After Tanya got old enough, I went back to work, and it's been an adjustment ever since. That was three years ago! The kids are in school now, but it's like he still thinks I'm home with the baby and can do everything.*

*But working has been an adjustment for me too over the years. I go to work, same as him, and then I come home to more work. And sometimes, it's just too much. That's why there are dishes still in the sink. That's why the laundry isn't done yet. That's why we ordered out three times this week.*

*He complains about how much I work. But he doesn't get it. If he did, he'd ask how he can help or what he can do to make it easier for me.*

*OK, so we haven't been intimate in a few days, but like I said, I'm working on a big project right now and could really use some support from him. Can he be the initiator for once?! Like,*

*can you take care of the dishes, make (or order) dinner, do homework with the kids when you get in just to give me a couple hours of uninterrupted time? Is that too much to ask?!*

*Well, it seems like it is to him because he keeps telling me how hard he works. He keeps telling me about the stress on his job and about how he's working to make sure the family is good, that we're provided for. So what am I doing? Learning to dance at the circus?! Hell no! I'm doing the same thing, and the fact that his paycheck is bigger than mine means that his "providing" trumps mine? "No," he says, but that's not how he acts. He acts like his ease and comfort is a priority and mine is an afterthought. He should get a pass on things, but I shouldn't.*

*I'm building on a new career since going back to work, and it's taking time and dedication. I work hard in all the ways. Now, he's tired when he gets home from work. I get that. But he says it like I'm not tired, like I have no reason to be tired too.*

*Well at work, you've got work. But I feel like I have work, house, and kids all rolled up into one. I'm online responding to emails while calling to make doctor's appointments. I'm boiling pasta while setting up spreadsheets. I'm folding laundry while doing homework help with the children. Does he not see that?!*

*To be honest, I'm just tired. I'm tired of feeling like I'm doing it on my own while he gets time to relax. I'm tired of spending so much time apart from my family, but there are only so many hours in a day. I want to feel like a married woman with a partner not a roommate.*

*I just want him to see how hard I work, to appreciate it, to acknowledge it. I want to feel closer to him. I want to laugh and have fun with him again, but that feels like such a distant memory*

*right now. It's always about what we have to do and what needs to get done, with the exception of the standard "how was your day?" question. But that's not enough for me, and I know it's not enough for him. I want him to ask me about my day. I want him to take an interest. He spends a lot of time in the bedroom doing whatever it is he does up there, or in the living room with me while doing his own thing. I mean, he's there ... but he isn't. He doesn't ask me to join him anymore. I asked him why one day. He said he didn't know why but that he'd start asking again. But he didn't.*

*Truth is, I feel like a crappy wife sometimes, and then I get ticked off that I feel that way because it's not like he's winning any husband of the year awards. It's not all on me! And still, I just want us to get it together. It would make everything so much easier because right now it feels so freakin' hard. Can we just get on the same page and work together? But what if he's not ready for what that takes? What if I'm not?*

This is the story of Martin and Gina! They are an inspired, yet fictional, combination of some of the issues I've coached through with the wives and couples who've worked with me. And you and I are going to be eavesdropping on their lives as they tell their story and work to implement the strategies in this book.

*"I had the pleasure of working with Imani with my marriage, and it was an amazing experience. Our relationship had amazing breakthroughs, and she helped us get to a place where we can communicate more effectively. In the past when we would try to communicate, it was always who was going to win the conversation. But after we did coaching with Imani, we were able to hold a conversation without having to win something or even get loud with each other. Our mindset and the way we deal with our relationship shifted between the two of us. We felt more connected and found a deeper love and understanding for each other."*

-Angel Erica, Intuitive Coach & Shaman

See, I don't personally know many people who grew up learning what it really takes to have a healthy marriage. Sometimes, this was because they didn't have both parents in the home. Sometimes, they did grow up with both parents, but the relationship they witnessed felt more like a lesson in what *not* to do. In either case, and in most other scenarios in between, we are not *taught* how to communicate in marriage, how to deal with conflict, or how to navigate change and changing personalities over time. Sure, we observe the relationships around us as we grow up, but most everything is left to our interpretation and imagination.

I mean, we've heard the clichés: "Don't go to bed angry," "Communication is key," "It's about compromise," "Don't let your emotions get the better of you," and a host of others. But what the heck do these *mean* to you? How do you actually apply them to your marriage when you've asked him to do something for the fifteenth time and you're ticked off because you feel he's either not listening or doesn't care? The phrase "communication is key" just doesn't seem to cut it at this point.

The truth is our mamas, grandmas, aunts, etc. teach us so many things, but what we actually need to make our marriages feel amazing, secure, and intimate seems to fall through the cracks. We're left to figure it all out with general sayings as our only guides. And if we're being truly honest, it's very likely our parents did the same thing because no one told them what it really looks like either. Now don't get me wrong, there are always things to figure out on this marriage journey; my husband and I are constantly learning each other and pivot-

ing through transitions. You'll learn a lot on the fly and figure it out as you go. However, there are also practical, foundational things that bring you closer in that journey instead of, as one woman put it, bringing you to the point of needing "an alibi and character witnesses."

So, in this book, I'm taking you beyond the typical clichés to actually show you real-life approaches that will help you obtain the balance and success you seek in your marriage. You ready?

OK, so first, let's break it down. This book is separated into two major sections:

### **7 Foundational Things and 2 Real Deal Issues (and How to Deal).**

In the **7 Foundational Things** section, you'll get the real deal on what you need to know to completely transform how you and your spouse communicate (or don't communicate). These are practical, down-to-earth techniques you can put to use right now (with none of the clichés). We get down to what healthy communication really looks like and exactly how you can change the dynamic in your marriage.

In **Chapter One**, we delve into what to do when you don't feel heard by your spouse and you both communicate so differently.

In **Chapter Two**, we tackle how to avoid one of the biggest missteps married couples make that leads them to arguments instead of conversation.

In **Chapter Three**, we lay out how to eliminate the “blame game” from the marriage when you feel like it’s always your fault, and he feels like it’s always his.

In **Chapter Four**, you’ll learn how to take the reins on what you want without waiting on him.

In **Chapter Five**, you’ll discover how to leverage the “let go” to get that peace in your household you’re craving. Because you and I both know that not arguing doesn’t necessarily mean peace.

In **Chapter Six**, you’ll find out the 6 key ingredients to getting more “help” around the house when your husband is resistant.

In **Chapter Seven**, we’ll keep you from taking two steps forward and five steps back with all the progress you’ve made. We’ll delve into how to avoid the rut of going back to the same ol’ same ol’ once you’ve gotten a taste of what’s possible.

In the **2 Real Deal Issues (And How to Deal)** section, we’ll tackle two of the biggest issues plaguing marriages: Time (Chapter 8) and Money (Chapter 9). We’ll get to the nitty-gritty of what the issues are and how to use the foundational techniques to turn things around. You didn’t get married to do it alone, and this is how you foster true partnership in your marriage.

You and I are going to “meet” in this book, and we’re going to have a real deal, marriage-changing conversation. I’m that marriage coach who breaks it down with you so you can go beyond those clichés you hear

over and over again but never change anything in your marriage.

You ready?

Now, before you shout “YAASSS,” I need to be straight with you first. This book isn’t for everybody, so I want you to know who it IS for ...

*Disclaimer:* This book is for the woman who is ready to see what SHE can be empowered to do to change things in her marriage. I know you’re tired of always feeling like you’re the one doing everything and trying everything while (maybe) your husband sits on the sidelines, seemingly unbothered by the fact that you’re working and running a lot of the household.

But I’m going to get really real with you here, so stay with me, OK?

If what you have been doing has brought you here to this book, and you’re ready and open to doing things differently, then this is no time for resistance. This is time for some raw, uncut honesty because that’s where transformation in your marriage lives. This book is written for YOU and will get to the real deal on what you can do to incite change. That does NOT mean your husband shouldn’t do these things too. It does NOT mean that you’re, yet again, the only one who should do something.

But, real talk, the responsibility of change lies with the one who *currently* has the openness to know there needs to be change and *moves* on it. And that’s why you’re

here. When you do it differently, a shift is inevitable, and this is the ultimate guide to doing it differently. You can play “chicken” with your husband because you don’t want to be the one to get the ball rolling, or you can get the ball rolling. And if you picked up this book, I’m going to say you’re a ball roller!

So, turn the page and let’s roll!

# **7 Foundational Things**



## YOU DON'T HAVE TO AVOID THE CONFLICT

*I was tired, OK! I just had a long day at work and, to be honest, I completely lost track of time when I finally got home. Martin's not home yet, but he'll be home any minute, and I haven't even started dinner. I can't even text him to ask him to pick something up; I mean, he's probably literally around the corner right now.*

*Dang, what was that? My stomach? Shoot, I'm hungry too. I can't even remember the last thing I ate today. Breakfast? Ugh, but the last thing I'm trying to do as my eyeballs recover from staring at that computer all day is cook something. Oh man, and here comes Martin with that hard exhale he does almost every night when he walks through that door.*

*The girls run past me screaming "daddy," and that's the first smile that comes across his face. But then it's shoes off and a plop down on the couch. "What's for dinner, babe?"*

*I almost don't want to answer because I already know what's coming.*

*"Well ..."* He knows from my tone there's nothing to eat.

*"Oh, come on! You gotta be kidding me!"*

*“I lost track of time. And I get it. I’m hungry too!”*

*“But when you lose track of time no one up in here eats? You say you’re hungry, but where’s the food?”*

*“Look, we can just make some sandwiches.”*

*“I don’t want a sandwich. I had that for lunch. I want something hot, Gina.”*

*“So, what you want me to do? I’ll order something from FoodDart real quick.”*

*“And pay that marked up delivery fee? We don’t have money for that. And this is the second night you want everybody to have sandwiches for dinner! You keep doing this!”*

*He gets up to leave.*

*“Where you going? What do you mean I keep doing this?”*

*No response.*

*“So, you just gonna leave? I had a crazy day at work. You’re not the only one who works around here. But you wouldn’t know that because you’re worried about sandwiches!”*

*“I’m done.”*

*I’m in front of the door now, ticked all the way off. “No, we’re not done; we’re gonna handle this right now. You’re not about to just leave like nothing.”*

*And what does he say? “OK.”*

*He takes his shoes off again and I think, “Oh snap, we’re really about to talk about this.”*

*Then he goes upstairs to the bedroom and shuts the door.*

*So, what do I do?*

*I follow him.*

---

See, Gina wanted things to be talked out right then and there. And Martin shut the communication down by leaving. Martin walking away with nothing to say just ticked her off, and while she knew that following him wasn't really going to help, she couldn't help herself.

Gina was tired of not being heard, and Martin was about to listen to what she had to say – one way or another. But talking to a brick wall that sprouted legs and walked away wasn't getting her what she really wanted: him to listen to her. And that's what you want too, right?

However, the only way that is going to happen is if you get real honest with yourself about how you communicate and how your spouse communicates too. Now, you may already feel like you know how it goes: he communicates by shutting down, walking away, acting like you're not even talking (uhmm, you're not invisible), but that's only part of it. It's time to take a hard look at your communication styles, so we can delve into how to take your engagement to the next level.

So, they tell you "communication is key," but they stop short of what that actually looks like in your household, with your lifestyle, and with you and your spouse's unique personalities.

When you need to have one of those “hard” conversations, the first thing that needs to happen is you have to know how you both talk that talk. So, let’s chat about communication styles.

*“Talking with Coach Imani about my relationship always helps me to get clarity on things that I haven't forced myself to consider. She outlines the tough questions and encourages you to face those answers that you normally wouldn't say out loud because you are too afraid of the reality. Her advice helps me to move towards the things that I want out of my relationship and creating workable strategies to help me bring my inner voice out in expressing those wants. I truly appreciate her boldness and honesty during our chats.”*

- Nicky W.

I’ve affectionately named the two basic communication styles: The Processor (P) and the Orator (O). Now, Processors don’t say much when things begin to get heated. When they do speak, they get straight to the point, but they need time to process what was said. They want to wrap their heads around things and cool off before they can even be open to listening.

On the other hand, Orators often say whatever is on their mind. It can sometimes seem as if they’re rambling, and they tend to give a lot of detail before they get to their points. Often, they are figuring out what they want to say and how to say it as they’re talking. They also have a strong desire to talk things out right then and there.

Now, most folks have a bit of both styles, but one usually presents itself more, especially when emotions are on ten!

As far as communication goes, there's no issue with either of these styles, but there are a couple of issues that come up if you don't know how to handle your spouse's style.

**ISSUE 1: It's not effective to expect him to communicate in the exact same way you do.**

So, let's figure out your styles, shall we? It's the first foundational layer for every "hard" conversation you have to approach, or for when a seemingly regular conversation goes left and gets heated.

So here are six super simple questions for you to answer so you can be clear about your *usual* communication style when conversing with your husband. Highlight or underline the ones that mostly describe you.

- 1) Is it your tendency to initiate conversation about the hard topics in your relationship (O trait)? Or do you usually wait for your partner to say something first (P trait)?
- 2) When in conversation with your spouse, do you start speaking right away (O trait)? Or wait to see what your partner has to say first (P trait)?
- 3) If your conversation begins to get heated, is it usually your desire to stay and talk about it more right then and there (O trait)? Or do you usually want to walk away to

gather yourself and your thoughts (P trait)?

4) When you are speaking, do you sometimes lose what point you want to make or miss the mark on saying what you really want to say (O trait)? Or do you get straight to the point of what you want to say (P trait)?

5) In conversation with your spouse, do you feel you are saying everything that pops into your head at the moment (O trait)? Or do you have a desire to think about what you want to say before you say it (P trait)?

6) In conversation with your spouse, do you usually find you have so much to say you can't seem to get it all out (O trait)? Or do you find you have little to say in the moment (P trait)?

Your Style \_\_\_\_\_

\*Your Spouse's Style \_\_\_\_\_

\*If your spouse doesn't go through these Qs with you, base his style on your observation.

**ISSUE 2: Whether you communicate differently or similarly, you will end up arguing if you don't learn to navigate each other's styles without going toe to toe.**

So, what does that look like?

If one of you is a Processor and the other an Orator, the clash comes in because the Processor may seem

like they don't care or are not listening because they don't have much to say at the moment. While the Orator may just be talking so much that their spouse doesn't understand their point and may feel they're being talked *at* instead of talked *to*.

And if you're both Processors or both Orators, there can still be a clash. Two Processors often avoid conversations because neither really takes the initiative to speak. Both of you may just go your separate ways and not bring it up again because you've already taken your big ol' brooms and swept it under the rug never to be seen or heard from again. (Unless someone takes the time to look underneath and clean it out for real!)

And if you're both Orators, then you may find that you're both just talking at each other and going in circles because each of you has something to say and refuses to "back down."

Okay, so how do you keep things cool, calm, and collected, regardless of your communication styles?

Handle the conversation without dismissing how you and he communicate.

Here's the breakdown:

If your husband is a Processor and you're an Orator, you want to be clear and get to your point so he knows right off the bat what you want him to know. It's important to give him space to calm down and think but

also equally important to request that you both come back to talk it through at a specific time (in 20 minutes, in an hour, next morning at 10, etc.).

If he's the Orator and you're the Processor, then you want to be more open to details and questions from him so he can gain understanding. And you want to request your space but give him a time when you feel you can come back to the conversation calmly.

If you're both Processors, give each other space to think, but you both still need to commit to coming together at a specified time to talk.

If you're both Orators, give each other space to calm down and gather clarity on what each of you want to say, then still come back together at a specified time to talk it out with cool heads.

Seeing a common theme here?

Space & Time!

So, what does this look like for Gina?

Martin's frustration hit below the belt. It wasn't even about dinner anymore, so an offended Gina wanted to hash it out right then and there (Orator). However, what do you think is going to happen if Gina follows him upstairs to continue an *already* heated conversation?

You just said it in your head, didn't you? Yes, you know. You've probably been there or at least adjacent to

there yourself. It's going to be the same argument on a loop, and no one is going to feel satisfied once the talking stops.

If Martin tends to walk away or shut down (Processor), the best thing Gina can do to get what she wants is give Martin that space.

For example, she might still order the food, eat hers (because "hangry" is real!), and then put his on the stove or in the fridge. She can take that time apart to cool off too. Then, she could just send a text: "Hey, I put your food on the stove. I know you need your space. I get it. But let's talk tomorrow morning at breakfast when we're both calmer. You down?"

Boom! She respected him by giving him space, but then requested a specific time frame for them to come back to the conversation for her.

So, like Gina, take the reins and do what's in your power to do, what will be the most effective and respectful in the moment based on how you both communicate. Then, the ball is in his court.

Now, maybe Martin comes down to talk again that night right after getting the text. Maybe he responds "OK," but when tomorrow comes he doesn't say anything to initiate. Maybe he doesn't respond to the text but still initiates conversation in the morning. It can go a lot of ways, but the point is to get into the habit of navi-

gating your talks based on HOW you actually communicate, and the shift will come with consistency.

My clients are often surprised how much of a game-changer space is. One woman, let's call her Pam, soon found that her and her husband weren't really arguing much and could actually get to resolution in just a few minutes of conversation instead of hours of conflict (and still no resolution).

However, there are two things to keep in mind.

1) It's important not to be so attached to the expectation that your husband will respond favorably right then and there. When changes like these just start to happen, spouses can get skeptical. They are so used to how it was, they sometimes can't see how it currently is.

He may think you're approaching this differently as a "ploy" to "get what you want" or that it's a fluke because he caught you on a "good day." But you know the deal! You're sincerely changing things up. So, keep handling your communication styles in the way that makes sense because it takes consistency for new shifts to become actual habits.

2) We've established that no one is really open or listening when they're ticked all the way off, let's say at an 8, 9, or 10 on the scale. So, it's important to use the space to come down off 10 in a way that works for YOU!

This isn't the time to spout out the clichés about breathing or taking a walk. That may work for some folks, and maybe a few others if they're not too mad, but you've got to think of what's going to work for you when you're so worked up you're ready to burst at the seams. Boxing? A *hard* run? Unleashing everything you want to say, cussing and all, on a drive to nowhere in particular? Don't worry about being "proper" in your approach. Find what allows you to authentically release so when you do come back to talk, you're down off 10 and in a position to speak calmly (not that fake quiet "calm" but really calm) and listen openly instead of unleashing on your spouse.\*

But despite "getting" all of this, our girl Gina is still feeling a bit skeptical. She sent Martin a text, but as soon as she did, the wheels started turning: *What am I going to say when he comes back to talk? What if he still doesn't listen after he's had time to process? Then what?*

That's when you ask yourself this game-changing question we're going to delve into in the very next chapter.

\*Avoid unleashing on a friend or family member! While they love you, their listening ear will be clouded by their own experiences, and conversations about the difficult parts of your marriage will begin to shape their opinion of YOUR marriage.

### **Chapter RECAP:**

- Discover both you & your spouse's communication styles.

- Based on how you tend to communicate, write out ways you can respect your partner's style when you approach the conversation and ways he can respect yours (see, now you'll be ready with more than some generic answers when he asks, "Well, what do you want me to do?" \*wink\*).

## ARGUING FOR WHAT? RESOLUTION.

*I wasn't so sure about texting him because I knew, I KNEW, he wasn't going to answer. He goes off and ignores everything. He doesn't want to hear a word I have to say; but fine, I sent it. And as I began to close the blinds and pick up the socks and toys that somehow always find their way onto the floor, my text goes off. Are you serious? He answered? And he did. I mean, it says "K," which is the smallest amount of thought or effort you can put into a text ever, but okay ... I guess we're going to talk it out tomorrow. Seriously, though ... how the heck is that supposed to go any better than tonight?*

### *Next Morning ...*

*Thank goodness the kids aren't up yet. Martin slept in a bit since it's Saturday, so I guess we're in a good spot to talk. But why am I thinking I don't even want to do this anymore? I know I was the one who said we'd work it out today, but I just don't feel like arguing or tiptoeing around how I feel about what he said yesterday. And if he walks out on me again, I'm going to lose it and the kids will wake up. I'm sitting here thinking how I can ease into this conversation without setting him off and going through the same thing that happened yesterday. OK, I'll just start calmly telling him how I feel and asking that he just listen for once ... OK,*

*maybe scrap the “for once.” I’m tired already, and he’s coming downstairs now. Okay, girl, you got this. Just avoid an argument and you’ll be good.*

---

OK, so Gina got what she wanted, right? Martin said let’s talk about it. But she doesn’t *really* want to talk about it; she wants to be heard and know that things are going to change. See, that’s the real desire. She wants to start the conversation with how she feels, and she wants him to listen. I get it. That’s completely understandable, right? You’re in a conversation, so you want to be heard when you have something to say. However, she’s missing a key piece to this plan, a piece a lot of spouses miss that makes a huge difference.

I did a 5-day challenge with some phenomenal wives not too long before I began writing this book, and after one of the ladies got this concept, she had the smoothest and most eye-opening conversation she had had in almost a decade with her husband of 14 years. She was in tears (happy tears) because she said her husband finally *saw* her. He listened and asked how they could change things. He even apologized, and she shared that when she had this moment she was like, “Is this MY husband?!” It sure was. See, even shifting things that seem small when it comes to your approach makes a huge difference in how you relate to one another.

So OK, OK, I know you’re asking, “What is this missing piece, already?”

It's something I call the "truth totality." Now, I'm going to appeal to your work self a minute on this one as I break it down, so stay with me. At work, you've got to be "in the know" to get things done. And if you don't know something, you figure it out, right? You look at it from many angles, and you get to what makes the most sense. Now imagine you have to meet with a peer you don't really know to complete a project, how would you handle it? Would you just come to the meeting out the gate saying, "This is what *you* need to do" and "This is what *I'm* going to do" and "This is how we're going to get it done. Let's go?"

Did you just cringe a bit? I feel like you did. But why? What do you think would happen in that scenario? Do you feel like there would be any connection established there so you two could work to finish that project together?

And I know you said it. The answer is no. Your peer would most likely feel railroaded and dismissed. She would have every right to come with a rebuttal on the grounds that you weren't listening to her. You don't know her thoughts, opinions, or suggestions, so the project will feel like a "you" project instead of a "we" project. And what if the tables were turned? What if she approached *you* that way?

See, you already know what it takes to make the project successful. You've got to hear each other out, come to a consensus, and get that thing done so you can rock it! That means you've got to show up with the in-

tention of hearing your peer's ideas as much as you want them to hear yours. That is being "in the know."

Now, I'm sure this is already how you'd handle things *at work*. You'd both share your ideas and come up with a plan of execution. However, in your marriage, if you don't know where your spouse is coming from, do you really feel like you have an "in" there? Because, the message you don't want to give off is ... "This is how I feel, and I hear what you're saying, BUT it doesn't really matter." And when that "but" is thrown around so quickly, the opportunity for understanding is lost. The goal is to be able to say, "*I know where you're coming from. I don't have to guess, I know. It's not in my imagination, it's not an assumption, and it's not just in my head.*" But you can only say this definitively when you've had a real conversation with the goal of understanding – on all fronts – without it being one-sided. So, while you want your husband to know where you're coming from, the other important part of that equation is understanding where he's coming from too.

Do you know how often in session with clients I hear, "I never knew that," "She never told me that," and "He's never put it like that before?" They could have been married for decades and still the lines get so crossed in their communication.

So, if you want to be heard, and you want things to change, come to the conversation with the goal of understanding. Period. Focusing solely on the goal of being heard and getting him to listen is a push-and-pull game that doesn't get you what you want, and it puts a lot of

pressure on both of you. If you come simply to gain understanding so there CAN be change in how you do things, then you're on the right track.

Let's eavesdrop on Martin and Gina again on this.

*"So, I know we said we'd talk about last night today. Look, I don't want to fight or make this a thing, but I just want you to understand where I'm coming from. I just feel like you downplay a lot of what I do and then expect more. Like my only job is to take care of the house and cleaning and dinner. You don't see that I work too. It's like what you do deserves respect, but what I do doesn't?"*

*"I never said that what you do doesn't deserve respect."*

*"I'm not saying that. I'm just saying that that's how it feels because you said that stuff yesterday about dinner like I just do nothing all day and have all this time."*

*"Ok, so what do you want me to do?"*

*"I just want some understanding. I'm busy too, and sometimes that's going to mean sandwiches for dinner."*

*"Fine."*

*"Just fine?"*

*"Yeah, because you just don't get it."*

*"Oh, I get it. You don't seem to get it. And I'm trying to help you understand. I feel like I have two jobs, and it's exhausting. Sometimes I just want to take time for myself too, like you do after work, but there's too much to be done to do that. There's toys to be picked up, homework help, laundry loads, and yes ... dinner! But I feel like you just get to work, come home, and kick back. And*

*what's worse, that seems to be just fine with you, like you wouldn't change that if you could.*

*"OK. But I'm just supposed to eat sandwiches everyday because ..."*

*"Oh, come on. Everyday? Really? And I don't care about the stupid sandwiches. This isn't about the sandwiches!"*

*"Of course you'd say that. Fine, Gina. You're right. You got it. I hear you."*

*"And ... ?"*

*"And I'm done. We talked, and I don't have anything else to say, so."*

*"Wow, OK."*

*Martin gets up to leave and says, "I'm going upstairs to see if the kids are up."*

*Saturday is the day he gets to spend the most time with the kids.*

---

OK, so let's look at this a little closer. Did Martin hear more about where Gina was coming from? Yes. Great! But what about Gina? Is she truly in the know about Martin? There were at least two opportunities for her to gain some understanding, but they were glossed over because her main focus was on getting heard, and she was pulling teeth to get it. However, if the goal was truly understanding, Gina would have picked up on those openings.

See, the truth totality means that you're both looking for the *whole* truth and not just *your* truth. If you've got things you should be appreciated for, so does he. If you have things you need to work on, so does he. If you are having a hard time with something, so is he (because it all affects your marriage).

But the reality is that when you feel hurt, you *feel* that hurt. You want to express it, to have him understand it – and that becomes the goal. Now, make no mistake, you *should* express it, but if you want actual resolution, you actually have to ask yourself, “What *else* is true?”

For instance, I worked with a wife in a group setting. She, her husband, and their kids had just moved to an unfamiliar place where they didn't know anyone, and they were still trying to adjust to the change. Neither was adjusting well, but she was super stressed out and didn't feel like she had a partner. And when she really started to dive in and ask herself what else is true, it dawned on her that if she was having a hard time adapting to this new place, so was he. And that tweak right there opened things up for her.

The truth totality means that you've got to be organically curious about your spouse. You want to be in the know without any assumption.

I like to call it “dancing in their truth.” Imagine you and him standing face-to-face on a beach with a line drawn between you in the sand. You're on your side in your truth, and he's on his side in his. If you both just stay on your sides, shouting your truths at each other, no one gets heard and nothing changes.

And what many people do when they feel they're *trying* to see the whole picture is just come right up to the line in the sand. They'll say, "I do want to understand what you're going through." Their spouse will then say something like, "See, I get that, but do you understand where I'm coming from?" See, that's not you dancing in his truth nor him dancing in yours. That's coming up to the line and then jumping right back onto your side. The goal is to cross over the line into his truth and really *get it*. Because that's really what you want from him too, right? Not to be dismissed or pacified, but truly heard.

So, when you realize what you're going through, ask yourself what else is true for him too.

Let's' take a look at how it could have gone differently for Gina and Martin if the goal was understanding ...

*"So, I know we said we'd talk about last night today. Look, I don't want to fight or make this a thing, but I just want you to understand where I'm coming from. I just feel like you downplay a lot of what I do and then expect more. Like my only job is to take care of the house and cleaning and dinner. You don't see that I work too. It's like what you do deserves respect, but what I do doesn't?"*

*"I never said that what you do doesn't deserve respect."*

*"I'm not saying that. I'm just saying that that's how it feels because you said that stuff yesterday about dinner like I just do nothing all day and have all this time."*

*"OK, so what you want me to do?"*

*“I just want some understanding. I’m busy too, and sometimes that’s going to be sandwiches for dinner.”*

*“Fine.”*

*“Just fine?”*

***“Yeah, because you just don’t get it.”*** (“In” opportunity #1)

She could have said: *“OK, but I want to, so help me out.”*  
If he doesn’t know where to start, try something more specific: *“Is it about the stress at your job since the new supervisor started?”*

*“Oh, I get it. You don’t seem to get it. And I’m trying to help you understand. I feel like I have two jobs, and it’s exhausting. Sometimes I just want to take time for myself too, like you do after work, but there’s too much to be done to do that. There’s toys to be picked up, homework help, laundry loads, and yes ... dinner! But I feel like you just get to work, come home, and kick back. And what’s worse, that seems to be just fine with you, like you wouldn’t change that if you could.”*

***“OK. But I’m just supposed to just eat sandwiches everyday because ...”*** (Opportunity #2)

She could have said: *“OK, we both know it’s not about the sandwiches. But I know I used to do more cooking and now that’s changed, so what’s really bothering you about the fact that I’m not cooking like I used to?”*

Armed with what's *really* going on with both of you is the only way to get to the change you seek AND the understanding you want from him. And when you seize the opportunities to get the "in," you get to the reality of what's going on with both of you.

When you also acknowledge "his truth," it gets him to talk about what's going on with him. And when you get to the point where you both are talking honestly, you're ready for resolution.

So, I want you to do a quick exercise.

**1) What is the most pressing thing you're frustrated about with your spouse right now? Yep, right now as you read this.**

- Dump out all the ways you feel your spouse has been a source of this frustration (present)
- Dump out the ways he's done things to alleviate that frustration (past\* or present)

(\*Why the past on this one and not the first? Because it speaks to *capability* to alleviate the frustration, even if it's not currently happening.)

2) Your turn. Because you've got to ask, what else is true on your part too.

- Dump out all the ways you've been a source of your frustration (present)
- Dump out all the ways you've done things to alleviate that frustration (past or present)

*OK, I get all that, but Martin needs to own up to all his stuff before we start dancing in this truth? Because I'll just be dancing in his truth, and he'll come up with something I did to jack things up and we're back at square one. And then what?*

I've got you. Let's talk about, "And then what?" in the next chapter!

### **Chapter RECAP**

- Be genuinely curious about your spouse and his point of view.
- Genuine curiosity gives you the "in" to get to resolution together instead of arguing on a loop.
- "Dance in their truth" and take opportunities to dig into what's going on with your spouse by asking yourself, "What else is true?"



## ELIMINATE THE “BLAME GAME”

*We’re sitting here having this conversation, and I can distinctly remember that time at his parents’ house last Thanksgiving. Their cable was out that year, and he was determined to watch the game, but I mentioned he should wait until after dinner at least. It’s Thanksgiving; it’s family time. And to my surprise, he agreed (still not happy about it, though).*

*But later that night, after dinner, he saw me on my phone, and cut me some smart remark – in earshot of his family too. Something like, “Oh so you just gonna be on your phone. That’s cool for you, but I can’t do what I want to do?” Really? They weren’t even the same thing! I was answering one email from work—just one. He wanted to watch a football game! Apples. Oranges.*

*But he didn’t see it that way. Now, to this day, one of his go-to’s is I’m “always on my phone,” as if I’m some social media-obsessed millennial taking selfies and showing people what I ate for breakfast all day. My response is, “I’m working,” which should be the end of it, right? But he comes back with, “You’re always working,” which, for some reason, cuts like a knife. And then we’re going back and forth about our work obsessions and terrible vices, and we still get nowhere.*

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Now, you and I both know Gina and Martin are not alone on the blame train.

Often, couples get into who did what and when, which gets them into a space of desperately trying to get each other to finally just admit what they did. They end up going back and forth between defending themselves and pointing out what the other person did. This is a surefire way to get nowhere fast, usually with a lot of yelling and feelings of inadequacy. They never feel like anything got accomplished. They might have talked for hours and came out on the other side with little to no resolution.

So, in this chapter we are delving into how you can actually get resolution by separating fact from fiction without going into what I call “trial mode.”

One of the biggest reasons so many folks avoid the hard conversations is because they don’t want to deal with any conflict, the conflict they’ve usually already played out in their head. And in their head it didn’t go well.

However, one of the reasons for the conflict is that the hard conversations can sound like you’re accusing each other of something, and you end up feeling like you’re on trial, presenting “evidence” to make your case. Once you get into “trial mode,” no one is really open to hearing anything the other has to say at all.

So, what do you do to avoid “trial mode”?

We're going to delve into two distinct aspects of this, and both of them are about shutting down trial mode. No more blame or defense.

The first part is **personal responsibility**, and that shuts down the blame.

I get it. You don't want to feel the issues you're having in your marriage are all your fault, so when your husband says something, anything, that makes it seem like it is, it feels like he's just blaming you. "If you had done X, things would be better." And then you start thinking, "Well what about you? You did A and B, and look what happened?" There's that blame loop. See, *blame* is about putting something on someone else, dropping the load on him or her. However, *responsibility* is about you recognizing what's *true* about your part and committing to making a shift. The former is placed *on you* while the latter comes *from you*.

Blame and responsibility are NOT the same, and understanding that distinction will help you truly flow through this chapter.

Now, you've already started to think about this in the previous chapter when you began to look at your part as both *a* (not *the*) source and as an alleviator of your marriage's biggest issue.

The key to shutting things down is to articulate your responsibility before he even has the opportunity to say anything about it. If you know that you struggle with shutting down work at a certain time because there's so much to get done in what feels like such a short time,

then say that. Tell him that you haven't figured out how to navigate your time to make time for other priorities that are really important to you, such as time with him, the kids, or both.

See, if you know it's true (Remember that "what else is true" question? It works here too!), then there's no need to dispute it or defend against it. That just drags out the conversation until it becomes an argument, a headache, and then a slammed door.

But taking responsibility just doesn't *feel* good.

Why? Because it means vulnerability, feeling exposed. I know. But in marriage, we've got to stand naked in front of the mirror (metaphorically) and let each other see what's real with the lights on. You want vulnerability, openness, and honesty from your spouse, then BE those things. And don't do it because you're trying to make your spouse "be" those things, but because you know it's what makes a marriage feel close and intimate. He will see the shift happening, and one way or another, he will shift too. It's like physics.\* If you make that kind of change, that kind of ripple, it will cause other changes, other ripples. Your spouse can't respond to your words/actions the same way because your words/actions are NOT the same!

(\*I'm not a physicist, so I'm paraphrasing here. If you're a real physicist reading this, please don't judge!)

*My coaching sessions with Imani changed the way I hold and see myself as a woman, mother and wife. Since my daughter was born, I had been coming from a place of hardship and victimhood due to a special needs diagnosis and a feeling of isolation. These feelings of anger, grief and guilt were slowly eroding not only my self-esteem but my relationship with my mate. After two conversations with Imani, I had completely faced a limiting belief of how I needed to show up for my daughter, which allowed me to finally start showing up for MY-SELF. It was such a game changer! ... After that, I started sleeping more, creating more boundaries and taking care of myself in a way that actually allowed me to live my life again ... If you want a coach who will really SHIFT you, and who is also an authentic, deep listener who will also be honest with you about what needs to change in order for you to be – first – an empowered individual while also a wife and mother, Imani is your woman!”*

*-Dee C.*

So, shut it down, beautiful! Comedians do it all the time. They take that embarrassing thing about themselves (big ears, pointed nose, snort laugh, etc.) and infuse it in their jokes. They make fun of themselves before anyone else can, as if to say, “I see my ears, folks, I know they’ve got some frequent flyer miles on them.” Then those ears are no longer the butt of silent jokes to the person next to you because the comedian already acknowledged them.

*Now, what if they call me out first?*

Then you acknowledge that truth and the responsibility of it. It still applies. And then what can they say? It won't be about blame anymore; it'll be about something else. And that's the point.

Now, let's get to this second part. And this one is about shutting down defense.

Shutting down the defense is all about **acknowledgement and appreciation**. Not in some fluffy way, but in a real way that connects.

If you find your husband going into defense mode when you say something, you're going to want to shut that down too, so you both feel secure enough to have an honest conversation about how behaviors are going to truly change. Understand that *blame* and *defense* show up when neither of you feels safe enough to be honest with each other. These two techniques create safety for you both to get down to what's real.

Now, some of his defenses may already be down once you've shut down blame with responsibility, because he sees it's not ALL on him either. (NOTE: He most likely feels the same way you do about it seeming like all the problems are his fault and even when you said, "I'm not saying that it's all on you, but ..." all he heard was the "but.>").

But that doesn't mean you may not still trigger his defenses in the conversation.

If you're sharing that you feel dismissed and unimportant because it feels like you're last on his priority

list when it comes to needing more help, and he gets defensive, take that opportunity for personal responsibility first, then ask why he feels defensive. Does he feel attacked?

Based on what he says ...

“I feel like nothing I do is good enough.”

“I feel like you don’t see me busting my ass out here working.”

“You don’t understand what I go through.”

Whatever it is, take that time to acknowledge what he said and then share something you appreciate about him related to that thing.

However, this does not mean simply saying, “I *do* appreciate you.” You need to delve into some specifics here. For example, “I do see you working hard. You’re working longer hours. I know your supervisor is a jerk. And then you still come home and play with the kids like you’re not dog tired.” Let him respond, and then bring it back to what you were saying in the natural progression of the conversation.

However, if you’ve been feeling a lack of connection for a while, it may not be easy to come up with ways you appreciate your spouse, so let’s flesh that out a bit.

1) Jot down three of your husband’s strengths.

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2) Then jot down why you appreciate each strength.

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And if you want more guidance on this, you've got the key to free access to the "How to Talk So Your Husband Listens" video training here: <http://bit.ly/TalkthatTalk>

See, breaking down the barriers of blame and defense is so important to how you communicate and run your household together. You'll most likely find that your talks are shorter, and ultimately way more pleasant, if you put out a few blame/defense fires in the beginning.

*OK, I can see this. But what if I do all of this and Martin still isn't budging on actually changing his behaviors?*

Are you psychic, Gina? That's exactly what we're getting to in the next chapter!

### **Chapter RECAP**

- Blame and responsibility are NOT the same.
- You can take responsibility without taking on blame by taking personal responsibility and sharing it with your spouse.

- You can shut down defense by acknowledging your spouse for what he does and sharing why you appreciate it.



## YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT ON WHAT YOU WANT

*OK, I admit the conversation went pretty well. I mean, there were some rocky moments, but when I started to listen to him, we had a real conversation and it was ... easier. My shoulders weren't up to my ears with all the tension we usually have when we try to talk to each other. We even laughed a few times!*

*He did start to get defensive when I talked about how hard I work, though. "Me too! But you get home before me, so what more can I do?" he said.*

*But instead of saying what I'd normally say ("Really?! You're not listening to me!"), I told him, honestly, I know that it probably seems like I'm just trying to pile more things on for him. Because I see him. I see his heavy eyelids. I hear his cracking knee. I know about the pain in his back from sitting all day. I told him that I was grateful that despite all that, he does it all without complaining and still turns on the fun for the kids when he gets home. I even suggested he go outside for lunch to stretch and get some fresh air and sun since his office has no windows.*

*And he stepped right off defense mode. And do you know this man said he saw everything I do too! I mean, he didn't give any specifics, but baby steps, I guess.*

*We didn't talk too long before the kids started coming downstairs demanding breakfast, but for the first time in a long time we left that talk with more understanding and willingness than we'd had in years.*

*But I need something now, so I know all this effort is about to get tested.*

*About twice a week, I have to bring a little work home. Martin and I both agreed that little built-in desk next to the pantry seemed like a feasible option for an "office" space when we moved here, but try concentrating on writing reports with pots constantly banging in the background. So, I often end up at the actual dining room table, but I hate it! It's like I'm battling for space to work in my own house. And on top of that, I feel bad because I don't always clean up my papers, and the family ends up eating dinner in the living room or rec room. We've gotten so used to it, even when the table is clear, we still end up in various parts of the house. I need a real freakin' office space!*

*"But it's only a couple days a week, right. You've got the whole house to work, Gina," Martin tells me.*

*Really! So, what if they stuck you in a storage closet at work. Would you really be able to concentrate on those advertising campaigns when you're sitting next to four brooms and a dirty mop? Nope!*

*I told him three months ago we needed to rearrange some things in here so I can get a legitimate space to work. But it's like money trumps logic in here.*

*“You’d have to buy a new desk, chair, and everything. That’s a lot for the few days you do a little reporting at home.”*

*Uhmmm ... let’s just make it happen because I’m telling you I need it. I can shop on consignment for a desk and chair. Geez! But around here, what I need is like this afterthought that surprises everyone ... yeah, the kids too. Like, you need something? You have needs? Yes!*

*But here I am at the dining room table again tonight.*

*DING!*

*And there goes the dryer.*

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Spouses often spend a lot time trying to get their partner to “see” and “understand” what they need, but forget to seize the opportunities to DO. In the midst of trying to get your spouse to understand what you need and act on it, you’re in a state of waiting. And when you need something, waiting on someone else is frustrating, yes, but it’s frustrating because nothing is getting done.

So, it’s time to explore that which you can control. Now, let’s not confuse this with *controlling things*. *Controlling things* is trying to manipulate and shift situations to your desire, even if it’s honestly out of your control. But this is about tapping into that which you CAN control.

You are more powerful than you know.

One woman I worked with wanted an office space so badly. She was constantly trying to block out the chatter of her twin girls, the pile of laundry in the corner, and the dishes in the sink, but she couldn't turn it off. See, he had an office space, and it didn't come with kids, laundry, and dishes. She coveted that space. She felt the resentment. And she waited for him to understand her need and do something about it.

And as you read this, you may be thinking, "I'm not about to wait on him. I'm doing what I've got to do." But if you really think about it, how long have you *not* moved because so much of your energy has been focused on him seeing you and your need and validating it?

Because having your husband do that – "see" you and validate your needs – feels good.

The hard truth is you can't control his understanding. You can create the space for it to happen, but that means lighting your own fire so you can get what you want done. The flame will show. He will see it. And he will respond, one way or another. It doesn't mean you don't work on "seeing" each other, but it does mean that in the meantime you take the reins.

So, let's get back to the woman with the office. We worked on her taking the reins, and it lit her up inside. The very next day, she had moved the bed in the guest room and began painting her new office. "I don't know why I didn't think of this before," she said. But it's

because she was waiting for him to take action to show he supported her. Because if he really supported her, he would have created an office space for her. Doing it for herself meant that he still didn't get it, that he still didn't see. However, she saw the need, acted on it, and felt so amazing afterwards. She wasn't waiting anymore. She was the catalyst for the change she needed.

Now, maybe for you it's not an office. Maybe it's the time and space to go to yoga class after work, so you can take care of you in the midst of the constant movement of your day.

Maybe it's more help around the house so you can kickback with him and enjoy each other and your family most nights.

Whatever it is you need, now's the time to start to think about how *you* can get yourself there.

And this is something I work through with my clients in every aspect, including the obstacles that get in their way (even the ones they didn't know were there).

So, I think you know what's coming next, right?

Jot it down! What's that primary thing you want and need to happen to feel more of a partnership in your marriage?

List out ways that YOU can get there.

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#### PERSPECTIVE SHIFT MOMENT ...

Now, I could have put this anywhere in this book. But now is the time. As you look at what you already do, you may feel like you shouldn't have to do more for you. You're already doing for you, and it's time for him to do more for you.

But that's because you haven't yet recognized and acknowledged for yourself the *true* value of all the "tasks" you do for home and household. When you do, the desire for him to acknowledge it becomes secondary.

Now, you make sure your "tasks" get checked off the to-do list, but it's so much more than that. It's not a checklist. It's transformation. You know the transformation and results you provide at work; it's what you get paid for. However, it's time to truly tap into your power, beautiful, which means describing what you do at *home* based on the transformation you provide too.

You don't just cook. You make sure you create nourishing meals for your family so they feel good in their body, have energy for their day, and don't get sick.

You provide that safety in body, mind, and spirit for them.

Take me, for instance. I homeschool my daughter. But I don't just go, "homeschooling, check." I don't "just" homeschool. I provide my daughter with the opportunity to understand that education is beyond the four walls of being *schooled*, so that she can take ownership and responsibility for her own intellectual prowess and grow up in a space where she's not limited by age or grade. I help her understand the world on a global level, and I create this transformation for her through homeschooling.

See, they're not just tasks. You create opportunities for transformation for yourself and your family. This perspective shift will help you hone your power and see the true benefits of what you do.

Let this marinate for a bit, but know that internalizing this concept is what will make the "take action" technique of this chapter all the more feasible and lasting for you. Because once you change your perspective on how you *see* something, then *doing* it becomes about so much more for you.

*OK, whether Martin "gets it" or not, I'm all riled up now to create my own office space. Shoot, I do want to try that 7pm kickboxing class too. Lord knows, I could unwind. But there's just one problem. If I start doing things like that, Martin's going to have to watch the kids more than he's used to, and he just doesn't do what needs to be done. I don't know if that's going to work.*

Or will it? Let's find out in the next chapter, shall we?

**Chapter RECAP**

- Get what you want/need by tapping into that which you can control without being *controlling*.
- Acknowledge the true benefits of what you do every day for your home and family.

## YOU'VE GOT LEVERAGE, LADY

*I came home and the diaper was so full it looked like Tanya had an extra little booty back there.*

*I'll admit I was reluctant to leave her alone with Martin at first because I had always done everything, so how was he going to know what to do?*

*But I needed to get out of the house, so I swallowed my separation anxiety and my doubt and left.*

*Then I come home 3 hours later to a full diaper and Martin looking none the wiser.*

*"Umm, did you change her?"*

*"I thought you changed her before you left."*

*"I did!! But that was THREE hours ago! Look at her diaper, Martin!"*

*"Ok, my bad. We were having fun, and I didn't think to change her again. Three hours didn't seem like a lot of time."*

*“OK, so, just as an FYI, you’ve got to check her and change her.”*

*The next time I had to leave, he changed her, but she hadn’t eaten.*

*“She didn’t say she was hungry,” he told me with a straight face.*

*“Really?! She’s 1 ½ years old. Did you eat?”*

*“Yeah.”*

*“Well, there you go.”*

*So, I had to go over changing her, feeding her, and just threw in making sure he gave her something to drink too.*

*He got the hang of it all, eventually. But he still doesn’t do things like I do. Kids. Laundry. Bed making. None of it.*

*He keeps the clothes in the dryer for hours and then everything is wrinkled. I fold them right away.*

*Honestly, I feel like I need to just do things because then they really get done.*

*But now I need to get things in order for my sanity.*

*I need that office space with a door away from the kids.*

*I need my space and my time to matter just as much as his.*

*But we've been doing pretty well lately, so what if doing that just starts some other mess?*

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In order for you to see the changes you want in your marriage, how you and your husband spend your time and contribute to the house will have to shift. Realizing this can often be an obstacle to you feeling comfortable making the moves you want to make for you. Why? Because the reality is you'll need to step back from things you're used to doing and how you're used to doing them, and that means letting go.

It's a clear enough concept, but it's harder to execute when you think about how you've always done it. We often expect things to be a certain way simply because that's how they've always been.

But if you need that space, time, respect, and sanity, you have to ask yourself if how you're currently doing it is really serving you right now?

There's got to be a shift, which means you've got to let go of some things.

You may have to let go of how you do the laundry if you're asking your husband to do it. Maybe you separate everything and use different temperature water. Maybe you fold the clothes right out of the dryer. He

doesn't do any of that. He knows how you do it, but he just does it his way.

Can you let go of how you do it if, in the end, the clothes are washed? That's "leveraging the let go!"

The truth is, when it comes to how you handle certain things and how your husband handles them, you most likely will not handle them in the same way. You've got your way, and he's got his. And, with the exception of key things you should see eye-to-eye on, there are things that can slide, no?

What things?

Well, that depends on you.

What is it that you want?

Gina, in our story, wants an office and time to go woooo-sah at a local kickboxing class.

It's your turn.

Write out what it is you want and don't hold back. Be specific.

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Now, let's take a look at obstacles. If what you just wrote down reflects your priorities, then what's getting in the way of you meeting those priorities?

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Now, what can YOU let go of to tackle those obstacles and go after what you need?

Here are a few questions to get your mind mojo going on this one:

1. Who or what can I say "no" to in the next week or month that doesn't line up with my priorities?
2. What do I need to let go of in my mind? What am I telling myself about my time that is keeping me from making what I want a priority?
3. What am I telling myself about how my husband does things that is keeping me from what I want?
4. What household responsibilities can wait or be delegated to older children?
5. What activities am I in that can be spread out or that I can step away from?

6. What activities are the kids in that can be spread out over the year?

You can use these as a starting point to recognizing what you can let go of.

*Therapy was more like, “Oh, let’s go back and let’s listen to the same story 20 times,” and there was no change. You used things that were practical for us, helped us embody those things to actually put them into practice. Like, we thought of them, but we really didn’t do them. So, I think that’s more relatable that you’re actually doing something that you suggested yourself and then you tell us how it’s going to function. I think that makes more sense.*

*- Erica Mariscal*

I worked with a woman who found herself constantly picking up clothes, making beds, washing dishes, and doing laundry to the point where she was feeling as if she couldn’t spend the time she wanted with her husband.

She was working long hours and traveling for work often, so that quality time together felt like something that got put on the shelf only to collect dust. However, when she got serious about what she could let go of, she was messaging me about “day dates” and all the time she got back almost immediately.

Along the way, she discovered there were things that she couldn't let go of too, but in doing the work, she learned to look for pockets of time to spend with her husband that she just hadn't seen before her perspective shifted.

This journey is about you elevating your marriage. Learning to leverage the things you can let go of is a key ingredient in the mix, especially as you take action on what you can control.

But even as you take the reins, the change is going to have a ripple effect. You may not be doing certain things you used to do, and it's going to shake things up in the house, so you have to be ready to request what you need as well. However, if getting help from your spouse has been an issue in the past, it's time to approach it differently.

Now, as you shake things up, you're going to find that "letting go" requires vulnerability, which is difficult for many people. So, how do you get naked (figuratively speaking) with your spouse and invite him to do the same? I invite you to check out this free audio series on what to do when hubby is not opening up to you. It's a great pairing to the concept in this chapter:

<https://www.imaniaieshah.com/marriagegoodies>

*OK, I can definitely work on this, but I'm always asking Martin to do more around the house and help me more with the kids, and he tells me it's not going to be 50/50. Or if he does try and help*

*me, he does it for like a day, and then he's done as if it never has to happen again.*

*I just don't know, at this point, how to get through to him.*

I hear you, Gina. Let's tackle that next.

### **Chapter RECAP**

- Articulate what you really want to see shift in your home to get what you want.
- Discover what you can let go of to create the space for what you want and need.

## BEYOND GETTING HELP AROUND THE HOUSE

*I've started work on making that space for me in the house, and I looked up the kickboxing schedule. I'll admit, it feels good to do some stuff for me for a change. I've always been so caught up with making things happen for everyone else that, I guess, somewhere between the kids' karate and helping Martin edit his proposals, I forget to get things done for me.*

*But while that part has been on an upswing, I miss my friend. I don't quite know when I lost him, but I'm just not feeling it. We've haven't spent much time together.*

*We've had some unexpected expenses the last two months, so he's been working longer hours. I can tell those extra bills put him under pressure.*

*He comes home tired, I know. But I'm exhausted too, and I feel like if we both tackled some things at home when we're tired, they'll get done faster.*

*Truth is, I need some help.*

*But part of me doesn't want to ask him to do anything.*

*I've started riding this "do me" wave, and I'll just ride that thing all the way into the horizon. But then my eyelids get heavy and the horizon looks so far away.*

*Honestly, part of me doesn't want to rock the boat, either.*

*You know what he said to me the other day?*

*"I'm going to order some food so you don't have to worry about that tonight. I see you nodding off!"*

*Now, it doesn't happen often, but he's ordered food before. I imagined it was because he had a taste for something other than what I was going to make. But he's never said it like he was trying to help me out. I was like, "What!" And, honestly, it was great! I went to bed like 30 minutes earlier that night.*

*But will it last??*

*We've definitely come to some understanding and appreciation of each other, but we haven't had that "I need you to step up so I can step down in some areas" talk.*

*Not looking forward to it, either.*

*In the past, when I've asked for help, it's always ended up being a competition over who's "more tired."*

*I never know who "wins," but I know I'm still the one doing everything I've always done.*

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We get where Gina's coming from, right?

So, it's time to trade in that "step up" conversation for something different. Here's where what you've learned so far is truly going to come full circle.

If you need to gain something from your husband that history has told you he will be resistant to, then you've got to approach that conversation with more effective ingredients. Now, I say ingredients because we're about to go through all the elements you need to get to what you want, but this is no cookie-cutter, step-by-step situation.

You still need to be aware and conscious of where you are in the conversation, the timing, the energy, etc., and that may mean the following ingredients may switch in order or be melded into each other somehow. But you've got to have all of these under your belt when you're heading into a resistant conversation.

No, things are not going to be "equal," but the goal is for it to feel like you're working as partners. It's about taking the perspective of, "Hey, this is a need I see for us," so running the household feels like a joint effort. On the other hand, it's not about saying, "Hey, I feel like I'm doing everything and I'd like you to help." See, that's when your husband helps you out a few times, and that's it. But you're dissatisfied because it wasn't consistent. This breeds resentment.

So, first things first. We've got to shift this perspective of asking for "help," unless that's what you truly need.

When you ask for *help*, you're saying this is "my thing" and my responsibility, but I'd like your assistance with my responsibilities here and there.

However, when you say you want to be "partners" when it comes to how the household is going to run, that's a completely different thing. It means that you want to work together to run things.

Since you are both the co-CEOs of Your Household, Inc., you've got to put your collaboration hats on. So, how can you work together as co-CEOs, as collaborators? Well, when you come to a peer at work, you give input and put suggestions on the table that are open to discussion. The same skills still come into play at home; you just need to know how to translate them so it makes sense for your household.

If you're looking for partnership in your marriage, then you want to handle changes in the household like a collective effort. And how would you handle a collaborative project with a peer? You would most likely come to the table saying, "This is the need I see for us, what do you think? How can we make something happen?"

Anything else would easily slip into being a command, a "boss/employee" dynamic that, at home, can feel like a "parent/child" dynamic. We both know nei-

ther one of those roles are welcome in a marriage. However, if you want to live like partners, sharing in the responsibility of running the house, then it means coming to these conversations like peers who respect and trust each other.

Now, I get that it's easier said than done. I mean, what if you feel your spouse just isn't open at all? What do you do in that situation? Nothing? Keep going along to get along? No. Threatening divorce doesn't work well. Manipulation doesn't work, either. Withholding sex sucks for all involved. So, you tap into that which you can control, like we talked about earlier in this book, and you make your own strides. Because you *cannot* control or change your spouse; he has to find his own way. And the fact that you're reading this book means that you're dedicated to finding your way regardless of what he does or doesn't do. You change the things that are within your power to change and make the choice to create the shifts you want to see in your marriage.

Still, I often hear my clients say that they're tired of being "the one" who always has to do the things to make things better. They're tired of that responsibility being on them when it should be on both of them.

Yes, the responsibility is on both of you, but the responsibility to be the *catalyst* for that change is on whomever (you or him) recognizes something needs to change and takes action on it. Otherwise, you're just playing "chicken" to see who's going to "do something" first.

But I'll let you in on this: it's a lot less frustrating when you realize *how* to do things differently. See, you've been trying with no results, and that can feel like you're bumping your head against the wall until you don't know what to do anymore. And that's where I come in, to show you there's another way you haven't thought of yet and coach you through what that looks like in your marriage.

So, let's talk about that right now.

Whether you're a Processor or an Orator, you've got to get clear about what it is you want out of the conversation. **What's the ultimate goal? What's the change you want to see happen?**

Answering these questions is where you take a little time to think through what you want, so you can come to the conversation with a level of preparedness. Eventually, you'll get to this answer quickly and be able to wing it in conversations without beating around the bush.

Now, let's get into those ingredients:

### **Why (You & Marriage)**

OK, so that change you want to see, why is it important to you? What would it mean to you when that shift occurs? What would it mean to the benefit of both you and your marriage?

This sets the stage for the fact that what you're about to say is about the big picture for you and for your marriage. It's something that you believe is truly going to elevate the relationship.

For example, if you want to feel more like partners when it comes to managing the household finances, it may sound like this: "We have a goal of buying a house in 5 years with 50% down (marriage why), and I want the kids to have that run around space I didn't have growing up (your why), and I want to make sure we're both a legit part of making that happen (you + marriage why)."

### **Request**

This is you saying what you want to change, straight up, no chaser. To continue our example, it may sound something like ...

"So, I'd love you to play a bigger part in managing our household expenses."

### **Personal Responsibility (Shut It Down)**

We talked about the power of the shut down in Chapter 3, and that's going to be key here if you've ever argued about the change you want to see happen (in our example, finances). So, it may go something like this ...

"I know I haven't been very communicative in the past, and it probably felt like I didn't really trust you in this area. There's truth in that, but I realize that I was shutting you out, and I don't want to deal like that anymore."

### **Appreciation/Strengths (What Else Is True?)**

Now, you get to say what you've brought to the table and what you think your spouse can bring. Here's where jotting down your spouse's strengths in Chapter 3 will be helpful. You've already gotten the ball rolling; now, you're just thinking about the strengths he has in this specific area you want to change.

It may look like this: "I take care of the check balancing and make sure the bills are paid, but I'll admit you're a way better budgeter, and we need that."

### **Request Again with Question**

Now, you reiterate your request, but this time you bring up that strength as a question, so he is involved in what you two are doing and, more importantly, knows you want him to be involved.

For example, "Now, I get that handling the daily finances hasn't been something you've done, but how about you create a monthly budget for the house so we can make sure we meet those house goals?"

If that's not floating his boat, ask what he would suggest.

### **Flexibility**

As with most things, you don't know if the changes you come up with are going to work for him or you, so you want to let your spouse know you're open. It's not some rigid command. If it works, great!

You'll keep the train running. But if it's not working after a period of time, you two will figure out a way that does.

That might sound like: "And look, let's try it for this next month, and if it's not working, then fine, we do something else. But, are you down to at least try it out first?"

OR

"This is for us to try. If it doesn't work, no one's stuck. We'll try something else in a month."

Now, in our girl Gina's world, she needs partnership with household duties so she can get more time to complete work at home and relax without feeling like a zombie. So, she may approach Martin like this:

*Last month, we talked about how we don't spend enough time together, and I totally agree. I do want to have fun with my friend again. Talking about bills can't be the majority of our quality time together. (WHY)*

*But the house stuff plus work stuff gets overwhelming, so I'm proposing we find a way to share in the house stuff in a way that works for both of us and frees up some time. (REQUEST)*

*And yes, I know I've gotten on you hard about this in the past and dismissed things, which made you feel like I don't appreciate what you do. But I'm coming to you now so WE can come up with something that works. I'm not trying to tell you what to do. (PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY)*

*And to be honest, while I'm killing it with helping the kids with their big projects and school crafts, you're more patient with checking over the homework day-to-day. (STRENGTHS)*

*Now, I get that you're tired when you come home from work, but how about – after you woo-sab and regroup – you help the kids with the homework while I knock out some of the other things that need to get done? Then when the kids go to bed, everything's done and we can unwind together. (REQUEST + QUESTION)*

*And, I mean, we try it for a week or so and if it's not working out, we try something else, you know. (FLEXIBILITY)*

Keep in mind, this is just one side of a conversation. Unless your spouse never speaks, you're not going to be able to just run through all of this without him interjecting. The reason these are ingredients and not steps is that conversations are fluid. You'll say something, and then so will he. There will be back and forth. So, listen and stay aware of how things are flowing because that will be key in how you use this technique.

For instance, if your spouse sounds like he's on board right after you talk about the "why," then run with it. You may not need to delve into personal responsibility and can dive right into the request with question.

You've got to feel out the conversation.

On the other hand, if your spouse has been super resistant to the idea of splitting up more responsibilities

in the past, you may want to start with personal responsibility and shut “defense mode” down from the beginning.

You’re not spewing out directives, right? So, be sure to listen and respond, and use these tools to guide you when and where it makes sense.

### **Chapter RECAP**

- Avoid asking for “help” and instead request a joint effort.
- Use the ingredients *Why, Request, Personal Responsibility, Strengths, Request with Question, and Flexibility* to approach the conversation about changing how you and your spouse run the household together.



## DON'T FALL BACK INTO THE SAME OL', SAME OL'

*Yesterday was the first day we tried our new thing. Martin came home, changed, had a tickle fest with the kids, then kicked back and scrolled through some videos. He was unwinding. OK, that was nothing new, but I was thinking in my head, "I'm going to have to remind this man to come down here for homework help with the kids after we done had that talk and everything. He agreed to ... "*

*And then, there he was. After about 90 minutes, he came downstairs like, "Let me see that homework!" Now, we agreed that it was going to be after an hour, but I wasn't trying to split hairs in that moment. He actually came down and helped the kids with their homework. He looked at me with a "go and do your thing, woman" head nod.*

*So, I did. I finished up dinner without the kids asking me twenty questions, put the toys away on the floor, and unloaded the dishwasher for easy loading after dinner. It's amazing how fast those things go without distractions!*

*Martin even put the kids to bed that night. I mean, we did story time together, but baths, teeth, sheet tucks – all him.*

*And when we came downstairs, we kicked it together in front of the TV instead of me in the background on a laptop and him scrolling through his phone. And, we didn't just kick it ... we kicked it (if you know what I mean).*

*It was so dope. I thought, "I could get used to this. Next week, I'm going to use that hour of homework help to go to the kickboxing class. Wait ... that means that the dinner will have to be done the night before? Ok, so a leftover night. And I'm teaching Cole how to load the dishwasher this week, so that should work."*

*I was so full of hope yesterday.*

*And now it's today, and I feel it. It's a lump in my throat that says it's too good to be true, don't get used to it, girl! Sure, he did it yesterday, but that's just one day. And even if he does it today too, he's going to get tired of this. He's going to fall back. He doesn't really know the kind of endurance this thing takes. It's going to all be on me again.*

*And now, I'm just feeling like I've got to do more work at night to compensate for when he falls off the plan. But if I do that, then I'm not holding up my end of the bargain. Ugh! I want to believe this is our new normal, but I just don't know.*

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So, one of the reasons couples fall off when they're trying something new, besides the mere fact that it's a new habit and takes time, is that they don't make sure those changes make sense for them.

They often make the changes they *think* they *should* make without considering what makes the most sense for *them*.

See, these are the things that sound good but don't actually get done:

“We’re going to communicate better!”

“We need to spend more time together!”

“We’ve just got to work on it!”

But if you want the changes you make to stick, then you’ve got to hone in on a few key things first.

**First things first, you’ve got to throw the general, broad stroke desires out the window.**

You don’t have a one-size-fits-all marriage, so a generic desire won’t work. You’ve got to get specific, so you and your spouse are crystal clear about what you want.

If our friend Gina had just said, “I want you to support me,” or “I want you to help me,” she wouldn’t have gotten anywhere. *Support* and *help* don’t mean anything. Support how? Help how? She specifically suggested Martin do homework help while she worked. See, there’s nothing to misinterpret in that. It’s a clear and specific need.

**Second, you want to check that you and your hubby will know if the change happens.**

In other words, it needs to be something you can measure in some way.

Let's say Gina had said she needed support and Martin said OK. He then started to tell her more often how much he loves and supports her. However, Gina is *still* requesting support, and Martin is thinking he's giving it. The thing is she wasn't "measuring" support in words; she wanted it in specific actions.

When Martin helps the children with their work, she and he both know they are taking action on what they talked about. There's no confusion about whether or not things are actually shifting.

**Third, you both need to agree.**

This is why we talked about involving your spouse in what you guys are going to do. If you're down to make a shift and he isn't (or vice versa), it's not going to work.

In this case, often one person feels like he or she is making an effort/doing his or her part, and the other spouse isn't. This leads to Resentment Road, adjacent to Argument Way.

So, you work it out and you tweak it until you both agree to try it out. Now, real talk, one or both of you may be hesitant just because it'll mean a change. But

if you're both committed to *trying*, you've got something golden on your hands.

**Fourth, and this is a biggie, it's got to make sense for who you both are and for your lifestyle.**

You know you. You know your spouse (and how he communicates, from Chapter 1). You know your life together.

If what you discuss is completely unrealistic for both of you to do, it's not going to happen. And if it happens once, it's not going to keep happening. And you're going to be right back on Resentment Road.

For this one, I want to give you an example from a couple that volunteered for me to laser coach them at one of my live workshops.

They wanted to spend more time together, and one of the best ways they said they could do that with their busy schedules was reinstating a weekly "date night out."

*Reinstating? So, they had tried date night out before? What happened?* Busier schedules. Bigger bills. More children. Exhaustion.

And as we all talked more about it, trying to orchestrate a date night felt more like a burden to them than something to look forward to. Maybe once a month, they figured. But that wasn't enough time.

So, we walked through other ways to get the time they craved on a daily basis. But it had to make sense for their lifestyle, and it had to be something they could look forward to.

But, see, they had to first realize they were trying to force something that just wasn't working very well for *them*. They'd try to make it work and then feel bad they fell off their date nights. However, their unrealistic (for them) goal of weekly date nights needed to be tweaked for their lifestyle.

Now, I know you're curious about what they did, but that's for the next chapter. I've got you!

The takeaway here is that the shift you want to make has to be a shift you can *feasibly* make.

Gina was tiring herself out, and Martin was tired coming in from work, but he still got his time to unwind and then engage with his children and their homework. It was something that was not difficult to fold into their lifestyle.

**Last, decide when the shift goes into effect and stick to it!**

You've got to decide when you're going to start this new thing. Next day? The weekend after the family vacation? On New Year's? When?

I can't tell you how many times I've talked to folks who said they agreed to do something different in their household, but it never got done because they never talked about when they were going to do it. It just got pushed back and finally pushed away. So, be sure to agree on when it's all going into effect.

Now, you've already started to think about this because we talked about flexibility in the last chapter, but you also want to make sure you agree on how long you're going to try it to see if things are working out for both of you. A week? A month? Three months?

See, when you do this thorough a job of a check, it's way more likely you're not only going to see things change, but that those changes will also stick around.

Honestly, Gina's anxiousness is understandable. Things had been going one way for so long that it's hard to believe that after just one day or one week, the new way is going to become THE way. But it does happen.

The good thing is that those ingredients from last chapter set you up beautifully for this kind of check. So, when you're feeling anxious like Gina, just look at what's happening and see how it measures up to your life and lifestyle. Does it make sense? Does it fold into your lifestyle pretty well? Are you both willing participants?

Run the check and then run with it!

You got this!

*When we got together, I told her that the person I was going to choose to marry, I was going to do it because I wanted to spend the rest of my life with that person, and there were some times where I didn't see that. I was like, it's not going to happen. But now I see it! You know, I can picture myself with her in 20, 30, 40 years. So thank you for guiding us on this journey!*

- Jose Mariscal

And I've got you too. You want focused support and direction to get you to the other side of what you want for less than what many people invest in a co-pay? Then I'm inviting you to join me and some amazing wives taking the reins in their marriage in an exclusive online club. I'm in there live and ready to support you: <http://bit.ly/FixMyMarriagePrivateClub>

Think of it as a gym membership for your marriage but without you ever having to leave home!

### **Chapter RECAP**

- No broad, general requests
- Make it measurable
- You both agree to give it a try
- Make changes that actually work for you, your husband, and your lifestyle.
- Decide *when* it all goes down

So, now that you have the 7 foundational things under your belt, it's time to put them to work by delving deeper into two of the biggest issues plaguing many married couples: **Time & Money**



## **2 Real Deal Issues (and how to deal)**



## QUALITY TIME WITHOUT THE SACRIFICE

*I laughed 'til I snorted! Martin and I have been spending more time together, and it's almost shocking. We didn't realize we had the time; I think we forgot how different it feels. And it's been pretty nice, but ...*

*Work has picked up a lot in the last week, and I've had to spearhead a new project AND train a new hire. I've had to stay late an extra night this week, mostly because I don't want to bring too much work home (in an attempt to be present), but I'm so spent.*

*And when I came home yesterday and saw the hamper overflowing, I burst into tears. It was so silly. But I was exhausted and ticked off that I was looking at something else that needed to be done before we all ran out of underwear.*

*It wasn't even about Martin on this one. When we started working together on the house stuff with the homework help, he also started making sure the kids picked up their toys at night and that Cole loaded the dishwasher. And two nights a week, he does dinner.*

*But yesterday was not one of his nights, and the laundry is something I do, but I felt so damn overwhelmed when I saw it that*

*I was just ... done. All I wanted to do was sit and close my eyes for two seconds.*

*Honestly, I feel bad because we've had this new groove going, and I'm just not into anything but the bed and sleep. He tried to get me to watch this movie, and I'm nodding after ten minutes.*

*And he's been kind of immature about the whole thing, talking under his breath about me being addicted to my work and talking about how I acted like our time was so important but just dropped it like nothing.*

*And normally, I'd be all up in that, telling him about himself and explaining how this is my work and how he has his work. But I've really been trying to ask myself "What else is true?" I've legit said that to myself ... aloud! And while I'm not feeling the delivery, I know he's feeling the sting of the change and just wants my attention too.*

*Truth ... I feeling like I'm giving about 95% to everything else, and there's little time and energy left for Martin, the children, and yes me. That's how it's been for a week, and I've got about another two weeks of this.*

*Yes, Martin and the children, too, have been a big help, but we haven't spent much time together. We've gone from spending a few hours together to barely much of anything besides bills and who's taking the kids where this week.*

*Ok, and I know this is so wrong. But part of me wishes he'd just fall back, you know, hit pause, while I get through these next two weeks. Then I think, "that's a long time to put our time*

*together on the shelf.” And I don’t really want that even though I’ll admit I sometimes feel it would make things easier.*

*I know I can’t really press pause, but at this point, I’m not sure what to do. There’s only 24 hours in a day, you know!*

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Getting *quality* time with yourself and your husband, especially when you have children, is often an issue. “Making time,” as they say, *feels* like it’s easier said than done, but let’s tackle that now, shall we? We’ll explore a few concrete ways to change how you think about time in your marriage AND get that quality time you want.

### **5 Minutes or 5 Hours?**

So, let me ask you a question. If you could spend 5 uninterrupted hours once a month with your spouse OR 5 uninterrupted minutes every day, which would you choose?

When I first asked this question in one of my workshops, the response was overwhelmingly for 5 hours. Why? Because wouldn’t it be amazing to have 5 uninterrupted hours alone to do all the things you feel you can’t do on a regular basis? And yes, *uninterrupted* means no children!

But is this the reality of your life? You may covet those 5 hours too, but how often do you get that kind of

time together outside of a no-kids vacation? Now, I get it, this is just what you *wish* you had. But it still speaks to your perspective on your time together. It's as if you're saying in order for the time to be "quality," it has to be a certain length of time. However, if your reality is not matching up to your ideal, what then? Then it becomes both of you in the living room, one of you on your phone and the other on the computer. Then you're in bed together, exhausted, no sex, and you're wondering how long it's been since you've felt close (and you're too tired to even think about that for too long).

Vacations are amazing. Long weekends together are great. But when you think of the simplest things that make you feel close to your spouse, what are those things? See, in that answer lies what quality time *really* means to you.

It is possible to be on vacation and still feel miles away from each other. It's also possible to be in bed together at night and feel completely connected.

OK, so rapid fire. Close your eyes for a second, and ask yourself this question: When I think of quality time with my husband, what's the *first* thing that comes to mind? Remember, think *connection* not length of time.

What's your answer? Go.

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Now, what's the second thing that comes to mind? The third? Do you see a theme here? I'm not even in your head, but I imagine you're piecing together what quality time really means to you right about now.

Let's take this baby a step further, then.

What actions can you and he take together to get quality time in just 5 minutes? Now, 5 minutes is about an entire song, maybe longer if we're talking old school R&B, but you get it!

So, to really give you a sense of how long 5 minutes is, put on a song or set a timer on your phone. Then, brain-dump the things you two can do together in that amount of time.

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The whole point here is for you to not be limited by time. Because too often when they tell you to "make time," they stop short of telling you what that actually looks like in your home.

When my husband was working crazy hours and we knew we'd hardly see each other without feeling like zombies, I got up 30 minutes earlier every morning to share a smoothie with him at the dining room table.

You will have to stretch yourself and get creative in a way that works for you and him (remember the "check" in Chapter 7).

Your ultimate goal is to get quality time in every day. But start with one day. Then, keep going. Be intentional.

Naturally, your 5 minutes will end up being 10, 15, or 20 minutes at times, but the point is now you know what's possible. "I don't have time for that," will be something you can't bring yourself to say because you know you've got 5 or 10 minutes to connect to each other every day.

You'll be surprised what happens. I've had clients who "didn't have time" and wanted more time for themselves, their children, and their spouse, message me and say:

"Got a mini-date at [a smoothie place] today. Didn't talk about to-do's. We talked about things we were excited about ... the trip to see my mom and our new house purchase. It felt good ... he started smiling. I guess he appreciates your advice too."

“Thanks so much, that video was needed. I'm so ready to do this. My husband even mentioned how I seem more at peace since our last video chat.”

“Even with all that's going on, I still made it to yoga (my hubby pretty much forced me, lol). He is being so supportive during this journey. After class, I pretty much worked on my plans from 9 to 2 am. My hubby stayed up with me the whole time and helped. But today I didn't stay late; I actually picked my daughter up and spent time with her.”

Here are a couple of other things to keep in mind as you take the reins on time in your marriage.

### **Can You Shut It Down?**

If you do have to bring work home, you've got to ask yourself this question. It's simple, but it's not easy because you don't want to feel like you're sacrificing time with your spouse for work, but you don't want to feel like you're sacrificing work for time with your spouse, either. Rock, meet hard place.

I know you don't want to end up with a spouse who feels like, “I'm not going to ask to spend any time with you again because you're 'always' busy.” You know it's not really *always*, but it can feel that way to your spouse. And I get it. You've got so many things pulling on you, and somehow you have to figure out how to be attentive to everything and everybody and still satisfy you and your spouse's desire for time together. But, the take-

away here is that you have more time for quality connection than you think you do.

So, think about this for a minute. If you've just finished a big task on your to-do list, can you shut down for 10 minutes? (Bonus ... they say short breaks between tasks actually *increases* productivity!). So, now is the time to be aware of your ability to shut down for a bit. You can do it. And if you're apprehensive, you can *try* it. You'll come back to your tasks in a little while, but if you work on the 5-minute exercise alongside shutting down work that you bring home, it'll be easier (and less stress-inducing) than you think!

### **The Issue with Date “Night”**

OK, so anyone who knows me or has been following me for a while knows my feelings about what is currently the “date night” craze. I see it all over social media, as if it's this magic pill that will solve everything in a marriage. In all fairness, it's not intended to be that but it's often interpreted that way, even unconsciously.

Is it important to date each other? Absolutely! But the idea of “date night” conjures up images of two adults, no children, ready to hit the town and let loose! And it's supposed to be a weekly thing on top of that!

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not anti-date night. I'm actually pro-dating. The difference is that dating can happen in any capacity. It doesn't look a certain way. In fact, it looks like what works for you, your spouse, and

your lifestyle. And it's quite possible that a paint-the-town-red date night fits into that lifestyle, but it's less likely that it fits in ALL the time.

I've listened to so many couples who feel like they're "failing" because they haven't kept their date night plans. Why haven't they kept it up? Tiredness is the biggest reason. Also, they don't have anyone to regularly watch the kids.

Remember the couple we talked about just last chapter who wanted more time together and felt the solution was reinstating date night? I mentioned that we uncovered all the ways that weren't working for them and how they had a bit of guilt/disappointment that came with letting those dates fall through the cracks. However, the reality was that when they were doing more dates nights, they had fewer children and responsibilities. Their lives had since changed, and the way they dated each other needed to change right along with it. Because if you don't pivot along with the changes that inevitably happen in your lives and marriage, you'll find yourself feeling stagnant and coveting what you "used to do." In other words, if your time and responsibilities look different than they did in the past, then it's time to change it up for what's going to work *now!*

And that's exactly what that couple did. They began to find the pockets of time they actually had. They moved things around in their life that they *could* let go of and found ways to work around the things they couldn't. They got their 5 minutes of quality time, and sometimes

even 30 minutes or an hour. They felt the strides and, even now as I write this, they are working on how they will make it their daily norm.

So, as you work your 5 minutes, 10 minutes, or 15 minutes, rethink how you “date” your spouse. Sure, get some nights out on the town, but also get some morning smoothie time in before work. Meet for ice cream (from your freezer) in your driveway when the kids are asleep and you’re both too tired to drive anywhere anyway. Meet for lunch, even if it has to be a “family date” with the little ones. These are the things that can happen more often than not.

So, where are your pockets of time? When you think about the morning, afternoon, and evening, where can you find the places to get up a little earlier, go to bed a little later, move things around? Because now you’re not looking for an hour (or three), you’re looking for consistent moments that are not limited by any time frame and that work for your life.

So, what’s the moral of the story? Take the strides every day to find your quality pockets, be intentional, and give yourself some grace when time feels tighter. Some days will truly only feel like you’ve had 5 minutes together, and others will be longer. Use your 5-minute list as your start, and start today. And, like we talked about in Chapter 7, be sure to do the “does this work for our lifestyles” check. If it *feels* like the time adjustments can’t fold into your lives, it won’t happen or happen consis-

tently. So, you know what to do, and you don't have to wait to begin taking that time for you and your spouse.

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*OK, OK, I'm feeling this. And I know Martin will too, but we've had another issue for a while that just won't seem to go away: money!*

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I hear you, Gina! So, let's talk about the money in the next chapter!

### **Chapter RECAP**

- Rethink your perspective on quality time with your spouse by starting with what you can do together in just 5 minutes.
- Use the 5-minute exercise to help you practice shutting down work.
- Date each other in a way that makes the most sense for you two and your lifestyle!



## IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE MONEY

*So the madness with work has died down, but even before it was over, Martin and I found a way to enjoy each other again. And I didn't even have to sacrifice much needed sleep because, like the children, I had a bedtime.*

*It felt so great to know we could find those pockets of time for each other even when our schedules seemed so crazy. However, the other day, I noticed something that frustrated the hell outta me. Martin spent over a hundred dollars on a phone upgrade. Uhmmm ... your phone works perfectly fine and you always seem to be stressed about money, but you upgraded your phone!?*

*And I get it because he's a spender who thinks I'm too frugal a saver. "Sometimes I just want to spend a little, and it was a good deal," he says. Fine. I get that. But I'm not sure we agree on what a "little" is, and he doesn't seem to get the bigger picture in all of this. See, when Tanya wants to do dance and swim this year, we're only going to have enough money for one. He doesn't see anything wrong with that, but I want her to be able to experience the things I didn't and not have to tell her she can't explore her passions because we can't afford it. Why? Because our phone bill is higher than last year. Obviously, I don't tell her that last part, but that's how I feel.*

*We go over our money together, but we just don't see eye-to-eye on how to spend it outside of what we have to spend it on. We say we've got plans for the future, but how are they going to get done, though? Through saving more! That's how!*

*And I get so tired of having the same argument about money. I just stopped talking about it, and I try to stash a little something away to get us out of jams if we need it. But I want us to do that together, to work toward that together. We have to talk about money and bills every week, so I just don't understand why we can't seem to get anywhere with this.*

*I mean, we've been communicating so much better lately, so this just sucks. But when we get into the money stuff, it's like everything we've been doing goes out the window.*

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*Imani has helped improve my marriage so much! She is very practical yet has the ability to hear and see beyond what is being said. I love her passion to see marriages thriving. I have also had a chance to attend two of her Sip n Share virtual events. I LOVE them! She has created a fun and safe place for wives to connect, share and receive. I highly recommend her services!  
- Lenora J.*

They say money is one of the causes, if not *the* number one cause, of divorce. Now, do we care what “they” say when it comes to how you’re trying to do *your* marriage *your* way? Normally, no. But these “trends” do perk up our ears and allow us to gain awareness of the struggles couples face AND how they’re handling them.

Financial issues are a stressor on a lot of individuals and couples because they worry about not having enough; either enough to get by, enough to have the lifestyle they want, or both. Couples argue about money when they feel like they don't have enough and even when they know they have more than enough. So, is it really about the money itself? Sure, the demands on our money (house expenses, medical bills, education, loans, debt, etc.) can be a source of stress. However, it comes down to whether you and your spouse can communicate through that stress or not.

And while money is one of those things you'll be handling daily throughout your marriage, most couples don't know how to talk about money without getting into heated arguments, or they just avoid the money conversation altogether.

Now, imagine with me for a second that you and a team at work were given a specific budget to complete a project, but you discover you went over budget a little. How would you handle it with your work teammates?

You probably wouldn't start arguing with them about who did what, who messed up, who spent too much over here or not enough over there. And you definitely wouldn't avoid the conversation altogether, right?

Right. Why?

I have a feeling you just answered this for yourself and the answer probably sounded a little something like this: "Because it wouldn't help anything."

You'd more likely hash it out and find a solution, right? And as we've talked about in previous chapters, if there's responsibility to claim on where things went wrong, you or whomever would take it and decide how best to move forward so it doesn't happen again.

And I know you see where I'm going with this.

When it comes to dealing with money in your marriage, your spouse is your teammate even if you don't agree right away. And much like the scenario above, arguing with him about money doesn't solve anything, either. The goal is to be as solution-oriented with your spouse as you would be with your peers when it comes to money.

Whether you have a little money or a lot, whether you're stretched this month with bills or not, you've got to be able to *talk* about the finances, not argue about them. How do you do this? You start with what it's really about. See, it's really not about the money itself; it's about what the money means to you.

**Conflict Starter 1: You & your husband don't know how to talk about money without setting off each other's triggers.**

So, the very first thing you've got to do to tackle this is discover *your* relationship with money. That's what you're really arguing about.

Your relationship with money is where your triggers come from. And your triggers are what set you off in an argument. Once that trigger is set, it's like someone

pulled the pin out of a grenade. So, understanding your relationship with money means understanding those triggers so you can put the pin back in the grenade and, eventually, not hold on to the grenade at all.

Think about it. Have you ever gotten super mad and wondered why it hit you so hard? Or, perhaps more often, has your spouse wondered why it hit you so hard?

It's because your fear of not having money and ending up poor, like when you were growing up, is being triggered when he wants to spend money on that big screen TV.

It's because you're working so hard you just want to be able to treat yourself every now and then without worrying.

Now, your trigger may not be one of these in particular, but it's something.

And if you're dancing on his side of the truth like we talked about in Chapter 2, you recognize that he's got triggers with money too.

Our friend Gina was ticked off when Martin upgraded that phone because it set off one of her triggers. And Martin most likely responded the way he did because of one of his as well.

Getting a handle on your triggers means you and your spouse will be in conversation, not conflict, when it comes to your finances.

So, let's get down to it! Fill in these blanks so you can uncover your relationship with money.

1) When it comes to money, I worry about \_\_\_\_\_.

2) When I have money, the first thing I want to do with it is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

3) When I think about not having money, I feel \_\_\_\_\_.

4) When I think about having a lot of money, I feel \_\_\_\_\_.

5) I don't see eye-to-eye with my spouse on \_\_\_\_\_ when it comes to money.

6) In my observation, my spouse does not see eye-to-eye with me on \_\_\_\_\_ when it comes to money.

7) When my spouse and I talk about money, the conversation is \_\_\_\_\_.

8) Money equals \_\_\_\_\_ to me.

9) When it comes to money, I expect my spouse to \_\_\_\_\_.

OK, now read your sentences back to yourself. Overall, how would you describe your relationship with money?

**Conflict Starter 2: You and your spouse's plans for how to spend (or not spend) money clash.**

Now that you understand your triggers, it's time to pull in those ingredients from Chapter 6 for when you have the actual conversation.

We're going to focus in on the WHY and the STRENGTHS in this chapter, though.

Besides not being able to talk about money because you didn't really hone in on your relationship with it (until now), you and your husband may also have different ideas about how the money should be spent.

This is where you bring in your bigger goals as a couple: to get a house, to vacation once a year, to have more freedom to enjoy life and family, etc.

These are your anchors. This is how you figure out what can wait financially and what is a higher priority, by connecting them to your bigger why. You're going to have several priorities, but they're not all going to get funded at once.

Now, you and your spouse both need to agree there IS a *why* BUT they don't have to be the *same* why. For example, you want to get a house because you want the kids to grow up in a space where they can run around and play in a nice back yard, something you didn't have growing up. But your husband wants a house because he

feels like it will be a sound investment overall, and has even pitched the idea of getting a house with a separate basement apartment as an income property. It doesn't matter that why you want the house is not the same as long as you both are personally connected and committed to the goal. In fact, more often the not, your "whys" are going to be different. And again, that's okay. Because the truth is, you and your spouse are not fully motivated by each other's reasons; you're motivated by your own.

*But what if after we put our "whys" on the table, we don't agree with what takes priority?*

Yes, I heard you ask that question in your head.

You use all the ingredients in Chapter 6, especially the "request and question" (so you can go back and forth with suggestions), "flexibility" (so you have the space to try things, tweak, and see what works) and "strengths" (which we're about to delve into in a second), to discuss it until you do. It may mean more than one conversation, and that's OK. Every conversation doesn't need to be wrapped up in a neat bow with a whole plan mapped out. You may table things, take time to sleep on things, and then come back to them.

So, we got to the nitty-gritty with your relationship with money. We discussed the importance of anchoring to your "why." And now we're bringing back those strengths.

**Conflict Starter 3: You and your husband don't play to each other's strengths when it comes to money, or if you do, you're not really OK with it.**

Let's take it back to work for a second. When you're at work, you do your part, the job you were hired to do. You're not trying to do the marketing if you're not strong in that. The marketing person isn't trying to be the IT person if they don't understand the inner workings of technology. You and your co-workers play to your strengths. You don't have to do the same things or be good at the same things in the same way in order to work well together. The same goes for you and your spouse.

One of you may be better at creating a plan for the bigger vision, while the other may be stronger in budgeting for it. Trying to get the visionary to create a budget or the budgeter to create the vision is often unproductive and devalues the team. Now, let me be clear, this does not mean that you don't explore each other's strengths or even learn from your spouse's strengths. What it does mean is that you don't hinge the *whole* idea of you being partners and teammates in your marriage on making the other person do things a certain way.

So, let's jot some things down so you can see it in black and white. What are your strengths when it comes to finances? What are your spouse's strengths?

For example, in my household, I am better at budgeting and finding creative ways to help us stay on budget, while my husband is better at consistently documenting the day-to-day and monthly expenses. We come

together to talk about the money weekly and quarterly, and we both bring our strengths to the table.

YOUR STRENGTHS

HIS STRENGTHS

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Now, I'm not going to lie to you, this one takes trust and some ego checkin'. You've got to trust your partner to operate in his strength just as you want him to trust you, even when mistakes are made. If he makes a mistake, show some grace, don't hold onto it, and work those ingredients to figure out the best way to fix it.

Relinquish control in the areas where you're not as strong and take up the reins where you're the strongest. All the while, be open to the fact that your strengths will most likely shift and change over time, so don't box each other in, either.

Because the real deal is that not acknowledging you and your spouse's strengths with money is costing you more than just failed budgets and overdraft fees. It sends the message that you don't believe in what your

spouse can do and/or you're not willing to let him do something he is good at because you are uncomfortable giving up control (triggers!!!).

#### ONE LAST THING:

Most couples I coach have different ways of handling money. There are many factors that contribute to this, including upbringing, and yes, triggers! Like Martin and Gina, there is usually someone who identifies as a saver and one who identifies as a spender. So wherever you and your spouse fall, I'm challenging you to see where you both can open up to each other's desires without sacrificing your "why."

For instance, when *can* you treat yourselves and spend a little "fun" money? For a vacation, could you do a staycation or a road trip instead of flying to the Dominican Republic? What can feasibly go in the budget for "fun" spending? On the other hand, how much more can you save if you cut back on certain things to get to your financial and growth goals faster? Could you eat out less? Could the spender let the saver be the only one with access to the savings account until they get into a groove or meet a certain goal?

These are the types of conversations that just aren't had when it comes to money. They're talked around. Now, it's time to dive in and make actual plans for action instead of talking in circles about the same money frustrations.

### **Chapter RECAP**

- Discover your money triggers by getting down and dirty with your relationship with money.
- Get on board with how to spend money as a couple by understanding the “why” and creating realistic priorities without the resentment.
- Work together when it comes to your household’s financial goals by playing to each other’s strengths.

Now, how do you feel about approaching this conversation with your husband?

What’s your level of apprehension?

Check in with yourself and then seize the opportunity to have the conversation with this fresh perspective.

And guess what?

You’ve made it to the end of this book, so many of those perspective shifts you need to move forward have already happened!

*Receiving council from Imani has been instrumental in my thinking regarding relationships. Her strong intuition, kindness, and knowledge is apparent in her delivery and I would recommend her to anyone looking to better understand their partner and loved one. Imani has the ability to help you move forward into resolution while helping you honor the journey that brought you to where you are!*

*Ladan M.*

So, tell me, what's the next thing you need to do right now to make sure you ride this wave?

Because this book isn't designed for you to read it once, get motivated, and then let that motivation wane until you're back doing the same ol', same ol' and feeling the same way about your marriage.

Now, maybe you're the kind of person who will read this over and over and find you're able to apply it and see the results.

Or maybe you've been feeling like you've been going it alone for too long and welcome support and guidance.

So, for you, let's talk. I know, I know, you probably already talk to your best friends or closest family members. And while they love you, their words are often colored by their own experiences and their love for you. They may even get angrier than you are with your spouse when you tell them what was said in that argument.

But when you and I talk, it will be to guide you to exactly how you can get to the other side of what you want for your marriage: the communication, the intimacy, the time, the mutual respect and appreciation.

So, I want to leave you with an invitation to a free call with me where we get down to it together. You don't have to go it alone anymore.

Just apply for your Clarity Call here:

<https://www.imaniaieshah.com/application>

I'm ready to work with you side-by-side to ensure you find your way to feeling like a married woman with a partner not a roommate.

So, I won't say goodbye, but I will say thank you so much for taking this journey with me (and Martin & Gina) toward the elevation of your marriage!

# CONNECT

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## ABOUT IMANI AIESHAH



Meet Imani Aieshah. A straight-shooting, plant-based-eating, living to laugh out loud, Wife & Mompreneur! As a native New Yorker, born and raised, currently living in Atlanta, she's got that southern hospitality wrapped up in a New York state of mind!

She's a Marriage Coach & Speaker who coaches you, so you don't feel bad about having a hard time applying generic relationship advice you could have just Googled to your unique marriage. General

“steps” aren't meant to really fix things.

So, Imani gets you to the “how.” She guides you to how to communicate in ways you were never taught, ways that will increase and maintain true partnership in your marriage.

Imani's work helps to strengthen the very foundation of the family: the couple. You can learn more and connect with Imani on social media, email, or at <https://www.imaniaieshah.com/>



IMANI AIESHAH is the Marriage Coach who takes a straight- shooting and practical approach to helping wives and married couples get true partnership amid exhaustion, crazy schedules, and demanding to-do lists. She's unleashed the most game-changing techniques for an intimate marriage in this book. No more trying to figure out how to apply those cliches about marriage. She's spilling what they don't tell you about the "key" to communication so you can feel like a married woman with a partner not a married woman with a roommate! Your marriage is unique, and this book will guide you through to exactly how to make the changes you want to see in YOUR marriage. So get ready to dig in, beautiful!

**THE BOOK FOR THE WIFE WHO 'S OVER GETTING GENERAL MARRIAGE TIPS!**

"She outlines the tough questions and encourages you to face those answers that you normally wouldn't say out aloud...Her advice helps me to move towards the things that I want out of my relationship and create workable strategies to help me bring my inner voice out in expressing those wants." - Nicky W.

"Imani has helped improve my marriage so much! She is very practical yet has the ability to hear and see beyond what is being said. I love her passion to see marriages thriving." - Lenora J.

"She understand the mind, body and soul of a marriage. Take her hand & let her guide you." -KP Clayton

"Not your typical "save my marriage" self help book. She fights for YOUR marriage by showing you a new way to look at humility, changing your understanding of self-centeredness while all the while keeping relating and relationships at the core." - Kami A.