

Additional Praise for...

The Long, HOT Marriage

In easy to understand language, Todd Creager helps couples, step by step, to higher functioning in communication and sexual relating. Highly recommended for couples at all ages and stages of intimate relationship.

—Doug Moseley, co-author with wife Naomi Moseley of *The Shadow Side of Intimate Relationships* and *Making Your Second Marriage a First Class Success*

The Long, Hot Marriage is a fabulous, yet practical guide for couples that strive to work on themselves to improve their relationship. Todd Creager has a warm, personal style that can gently help readers recognize common pitfalls to having a satisfying, intimate relationship. Then he tells simply and plainly what couples can do to correct them.

—Stephanie Buehler, Psy.D. Psychologist and AASECT Certified Sex Therapist

Todd Creager has written an optimistic book filled with strategies and techniques to help couples appreciate the emotional and sexual value of a marriage which is both creative and sexual. Mr. Creager is at his best when he describes creative exercises to increase individual and couple risk-taking to break emotional and sexual impasses.

—Barry McCarthy, coauthor with wife Emily McCarthy of *Rekindling Desire- A Step-By-Step Program to Help Low-Sex and No-Sex Marriages*

Every chapter in Todd's book will have you saying, “Oh, yes, that’s happened to me.” The beauty about *The Long Hot Marriage* is that it doesn't slam you with boring and cold psycho-babble about why your sex life isn't working.

Todd masterfully and gently holds your hand and walks you through the maze of complicated emotions we call human sexuality. It's like having a best friend and a trained therapist to talk to you in front of a fireplace with a cup of warm cocoa. Read this book—it's fun and your sex will improve!

—Michelle Quintana, Owner of Bulldog Creative Copywriting

**The
Long,
HOT
*Marriage***



Todd Creager, MSW

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Firstly, I want to acknowledge my good friend and former supervisor, Pat Carney. He got me started as a social work apprentice in my private practice in 1982 and I have cherished my relationship with him ever since. He helped shape my earliest understandings of couples and families and how people change. The way he has handled life's adversities has also been an inspiration to me.

Secondly, I want to thank all the other mentors and authors who have influenced the way I work with my clients. Special mention has to go to Judith Milburn and Doug and Naomi Moseley. Judith Milburn helped me appreciate the mysteriousness and awesomeness of our unconscious minds as well as the link between spirituality and psychology. Doug and Naomi Moseley taught me so much about how to treat couples in ways that are powerful and effective. I coordinated couples workshops for them for several years where my wife and I participated as well. They were also invaluable in helping my own marital relationship mature and thrive.

Thirdly, I want to acknowledge the people that helped me with my manuscript for this book. Chuck Kelly, my editor, is a truly talented man with the English language and helped me write some difficult to describe concepts in ways that people can more easily understand. After working with him, I have a great respect for people that are good writers. Also, my long time associate, Jan Wagniere, LCSW, gave valuable feedback. I appreciate her time and attention.

I want to acknowledge the thousands of clients through the years, whom have allowed me into their lives. I love what I do and appreciate their trust in me.

I want to acknowledge my parents, Mortimer and Dorothy Creager. My dad, who passed away four years ago, taught me about kindness to others. My mother, whose spirit and passion for life continues to soar at the age of 87, taught me that if I wanted to achieve something, I had the internal resources to do it, no matter what.

My lovely and precious daughters, Arielle and Danna have taught me so much about myself as a person and parent. Of course their biggest gift to me is the joy I feel when I am with them. I am truly blessed with them in my life.

And last but definitely not least, I want to thank my wife, Cherie. Through our 24 years of marriage we have experienced tremendous joys as well as pain. We have learned and continue to learn about what it takes to handle emotional pain more creatively and how to enjoy each other more fully. Our relationship keeps getting better and I am looking forward to our future decades together. She is a woman who is so dedicated as a wife and mother and continues to get more beautiful as time goes on.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1: The Art of Bringing the Best Out of Your Partner

Chapter 1:	Learning to be Creative in a Marriage.....	1
Chapter 2:	Beware of Your Perceptions of Your Partner	7
Chapter 3:	High Impact Partners	21

Section 2: Dealing with Pain

Chapter 4:	Developing Emotional Muscle.....	31
Chapter 5:	Two Partners, Many Characters	45
Chapter 6:	Choosing Connection Over Control.....	59
Chapter 7:	Anger & Sexuality.....	69

Section 3: Sex & The Married Couple

Chapter 8:	Romance & Other Pleasant Connections.....	77
Chapter 9:	The Making of a Great Sexual Partner.....	87
Chapter 10:	Sex & Personal Growth	106
Chapter 11:	Receiving in the Bedroom.....	120
Chapter 21:	Concluding Thoughts	140
Bibliography		144
Very Helpful Resources		146

DISCLAIMER



Here is my important disclaimer. Read the book and follow it. It is a roadmap to a fulfilling relationship and sexual life with your partner. However, the book should not be taken as a substitute for a skillful marriage/sex therapist. Most of us need a knowledgeable therapist to help us navigate the challenging and sometimes turbulent waters we face in a marriage. Our old habits can get in our way. We need to overcome and go beyond our old behavior patterns. To some degree, we can do this on our own. However, it may be beneficial to work with an experienced third party to help change old habits/patterns that get in the way of a successful marriage.

INTRODUCTION



“Sex and marriage are like oil and water. They just don’t mix.” “Look, I knew sex would decrease with kids and all the stuff we have to do every day.” “I remember the days when you wanted it as much as I did.” “I wish we could go back to the old days when we had sex all the time.” “I guess I have to accept that we are roommates and I will have a sexless marriage.” “There is no way I am staying in a sexless marriage. Do you know any good family lawyers?”

As a practicing marriage and sex therapist for over 25 years, I have heard variations on these statements thousands of times. A lack of passion in relationships seems to be the norm, for most married couples. There are of course couples that seem to go on having great and frequent sex forever. This book is for that large majority of couples that wish they could recapture the excitement of the sexual peak of their relationship. However, it is also for those couples that are having frequent, satisfying sex, because odds are their emotional and sexual relationship can still improve significantly. Also, even couples having frequent sex may feel left with a feeling of inadequacy because they are depending upon their sex life to hold their marriage together and realize that it lacks creativity and heart.

This book aims for a deeper connection that links the married couple together so that both partners continually desire each other sexually, emotionally and spiritually. This book *embraces* sexual problems as inevitable and then leads the couple to developing the attitudes, feelings and behaviors needed to be a “Full-Bodied” couple. Like full-bodied wine, a “full-bodied couple has a robust relationship that is rich and alive. The “full-bodied” couple stays connected through the deepest and darkest most

painful moments as well as through those moments of warmth and intense pleasure.

This book is written with the sole intention of helping you discover your abilities to create a marriage that nourishes you and your partner. I have tried to make it pragmatic as well as thought provoking. The First Section is The Art of Bringing the Best Out of Your Partner. This section emphasizes your ability to be creative and have an impact on your partner. I put this section first on purpose. When you get out of the “victim” mentality and decide to be a positive force in your relationship, you will be able to do what the rest of the book asks of you. Section 2 is all about Dealing With Pain. I am convinced that most couple’s dilemmas stem from the fact that most of us had parents who did not know how to deal with their own or each other’s emotional pain. Fight or flight reactions rule supreme in the emotional conversations and challenges of marriage. (i.e., “I’m outa here!” instead of ‘Let’s talk about it.’) Couples need to learn to deal with emotional pain in healthier ways; ways that lead to more rather than less connection. This is a crucial step to having more joy, sex and passion. Section 3 is Sex and the Married Couple. This section is probably why most people would pick up this book; the important thing to remember is that the first two sections have as much to do with having a long, hot marriage as this section. This section deals with myths of sexuality and the importance of correcting them. It talks about how to use the sexual arena of your marriage as a way to develop as a person and become more alive. It talks about the importance of “healthy dependence” and how to give as well as receive good energy, love and pleasure from others. The information in this section will definitely accelerate you along your journey toward a more passionate marriage. There are exercises throughout the book to help you practice developing the skills, mindsets and positive habits to help you achieve what has been discussed in the book.

This book focuses on several important slices of marital life and sexuality. It cannot cover the gamut of all dimensions of relationships. I did not include physical influences such as chronic illness or hormonal influences even though they all need to be considered. In my own practice, I often work closely with physicians and other health care professionals for

these problems. There is a growing body of work regarding the biological side of sexuality. Drugs like Viagra and Cialis have helped men with erection problems return to sexual functioning with their wives. These erection problems could stem from physical causes such as effects of certain types of medications, certain chronic illnesses or hormonal changes and the general effects of aging. Also, when there have been psychological factors such as anxiety, Viagra and Cialis has helped these men refocus on their partners as opposed to obsessively worry about performance. I also do not talk about sex toys and aids to spice up your life. I am not at all opposed and often times will encourage such products. There are many books that are out on topics such as these. My only issue with drugs and other external supports is when the couple does not look within at the real issues/problems and too quickly depends on these aids to fix their marriage. This book helps you tap into your inner resources to have a more passionate, caring and fulfilling relationship with your spouse.

Marriage is not easy. It beckons us to grow from within and stretch our creativity and imagination to the max. If you are looking for a quick fix, this book is not for you. The ONLY way to re-sexualize marriage is 1) learn how to think about and act toward your mate with more imagination and creativity, 2) learn how to connect through both pain and pleasure and 3) discover your own sexual potential. Without developing those emotional strengths and skills, you are probably doomed to repeat the same patterns that got you where you are now. This behavior will likely continue with your current mate-- or on to your next partner.

You have something to do with the re-vitalizing of your marriage. It could perhaps be bad news because now you have to get actively involved in creating something new, something better. You cannot just sit passively and wait for your partner to be the catalyst of change. And, it could be good news because as you learn to develop those creative muscles, you can have a tremendous positive influence on your relationship.

There is reason to hope because you have undeveloped emotional capacity that when developed could lead to a great sex life with your partner. Could you imagine what could happen if each of you develop that emotional muscle? I do not have to imagine it. I have seen countless

couples in my office who had given up hope, on the brink of divorce, had one or more affairs, etc., and find their way back to each other. They successfully created a connection that they never had before resulting in a vibrant, caring relationship. A lively passionate marriage is possible. Let us begin!

(The use of gender in this book is arbitrary and interchangeable unless I clearly state that written material specifically pertains to either male or female. The arbitrary use of gender helps the information flow easier without having to refer to both genders each time. The cases are actual cases from my private practice. The names and certain situations have been changed to maintain confidentiality).

3

High Impact Partners



No matter what I do, it is never enough for her.” Do you ever feel that way? Do you get frustrated feeling that you can never please your partner? Do you see yourself as a spouse who contributes greatly to the household, family, finances, etc. but your partner seems to only focus on the negative? Many partners experience that kind of frustration. It would be easy to categorize the unsatisfied partner as difficult to please, ungrateful and/or moody. However, there may be another reason for her displeasure and there may be a relatively simple solution to her disappointment and your frustration.

Giving from Your Weakest Link

High impact partnering is when a partner does or says things that uplift the energy of his partner in a big way. The high impact partner does and says the things that have the most leverage to have the most significant positive effect on his mate. Ask yourself, “What makes my partner tick? What does she like? What is the one thing my partner needs from me, that if I gave that to her, she would be elated?” You could be giving in all kinds of ways but if what you are doing is not what is essential to her emotional

well being, it is not going to give you what you want. It is natural for you to give in ways that come easy for you. For example, you may be a very handy person and you can fix things around the house, build furniture and do other projects that improve your family's living situation. In addition, maybe you help with the kids, bring home a good paycheck, and sometimes wash the dishes! Meanwhile, you have a wife who more than anything wants to feel emotionally close to you. She wants to learn more about how you feel, what you want and what your dreams are. She also wants you to show interest in what she is experiencing. She would love to have you ask her questions that allow her to express herself to you. Despite all your giving, she may be unsatisfied if you do not spend the time and energy to attend to her emotional needs for closeness. With high impact partnering you are going to ask what the core needs of your partner are. You may have to stretch outside your comfort zone to meet her needs. Giving your attention to her feelings as well as expressing your own may not be a natural skill you have. It often takes giving from a less developed aspect of yourself to be that high impact partner.

Curiosity

You need to get curious about your partner's needs. What makes your partner feel alive? What thrills his or her soul? What motivates your partner? You need to apply those questions to yourself as well. Your answers to these questions can become guideposts to making decisions to creating a lifestyle that benefits both of you. Your answers can help you plan the days of your life to make sure you experience those things that evoke your enthusiasm as well as that of your mate. In order to have a "Long, Hot Marriage," each person needs to have an emotional spark; that feeling of joy to be alive and a high level of energy to devote to one another. As part of a couple, it would behoove you to help find your spark as well as that of your partner.

Examples of High Impact Partnering

Ted and Lori were married with a 13 year old daughter. Ted was an electrician and owner of a small but successful company. His wife was the office manager and accountant. Ted was great at managing crises whether it was technical or interpersonal. Sometimes, the way he solved problems did not take into account that he was possibly setting up some bad precedent for the future. In his home life he also lived in the present, sometimes eating too much, drinking too much, and looking forward to sex with his wife. His wife was turned off by his overweight body and his excessive eating and drinking habits. Lori was an attractive, energetic women who thrived on organization and feeling a sense of progress. This need for “progress” was experienced both at work and home. Her face would light up whenever she talked about some improvement she made at work, or when her daughter accomplished something significant or when her husband handled a challenge at work with poise and skill. Sexually, she felt that because he was out of shape, they were not enjoying sex as much as they could. At work, she was frustrated because despite his great skill as an adaptable crisis manager, she did not see him doing things that would eventually help the business to grow. He was angry because of her constant negative feedback and his inability to please her sexually as well as in other areas.

In therapy, each partner began to understand each others core needs. They softened their perceptions. Instead of Tim seeing her as non-accepting and controlling, he understood her need for progress and mastery. Instead of resisting her, he now was motivated to develop healthier eating habits. He drank less and exercised more which led to his having more confidence and a greater ability to enjoy sex. His willingness to “make progress” in his health had tremendous positive impact on her. She even found herself overlooking some of the less important irritants. She was able to appreciate his desire for excitement and fun and made it a point to be more fun herself!

At work, they both learned to appreciate each other's complementary strengths. He realized that even though he had to focus on the present, he needed to have one eye on the future as well and see the big picture. This was not a natural process for him; if left to his automatic habits, he would not even think about the future implications of his way of handling work challenges. Lori needed to let go to some degree of her need to have things in perfect order. She understood that if her husband had to always check himself and not be spontaneous that would deplete his energies. She saw his need for freedom and spontaneity as a valid need rather than an obstacle to her need for constant maximum progress and ideal strategy.

Ted and Lori recognized the core needs in each other and stretched themselves to give each other as much of what each needed to thrive. This stretching has to be done consciously and consistently. They had their occasional setbacks as we all do. He would start to see her as too controlling and she would start to see him as too impulsive. The good news for this couple is they were able to shift out of their power struggles and come back to this central principle of high impact partnering.

Paying Attention to What Elevates Your Partner's Energy

Here is a great question to ask your partner. "What would you like to do if you had the opportunity that would make you feel more alive?" You need to know what makes your partner feel glad to be alive and to encourage those behaviors. It becomes obvious that there are two winners when you do this; she wins because she gets to feel alive and passionate and you benefit because when she feels this way, chances are she will give you more positive attention as well.

My wife loves to go Israeli Folk Dancing. I like it too, but it is a struggle for me since it can be challenging and I am not as coordinated as she. I encouraged her to go every week to the dance class even though a part of me would have loved her to stay home so that I would not be the only one having to deal with the kids' homework, bedtime, etc. When she returned

home from dancing, she would be in a wonderful mood and treated me as if I was the husband of the year.

When I work with couples I sometimes say that if one partner is having it too much his way then the other is possibly being too accommodating. Ultimately both partners lose out when this happens. If you have a partner that is too accommodating and is not doing the things that makes her tick ultimately her level of aliveness decreases. A person at a high level of aliveness is joyful, passionate and enthusiastic. A person at a low level of aliveness is depressed and/or apathetic. There is a continuum between these two extremes. At a lower level of aliveness, she is not going to want to have sex with you because she is not going to be motivated, or she is too tired. Sometimes it takes sacrifice on one person's part to encourage the level of aliveness in the other, just as I did when my wife went Israeli folk dancing. There has to be a constant give and take between two people.

These are some possible questions to ask yourself AND your partner:

- What are the types of people you need to be around who make you tick?
- Do you need to be alone at times?
- Do you need to be around more people?
- What am I not doing or saying to you as a spouse that if I did, would make your day?
- What are your dreams?
- Do you have a secret fantasy?
- Are you passionate about your job? If not, what kind of job would you like to have?
- If we could arrange our lifestyle differently that would suit you better, what would that be?

Of course this is a small sample of questions, but I am sure you get the idea. Be constantly aware of what makes your partner tick.

Bob and Nancy

Nancy was very frustrated with her husband. They had some major issues with their oldest son. The son, now approaching his mid- 20's was still at home, not trying to get a job or going to school and sponging off his parents. Nancy wanted Bob to finally put his foot down and give their son the ultimatum- "Find a job and start paying rent within a month or you are out of the house." Bob did follow through with making that statement to their son. Bob had been a passive parent who did not set boundaries with his children. The house was run by the kids, an upside down situation that happens in homes where parents do not give structure and give in to children's impulses in order to keep the peace. He was trying hard to change some of his parenting styles; not only with the older son but with all three children. Despite his progress in his parenting, his wife was still frustrated. She often had a sour look on her face and Bob was getting more and more discouraged. He was ready to give up.

I realized that Nancy was always needing to manage and oversee things and taking on too much of the masculine role. What she really needed was to feel feminine; feel a sense of, "My partner is being strong for me and being there for me." Even though he was making progress as a parent, he was *responding to her direction* and he needed to be more of an *initiator and give Nancy a chance to respond to him*. During one session, I said to him, "I want you to make an impact on Nancy right now in this session. What can you do right now that would make her feel a sense of hope, a sense of femininity and give her other good feelings?" He looked at me and we stared at each other for a minute or two but I did not say anything. After a few moments, he took her into his arms and he gave her a mad passionate kiss on the lips. She was surprised and you could see her whole attitude was

different. I asked, “Was this the kind of thing he does at home?” She said, “Never.” This self-initiated act was definitely different.

What he did in my office had nothing to do with parenting, or with him being more cooperative; it had to do with him being a leader in the interaction and giving his wife a chance to receive and respond to him. She totally softened and they walked out hand in hand. This shift of emotion between them continued throughout the month their son was still living with them. The son did not look for a job and was kicked out of the house. The significant point is: as important as it was to follow through with the son, the behavior that had the major impact was the husband’s ability to initiate and evoke new feelings in his wife. He did something spontaneous—and she liked it.

Declare that you will be a High Impact Partner. Ask yourself, “What is something that is really difficult for me to do that if I did it, there would be a good chance it would make a positive impact on my partner?” Asking this question will often lead you to come up with spontaneous ideas. Sometimes, these ideas, if followed through require you to tolerate some anxiety or discomfort if it is not a natural behavior. Be willing to tolerate some anxiety to get the benefits of being a High Impact Partner.

1. The “logical, thinking” husband devotes 10 minutes minimum per day to sharing and listening with his “feelings-oriented” wife.
2. The sexually conservative wife surprises her husband with a sexy strip-tease.
3. The husband who drinks too much goes to AA and demonstrates a willingness to “clean up his life.”
4. The wife who spent money to feel good chooses to get therapy and live within the family budget.
5. The overly serious husband pulls his wife off the couch and dances with her in his living room.
6. The wife who can be overly critical starts a new habit of telling her husband the things she appreciates about him.

You may see yourself in one or more of these scenarios or maybe you can think of your own scenario where you and/or your partner are giving but not in the highest impact area. You can probably imagine the impact of these kinds of behavioral changes. As you discover your highest leverage actions, you can look forward to the transformative power of your new behaviors that can instantly raise the energy inside of your partner and the aliveness in the relationship.