DOMESTIC PAIN-POINTER

"Know when to ask what, where or who is the current"

There are some obvious prerequisites to successful relationships. One far-too-easily overlooked is a factor of interpersonal energy. All relationships have their stresses. But, on the whole, it's whether both individuals feed or drain the other. This also makes for a good checkbox atop the dating checklist.

In relationships, a subset of this energy exchange is about bringing the best out of one another and supporting continuous growth versus either person being stifled and becoming their lesser selves.

For our purposes, let's agree that all is well enough to keep this conversation flowing, which leads us to the domestic version of Swimming with the Current. As unriveting as that may sound, we may be very close to uncovering one of life's greatest mysteries: that being the true secret to a healthy marriage.

The key is to always know where and *who* the current is at any given time. This applies to everything from who is better at what to any topic of discussion that requires one decision or the other. Of course, having the benefit of experience from past relationships adds a significant advantage.

Knowing who is better at what is easy to identify. For each aspect in the business of managing life, it's essential to define who owns the ball and who is on call to assist.

Think of it as a straight-up compatibility test. Go down the list with your significant other on who's better at what in everyday life, and who does what around the house or otherwise. There's a comfort to having answers that make the doing easy and then second nature.

At a fundamental level, taking this "dividing and conquering" approach to the Nth degree is a problem prevention strategy. There also needs to be parity. Whoever takes charge of the finances has their work cut out for them. The other person needs to feel good about whatever else their doing and neither person should feel a greater burden of responsibility. Arguments that never happen are a good thing.

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Naturally, this Domestic Pain Pinpointer is slated for those living together in committed relationships. It's also applicable to any and all co-habitants – from college roommates to families.

ACTIVITY: 1 – DIVIDE AND CONQUER (TIME: 15-20 MINUTES)

Take inventory of all major responsibilities and household chores and decide definitively who "owns" what. Most of this is likely already determined. Examples include:

ESSENTIAL	IMPORTANT	NECESSARY
● Cooking	● Home Repairs	● Driving
● Grocery shopping	● Other household supplies	● Remote Controls
● Finances / Taxes	● Landscaping / Gardening	● House Cleaning
● Income	● Pet Care	● Trash/Recycling
● Parenting Duties	● Various Service Providers	● Laundry
● Kid's Activities	● Tech Support	● All Else

ACTIVITY: 2 – PAIN PINPOINTER (TIME: 10-15 MINUTES)

This has several parts. First is to do a "gap analysis" of anything that neither person is skilled enough to do and/or either person hates enough to dread doing. The operative question here is whether anything can be outsourced to service providers. If so, who arranges and "owns" those relationships?

Another is whether there are any "hot spots" you can identify as known or likely sources of disagreement. If the answer is yes, then this task is incomplete. Continue to eliminate as much potential friction as possible.

While your goal is to pre-problem solve, there will be times when you don't see things the same way and will likely softly butt heads. Agree that those flare-ups will trigger an alert to bring a discussion into better focus.

Here the ultimate decision to make together is who leads and who yields. To whom does something matter more? Who has the most to lose or gain based on who handles what? In most cases, that's an easy decision, especially if it means having one less thing to do and resolves whatever disagreement. Even if it comes down to flipping a coin – it's a better alternative to flipping out.

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If you are in a certain relationship or friendship involving some sort of friction or a simple sticking point, consider the strength and direction of that current and decide together how to chart the path of least resistance.

Here's a reminder from our prior discussion about Managing Energy and making a conscious decision to say, "You know what, I take full responsibility for what happened," which is to say – you have to mean it.

Is this excessively practical exercise and approach the true secret to marital bliss or any happy, healthy relationship? Well, with practice, you can decide for yourself. Perhaps even more essential is to get over something and just move on. Remember what we said about keeping a scorecard and rehashing the past. That does no one any favors.

So far, these practical insights apply to what we can agree are viable or at least salvageable relationships. Now let's swim a few strokes in some of life's stronger currents, which leads into the waters of being in a failing relationship or marriage.

Just mentioned in our Intuition Truster is Gladwell's book, *Blink*, and how those who trust their gut with decisions make at least as good, if not better decisions as those who overthink things. One the example he used to illustrate his concept of "Thin-slicing" had to do with a study done on what makes marriages succeed or fail. The study revealed that a marriage or relationship is essentially unfixable once there is 'contempt' for one another. That's a pretty strong word.

This Domestic Pain Pinpointer would be incomplete in the absence of taking this head on. If the activities above do not close certain fissures, it may be time to confront yourself, the situation and your significant other. What does your gut tell you about who is the current and your best course of action? Don't get this wrong, divorce is flat-out awful. There is no other way but through that hardship. A key question to consider is what one sets their sights on beyond that relationship and, if any kids are in the equation, how the family dynamic will change on the other side.

Relationships are about making each other's lives better by being together. And while that's not always possible, it's certainly the goal. And if that goal is clearly no longer achievable, then the choice is either to endure greater suffering for however long or endure the temporary suffering in moving on.

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Confront this very question starts with challenging yourself. How can I be happier living the life I do? Is my relationship or marriage beyond contempt and the joy in it unrecoverable?

If you are experiencing true, incessant, toxic contempt in a relationship that seems as if it's already over, it's almost surely best to turn around before you drown.

More to the point is that you as well as your significant other have one life to live and both may be better off letting go of one another. There's no way around it or to make it easier.

Being the one to initiate leaving someone is one of life's scariest and most difficult decisions. It's also why too many people suffer instead. They are unable to summon the courage to move on.

Here's another friendly reminder to rely on your Earned Confidence to recognize that you've already overcome every hardship until now and – therefore - know yourself to be fully capable of dealing with events in real time.

Which way is the current flowing?

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