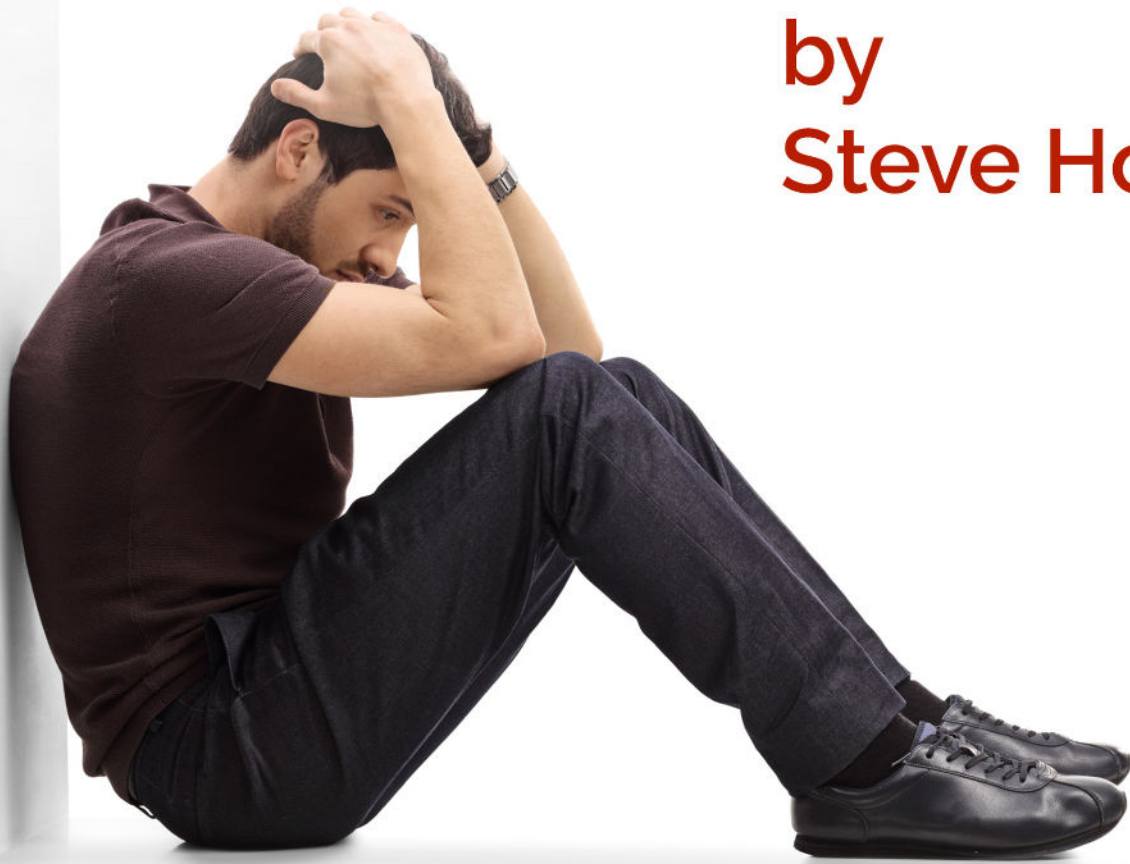


Every Man's Marriage Nightmare

How to Wake Up and Fix It Right

by
Steve Horsmon



How To
DEFUSE THE
DIVORCE
BOMB™

Is This How a Married Man's Life is Supposed to Go?



Pete stormed out of the house into the cool night air after another stupid argument with his wife, Barb. The last thing she said was, “I just can’t take this anymore! Don’t you even hear how you talk to me?!” The door banged shut just after he heard her begin to sob. Again.

Blinding anger and deep sadness – the feelings were such a confusing combination.

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Pete leaned on the fence behind the garage and looked at the stars, wiping tears and snot from his face. This was a side of the aching knot in his gut he would NEVER show Barb - or anyone else, for that matter. He always let her do the crying.

In fact, she'd been doing most of the crying, yelling, complaining, nagging, and door slamming for the last 3 years.

Pete prided himself on keeping his cool. He was good at dodging her emotions when she got crazy like this. But he seethed at how she was always able to make everything his fault – as if she were perfect.

His resentment caused him to defend himself with cruelty. He would try to use logic to disarm her and make her feel stupid. Then he could quickly deliver an uppercut of “You’re just like your mother and you don’t make any sense!” It worked every time.

The pattern in their arguments was so predictable. He could see conflict coming a mile away, yet he didn’t know how to avoid it.

He shook his head to clear his mind as a sudden breeze dried the tears on his face. He was so stuck in this way of relating to Barb that he saw no alternative. It was probably too late anyway.

He started doing “divorce math” in his head again, trying to determine how bad it would be. What would be the financial outcome? What about the house? The boys? Our friends? The dog?

No matter how he tried to calculate it, it was a bad deal. His aching heart made that crystal clear.

This is not how his life was supposed to go.

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Just then, he heard someone clearing their throat in the dark behind him. It startled him. He whipped around to see who it was. Before he could make out a face he heard them say, “Another fun night, huh buddy?”

It was his stepfather Mike, the man who adopted him when Pete was five years old. He and Pete’s mom lived just down the road and Mike had walked over to get a tool Pete had borrowed. With the windows wide open, he’d heard part of the argument.

Mike was a powerful and caring man of very few words. He had been Pete’s “real father” for 40 years and was the only predictable source of comfort and compassion he and his mom ever knew. Mike managed to create those feelings without much conversation. He was better with stern looks and hugs than he was with the English language.

Mike knew Pete inside out and was well aware of what had been going on in his marriage. There’d been plenty of guy-talk over the years, but Mike and Pete never had a serious man-to-man talk before. That would change tonight.

With steely eyes and a kind, measured tone, Mike said, “Pete, it’s about time we had a talk.”

“About what?” Pete said, pretending to swat a mosquito from the lingering droplet on his right cheek.

Mike grinned and said, “You don’t know this, but before I met you and your Mom I was walking in your shoes. I’ve been in exactly the same place you are now. I’d like to help you avoid some of the huge mistakes I made – if you’ll let me.”



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At this stage of marriage a man has overwhelming feelings of frustration, fear and sadness. It's these emotions that tie us in knots and make us anxious.

That means we start doing really stupid things that makes things worse. We just don't know what we don't know!

Our nervous "hummingbird" energy comes out and we start asking endless questions. We want to know "WHY?" We want to talk too much. We want explanations and long conversations and we keep pushing for information to help understand and FIX things fast. And it's this approach that may have gotten us here in the first place. At this stage we typically don't know who or where to find help.

Read on to see Pete's next revelation...



Mindless Things Men Do... and Then Ask for Sex?



Pete agreed to go with Mike down the street to a local all-night diner for a cup of coffee. As they slid across worn vinyl seats into a booth, a waitress came to take their order.

She was wearing the diner-issued red button-down shirt tucked tightly into a pair of well-fitting jeans. Her kind voice and cheerful smile invited Pete to make eye contact...much longer than was appropriate for a coffee order.

He felt Mike's foot nudge him on the shin under the table, then caught his disapproving glare.

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“What’s that look for?” Pete demanded.

Mike rolled his eyes and said, “I guess this is as good a place to start as any. I’ve seen you stare at other women just like that before when Barb was sitting right next to you. You do it all the time.

When it comes to being aware of how much your behavior affects your wife, you don’t know what you don’t know. Sometimes a man needs a kick in the ass to understand it. That’s what it took for me.”

Mike went on to remind Pete about Barb’s experience of living with her father. Simply put, her dad was an emotional bully. He was an insecure man who used yelling and criticism to build himself up around everyone else. His kids got the worst of it and Barb could not wait to leave home on her 18th birthday.

What Barb had seen in Pete was a wonderful, kind man who she hoped would save her from ever feeling abused and inadequate again. When they were married, Pete assumed Barb left all that behind.

Mike explained how Barb shares something with thousands of women who have similar experiences with men as young girls and as young women in college. In relationships with men, women experience closeness, trust, connection, and attraction based on one important thing: their feelings.

They trust their instincts of feeling safe or unsafe, respected or disrespected, valued or unvalued, attracted or repelled. And they will react accordingly. A man must know how to create the positive feelings his wife needs if he wants her to respond positively to him.

Pete squirmed impatiently in his seat and asked, “How in the world am I supposed to know what makes her feel good or bad about me?”

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Mike continued, “It all starts with you deciding that you WANT to consider her feelings and understand her emotional triggers and her needs. It might seem unfair that she hasn’t just given you an ‘instruction manual’, but the truth is that revealing those things is scary – just as it is for you. You’ve got to learn some things about your influence as a man that nobody ever taught you before.”

Pete’s eyes narrowed and he asked, “So, that’s why you kicked me under the table?”

Mike answered, “That was lesson number one about the dozens of mindless things you can do to scare or hurt Barb. When she sees you staring at other women, her feelings of trust and connection and her sense of well-being with you are slowly whittled away.

When you attack her well-being, she will react through anger, disrespect, resentment and distance. You usually don’t see what is really happening right in front of your face and then you react defensively toward her when she reacts. You don’t know what you don’t know. And then you ask her for sex. How’s that been working for you?”



At this stage we’re ready to learn more about what we don’t know. When Pete asked Mike, “How in the world am I supposed to know what makes her feel good or bad about me?” he is admitting he doesn’t know enough about Barb’s needs for feeling safe and attracted to him. He was putting all kinds of subtle demands and pressures on her without even knowing it.

This is where we learn how to STOP putting the subtle pressures on her which increase tension and emotional distance. Pete is starting to learn how to “stay in his lane” and out of her “bubble”. By reducing his anxious attachment to Barb’s moods and reactions to him Pete will instantly begin to be liberated as he cuts the cord to the “Femometer”.

Why Women Can't Stand Men Who Are Stuck in the "Good Guy Zone"



When Pete got home after the coffee talk with Mike, Barb was already in bed. He noticed she took the time to clean up the whole kitchen and the place looked great, as usual. He felt an uneasy twist in his stomach as he realized he never showed much appreciation for how hard she worked around the house.

Pete slipped between the cool sheets of their king-sized bed and tried not to wake her. She made it clear she wasn't asleep by the way she tightened the sheets and scooted even further to the edge of the bed. Barb couldn't let him see how much she had been crying.

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Pete stared at her back and felt an angry chill. He hated how that made him feel! But after his talk with Mike, he also started wondering how SHE must be feeling and why.

Guilt set in as his face tightened and he thought more tears might bust loose. He wanted to talk to her, but assumed she wasn't interested. If only he knew what she really wanted most at that moment!

He sighed deeply.

The last thing Mike had said to Pete that evening was keeping him awake. He said, "Until you figure out exactly what you stand for as a man and as a husband, everything will feel confusing and difficult to you. And you will continue to blame Barb for those feelings."

Pete recalled the clichés he heard over the years. *You gotta stand for something or you'll fall for anything. And, If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there.*

He always liked those kinds of sayings and figured he had done a decent job of setting his values. He always did great in school. He had multiple job offers out of college. He worked hard and was the most dependable guy in the world.

Bosses and coworkers loved him, and so did his weekend car racing buddies. All of the women who knew him found him to be funny, attractive, and trustworthy – except for Barb.

In fact, Pete remembered her saying about a year ago, *"Just because you're a nice guy doesn't make you a good husband."* It hurt and confused him then, and it still did.

Mike had once asked Pete a question he hadn't heard before: "If you could choose only one, would you rather feel liked or respected by other people?" Pete had immediately chosen *respected*. His first reason was that he thought it was what Mike wanted to hear.

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But, truthfully, Pete thought the feeling of being respected felt more satisfying than just being liked. And as he looked back at his life, it was clear that he would DO almost anything to make others like him. He didn't have any values that guided him toward BEING a man others respected.

As he started drifting off to sleep, Pete remembered Mike saying something about how women couldn't stand being around a man who always tried to DO things to be liked by her. He said people were drawn to guys who knew how to BE a man and **respect himself**, like a ship to a safe harbor.

Becoming that kind of man depended on him knowing what values drove his thoughts, words, and actions toward everyone around him. Pete wasn't sure he knew what those values were and, apparently, Barb wasn't so sure either.



At this stage of Pete's growth he is realizing that he has more expectations of Barb than he has had for himself. This is a common "good guy" pitfall. We expect others to be, do or say the things we want in order to feel better about ourselves and our relationships. It's okay to have expectations FOR your relationship...but it's not effective to have "silent demands" that she make you happy or feel good about yourself.

This is where we find out that knowing what we stand for is critically important. We need clearer principles about who WE are and how we want to show up as a strong, secure, confident man.

We must have a clear picture about who we want to BE and what we have to GIVE before getting worked up over what we're not GETTING from her. This is where we first meet our "inner Mountain Lion." He's the one who will help us calm down, relax and find our naturally attractive confidence and self-respect.

The #1 Mistake ALL Good Guys Make in the Romance Department



“Do you still love her?” Mike asked as he bit into his hot pastrami sandwich. It was Saturday and Mike had invited Pete to join him for lunch at his favorite deli in Old Town. Not knowing what his next steps with Barb should be, Pete accepted the offer.

Pete paused and began, “Well, yeah, I love her. I mean, we’ve been having a lot of issues and sometimes she’s not so loveable, but sure – I guess I still love her. It’s just that she doesn’t seem to love me anymore and it’s hard to...”

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“Just stop,” Mike interrupted, visibly tired of Pete’s rambling. Mike noticed that whenever Pete talked about his wife and marriage he constantly referred to Barb’s attitude, her mood, and what she was or wasn’t doing for him.

Being such a “good guy” had always gotten Pete whatever he wanted – except from Barb. He was frustrated that he wasn’t getting what he wanted from her. His desire for trust, approval, affection and sex was never satisfied. And he would openly complain, joke and criticize her for it in front of his friends and family.

Mike asked, “Why do you think Barb doesn’t give you what you want from her?”

“I don’t know,” Pete said. “I bring home good money, I fix stuff, I’m a good dad, I help clean, we have a nice house, I tell her she’s pretty...don’t I deserve to be treated like a husband? I mean, I’m pulling my weight. She should pull hers, right?”

“So the secret deal you’ve made with Barb is that if you do all that stuff, then she is expected to shower you with hugs, kisses, appreciation and sex. Do I have that correct?” Mike challenged.

Pete stumbled for an answer. “Well, I wouldn’t call it a ‘secret deal’, but what’s wrong with expecting her to give something back?”

Mike looked down at his sandwich and drew a long, deep breath. He was ready to tell Pete about one of his biggest obstacles in his relationship with Barb.

“Pete, a marriage has no room for secret deals. Those might work just fine in many friendships and professional settings where everyone accepts the implied agreements about giving and getting. A sense of fairness and reciprocity from both parties can make those relationships thrive and feel easy.”

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Mike leaned in towards Pete, “To be crystal clear for you, **this does not apply in your romantic relationship** and is one of the most important things you need to understand. You need to fix this.”

Pete was confused and replied, “But, HOW do I fix that?”

Mike said, “You first have to SEE it and FEEL it from her perspective. Barb feels that your love has implied conditions. Your willingness to show her love is continuously adjusted by your opinion of how well she loves you back.

When you do something for her, you secretly think you are banking points to GET something from her later. She has no choice but to respond with decreased trust, respect, and attraction if your love is conditional and you are giving only to get something back.”

Pete realized he had been operating this way since the day he was married 13 years ago. He has watched the slow decay of his relationship every year since then.

Because the downward spiral didn't happen in a straight line, he didn't pay much attention to it in the first 7 years. But it sure seemed to accelerate over the last 6 years as Barb decided that she just couldn't pretend to respect him anymore. That's when the intimacy really dried up and eventually turned into Pete's current reality.

Pete is holding onto the last dregs of his romantic relationship by going for a goodbye kiss each morning. On the good days Barb will allow him to touch her lips. There aren't a lot of good days anymore.

“So, you said you used to be in the exact place I am now. Did you feel as horrible as I'm feeling now?” Pete asked.

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“Yep,” Mike smiled. “Sucks, doesn’t it? The truth is that for tons of us “good guys” it is a necessary step in our life. It kicks our butt. We feel guilty. I know Barb isn’t perfect, but this isn’t about her. The question is, are you going to decide to make some changes or are you going to just see how things work out for another 13 years?”

Pete thought about the question for about 2 seconds. “I want to change. I WILL change.”

His look was thankful and a little desperate as he asked Mike, “Can you help me?”



Here you see that Pete is really starting to get it. We call this the “conscious incompetence” stage where we become VERY clear about what we’ve been doing wrong and how ineffective it has been at getting us what we want.

It was this line that CLICKED with a loud “pop” for Pete. “You first have to SEE it and FEEL it from her perspective. Barb feels that your love has implied conditions. Your willingness to show her love is continuously adjusted by your opinion of how well she loves you back.” This is Pete’s ability to empathize with Barb finally showing through.

This simple change in perspective is what made Pete see how much of a nervous Hummingbird he had been. It’s what moves him to really want to understand how to be more of a Mountain Lion - the man he really wants to be for HIMSELF FIRST.

Women Are Irrational, Ungrateful and Crazy... Aren't they?



Pete was both excited and nervous about what he was learning from Mike. He felt badly about how he'd handled a lot of situations with Barb and was anxious to start trying out a different approach using his new perspective.

And while he felt strangely optimistic, Pete was concerned that he might screw up. Mike wasn't available again until next Saturday – 7 days from now. But Pete was confident he knew what to do.

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Pete was up early the next morning. He knew Barb liked to sleep in on Sundays and often complained that she never got any time to relax. Pete got dressed quietly, confidently leaned over, and gave her a light kiss on the cheek. She was awake but didn't let him know that. She thought, "I wonder what that was all about."

"C'mon guys, let's go get some breakfast and let Mom sleep in," Pete whispered to his 6 and 8 year old boys - Devon and Jake - who shared a room down the hall.

Pete's plan was to get the boys out of the house before they started making their normal ruckus and woke up Barb. He would take them down to the local coffee shop for donuts and he would grab coffee for himself and Barb. By the time he got back, she would be awake and appreciate that he had thought of her.

It felt like a brand new day and a new lease on life. The sun was warm and there was good music on the radio. The kids got along great on the ride back home and Pete was thinking about how well his plan worked.

Why didn't he think of things like this more often? Why did he so seldom think of ways to let Barb know he cared about her needs?

He remembered Mike saying how many men fall into a pattern of being focused only on their own needs and appearing selfish and controlling to their wives.

Not today, though. Pete's plan was perfect.

"Really, Pete?" Barb was in the kitchen when they got back home and the boys showed her the remnants of their chocolate donuts on their faces.

"Donuts for breakfast for kids?" she said with an annoyed grimace. "I guess those are the kinds of dumb decisions boys make. Now I've got three little boys to worry about. What were you thinking?" she demanded.

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Pete took a shallow breath and said, “Umm...I brought you some really good coffee. We thought we would let you sleep in.”

Barb took the coffee and as she walked back to the bedroom she said, “Yeah, thanks for the coffee and for feeding our kids crap for breakfast.”

That was it. Pete’s day just went from fantastic to horrible in about 60 seconds.

And he was instantly smoldering mad.

That’s when he lost it.

He slammed his coffee cup on the counter and followed Barb down the hall.

At the top of his voice he screamed, “What the fuck is the matter with you? I try to do one nice thing for you and all the appreciation I get is you chewing me out for buying donuts? Why can’t you just ONCE treat me like a husband who’s NOT an idiot? Why can’t you just say thank you for the coffee?!”

Before he could say another word she slammed the bedroom door and cried, “Just leave me alone!”

So he did.

Then he turned to see two scared chocolate covered faces looking at him and once again, he felt guilty. Sad. Defeated. Confused.

As he went for a wet paper towel to clean up the kids, he wondered if he could wait seven days to talk to Mike. He was wondering if this marriage was even worth the effort. He was dying to ask Mike what the hell he did wrong.

He didn’t have a clue and was sure Mike would agree that Barb was totally in the wrong. She was acting like an irrational, ungrateful crazy woman.

Pete thought to himself, “Surely Mike would see it that way. Wouldn’t he?”

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This is the point where our “inner mountain lion” wants to be seen. We begin to deliberately change how we’re thinking and being without seeking permission and approval.

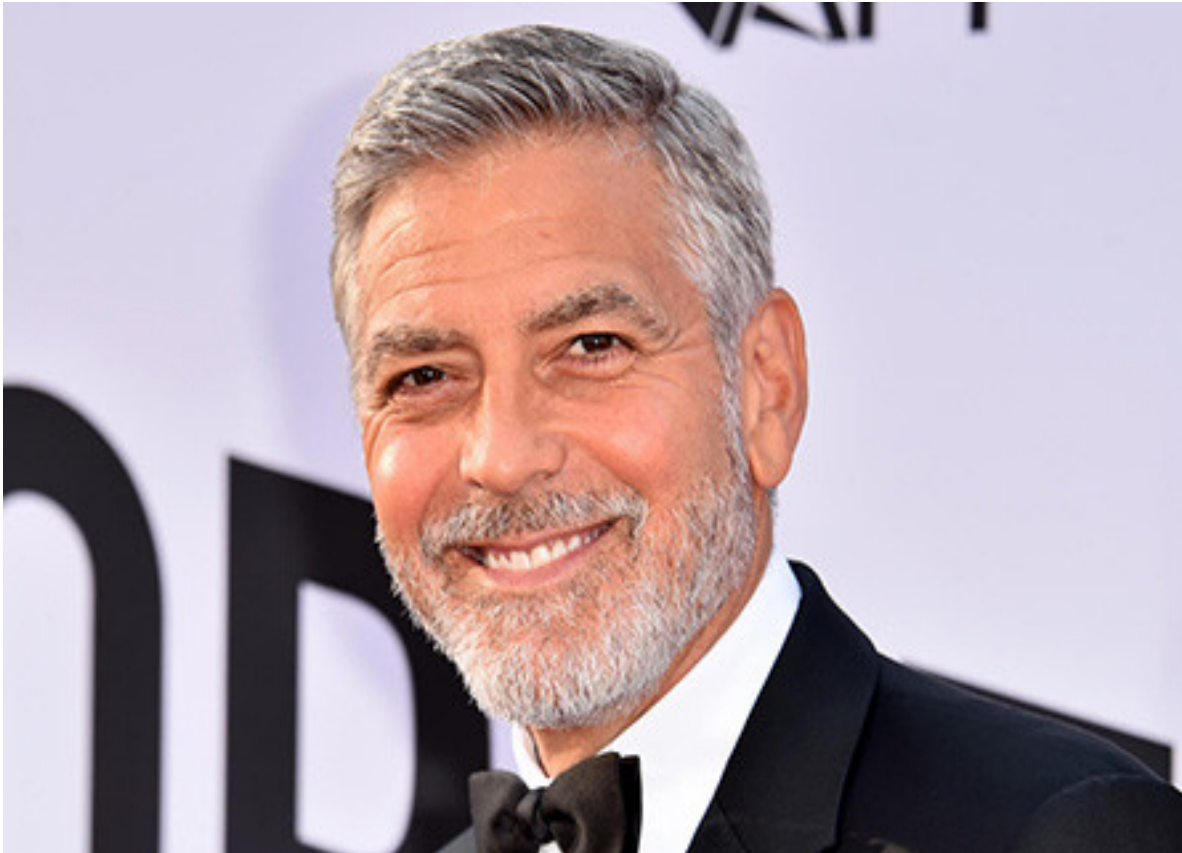
However, at this stage we’re a little wobbly in our confidence and are trying on a new attitude and new behaviors. This is when we will be tested. Pete came up with a plan on his own.

He thought it was a great way to take charge and give Barb something he thought she really needed. He was also secretly hoping it would “win brownie points” and she would finally show some appreciation.

Barb knew this was his hidden agenda and tested him. And he failed. This happens a LOT with young Mountain Lions, but it’s absolutely necessary as we learn how to take charge of ourselves without looking over our shoulders for “brownie points”. Pete is figuring this out and he’ll do much better next time.



If George Clooney Had to Put Up With Her, What Would He Say?



After the big blow-out on Sunday, Pete moved through the next week like a zombie. He was numb about work and numb about his marriage.

What scared him was that he was starting to like it that way. It was much easier to NOT feel anything than to deal with the resentment and anger that was waiting for him if he allowed himself to feel again.

Barb seemed to be in the same boat.

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All week long they were functional roommates who went through the motions of child care, housework, meal preparation and bill paying. Pete didn't even try for his normal kiss goodbye in the mornings. He wasn't even sure if he was attracted to her anymore. She certainly wasn't attracted to him.

Finally Saturday morning came and Pete couldn't wait to meet Mike at the same diner where they'd had their first meeting. The same cute waitress glided over to their table to greet them and take their order.

Pete refused to even make eye contact as he mumbled his order – a Denver omelet, wheat toast and coffee. Mike grinned at Pete, then he gave her his order along with a hearty thank you and an appreciative smile.

“Jeez, Pete,” Mike said. “You won't turn to stone if you look at her!” he kidded, trying to lighten Pete's obvious dark mood.

“That's just it!” Pete said, clearly frustrated. “I don't know WHAT to do around women anymore. It's like I'm walking on eggshells everywhere I go – even work. I'm second guessing how I'm supposed to talk to Barb or look at women or how to respond. I've lost any mojo I might have had. And Barb senses it too. It's just easier to not bother trying anymore.”

Mike recognized the defeated look on Pete's face. He knew it well. And he knew exactly what Pete needed to get his mojo back.

Pete took about 15 minutes to explain to Mike what happened last Sunday during “The Big Blow Up.” Mike listened carefully without interrupting and let Pete vent. When he was done talking, Mike asked him a question.

“What do you think you could have done differently that might have preserved the ‘best day ever’ feeling you had at the start of that morning?”

“I don't know,” Pete said. “I was hoping you could answer that for me. She was wrong, right? She was being unfair and irrational, right?”

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Mike grinned again. “Let’s say that she gets to have two days every month where she isn’t perfect. Pretend for a minute that you KNOW without a doubt that on two random days per month, Barb will react to you like she did last Sunday. Now, if you knew this last Sunday, could you have chosen a different way to respond to her?”

Pete said, “I suppose so, but she really got under my skin quickly. She called me a little boy and implied I was stupid. But I guess if I knew this was just one of her days, I might not have reacted so badly and just let her take the coffee and be alone. But that’s not what happened...she ALWAYS...”

“Stop,” Mike told him. “Back up and tell me how the morning WOULD HAVE gone if you’d thought about your response instead of reacting emotionally like you did.”

Pete took a deep breath and thought out loud. “If I’d just let her take the coffee and go away to be alone, there wouldn’t have been the “Big Blow Up”. She probably would have gone back to bed to watch TV and be mad for a while. Then I would have gone outside with the boys to play Frisbee or something.”

“Then what?” Mike asked.

“Then Barb would have eventually gotten dressed and come out of the bedroom. Then she would probably glare at me and give me the silent treatment for a few hours.”

“Would that have been a better outcome than what happened?” Mike asked.

Irritated, Pete said, “Sure it would have been better, but it still would have left me upset that she reacted to me so disrespectfully and took no responsibility for it!”

Then Mike asked him the most difficult question of the day.

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“Pete, what if you were the director of the ‘movie’ that played that Sunday in your kitchen? What if you had the job of writing the perfect line – one sentence – for the guy playing you? What would you write? Let’s say the actor playing you is George Clooney. What would he say and how would he say it?”

Pete smiled and shook his head. “I don’t know. Let me think about it for a minute. This is interesting.”

Mike just drank his coffee patiently and waited for Pete to write the perfect line.

What Pete came up with was simply amazing. And it was the beginning of another one of Mike’s memorable lessons that would change Pete’s life forever.



At this point Pete is learning something about what it means to be a grown Mountain Lion. They DON'T GET RATTLED over little things. They don't allow opinions or over-the-top reactions from others to change how they feel about themselves and their values. And only when he can remain calm and un-rattled can he RESPOND (not react) in ways that build trust and ATTRACTION.

By giving him a “do over”, Mike is teaching Pete how to THINK differently so he can pause and then respond in a way he is actually proud of. And this kind of response is always more effective and safe than an angry reaction ever will be.



The Perfect Line George Clooney Can Teach All Married Men



Pete was beginning to feel more relaxed and the emotions of “The Big Blow Up” were fading. He wanted to impress Mike with his answer to the question.

“Pete, what if you were the director of the ‘movie’ that played that Sunday in your kitchen? What if you had the job of writing the perfect line – one sentence – for the guy playing you? What would you write? Let’s say the actor playing you is George Clooney. What would he say and how would he say it?”

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Pete looked Mike in the eye, cleared his throat, and said, “I think I would have said nothing at first and let her blow off some steam.”

“Then later, after she came out of the bedroom and the boys were out of the room I would have Clooney say, ‘Sweetheart, you can **not talk** to me all day long if you want – it’s really okay. It won’t change the fact that I’ll probably let you sleep in again sometime, take our boys for donuts, and bring you coffee in bed. You need to know that your sniping at me for chocolate donut breakfasts doesn’t scare me and it doesn’t change the fact that I love you. The boys and I want to see a movie in town today and you’re invited too if you want to join us.”

Pete added, “Then he would gently hold her shoulders, kiss her on the cheek, and walk away.”

Mike threw his head back and laughed so loudly the whole diner turned to look at them.

“Perfect!” he cried. “Clooney nails it again!”

Pete said emphatically, “You know, I really meant what I said there! It wasn’t just a script. I DO love her and I was telling the truth about wanting to do things like that in the future.”

“I know that!” Mike exclaimed. “That’s what made it perfect. It was perfectly clear and perfectly true. I’m proud of you, man!”

“Well, why is it so freaking hard to be clear and true in the heat of the moment?” Pete asked while trying to hide his watery eyes with a dirty napkin.

Mike smiled and said, “It will get easier. Give yourself a break. It took me YEARS to figure out how to respond in ways that reflected who I REALLY wished to be. You will get there, Pete. Keep working and I promise you will get there. Your marriage is the perfect ‘boot camp’ for you to figure this out and become a man that YOU are proud of.”

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Then he added with a more serious tone, “Try not to resent Barb for being a skilled drill sergeant. She is perfectly equipped to bring out the best in you if you learn how to handle it.”

Mike and Pete must have killed 4 pots of coffee that Saturday morning at the diner. That might explain why Pete was getting so wound up at the end of their breakfast.

But it wasn't all about the caffeine. Pete was starting to feel a sense of well-being he never felt before. His talks with Mike and the things he was learning created a sense of purpose for Pete that gave him a knot in his gut – a really GOOD knot. It was a knot of anticipation. His head was clearer than it had been in a long time and that gave him a feeling of confidence and strength.

Mike told him those are the feelings a man gets when his character is clear. That “good knot” is caused when a man realizes he really is the captain of his own boat and of his own character.

The sense of well-being is that he will be okay no matter what challenges he faces. Mike explained that's what confidence does for a man. It gives him the reassurance that he will be able to figure out anything that comes his way and he will respond to it effectively.

A man can respond on his terms without apology or fear of judgment. He can do it from a place of strength AND unconditional love. And in his romantic relationship, he will respond with the best interest of his relationship in mind.

His priority is to create a safe environment where his family and his lover consistently feel trust, respect and adoration.

Men who get to live their lives like that are not rare – but they are special. The most important lesson Pete has learned so far is that these men are not born special – they must choose to be special. And this means they must choose to live, learn, fail and GROW.

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This process lasts a lifetime and there are no shortcuts. Urgency and impatience in our relationships will always serve to disappoint us.

Through our commitment to personal growth and our willingness to accept guidance from other men on the same journey, we WILL create the life we want. We WILL have the love we want.

And we will become the man we want to be every step of the way.



Now you can see that Pete is starting to get it. And he's really liking this version of himself. His new response was perfect because he OWNED his response and was clear and unapologetic about his values around his decision.

When he asked Mike, "Well, why is it so freaking hard to be clear and true in the heat of the moment?," he was acknowledging that his EMOTIONS have been hijacking him in the past. He could never say anything clear, calm and strong because he was insecure in his fear of what Barb would say and how she could make him feel.

*This is all changing now as Pete is becoming "consciously competent" in his new skin. **This is where a man begins to really RELAX and feel liberated from the fear of reactions and the tension of uncertainty.***



Three Months Later: Barb Says She's Done



For the next 3 months, Pete felt more driven than ever before. He was committed to keeping his relationship with Mike and they met about once a week to talk.

It felt like a switch flipped for Pete.

His desire to learn and grow as a man and husband was no longer all about Barb!

It was about him. His time with Mike was non-negotiable. He MADE time for it because it was more satisfying than the half-dozen things he might be doing otherwise.

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Pete began to get crystal clear about some very important things and it was changing his life. He was learning about:

- **Why his impatience and temper drove Barb away and how to control himself**
- **How to build more confidence in himself and why Barb was attracted to that**
- **Where his negative thoughts came from and why they were complete B.S. and were sabotaging him**
- **When he should make a stand for his values and when he should be more accepting**
- **What Barb needed at a deeper level to feel more trust and attraction and desire for him**

From Pete's point of view, the last 3 months went pretty smoothly. He and Barb still had ups and downs, but they got through conflict and tension MUCH quicker than before.

There was more respect. More kindness. And a LOT more appreciation.

The things that used to result in a big "blow-up" were addressed more quickly before they escalated.

And he no longer feared the idea of divorce. It hasn't even crossed his mind.

Pete was really starting to feel good. Maybe TOO good.

Pete Overhears Something Disturbing

Barb's best friend, Eva, stopped by on Saturday morning and they were talking in the kitchen. Their hushed voices made Pete curious and he couldn't help but eavesdrop.

The first words he overheard Barb say were, "I'm done, Eva".

He gulped so loudly he thought they heard him around the corner.

"Done with what?" Eva asked.

Barb replied, "I'm done with settling for a mediocre relationship."

Now Pete was getting concerned...until he heard the rest.

"I've decided I have to be done with my role in allowing bad stuff in my marriage. I have to be done with silly arguments and snarky comments."

Barb continued, "Pete's been talking with his step-father and has been trying hard to be more consistent and more connected. He isn't blowing up like he used to and he really wants to make this work. I know he loves me."

Then Eva asked, "After all this time, do you trust he can change?"

Barb said, "I know. That's been my problem. I've been really guarded and skeptical. I've purposely made it harder for him because I'm afraid to trust. I'm done with that too. I have to change too."

"He says he wants to be a better leader. Well, he's not the only one who can lead. I've got just as much to do with how we get along as he does. And I'm done with expecting him to be perfect because he never will be. I'll have to be the perfect one, I guess." she kidded.

Pete smiled. He had heard enough and already felt guilty for listening.

But it felt good to know what Barb was "done" with. He was done with the old relationship too. He was done with the way he had handled himself and his marriage. And the idea that Barb also wanted to lead the way to a new level was exciting!

Things that go Bump in the Night

That night, Pete and Barb finally got the boys to bed, straightened up the house and crawled into their own bed around 11pm.

Every Man's Marriage Nightmare

Their new ritual was laying in bed and cuddling naked while they took turns telling a story until one of them fell asleep. This kind of closeness was new to them and they felt like teenagers in the way they secretly whispered and giggled about the stupidest things.

As Pete was falling asleep to one of Barb's better stories he heard her say, "Pete, are you awake?" When he opened his eyes he saw her staring directing into his - about 6 inches away.

"Make love to me you stud", she whispered with a grin in her lowest, sexiest Hollywood voice.

He was wide awake again. And with his strong hand around the small of Barb's back he drew her close to him quickly and firmly. When she giggled loudly Pete said, "Shhhh...we don't need any company."

Their lovemaking was intensely sensual and playful at the same time. They couldn't get enough of each other. It was so comfortable. So natural. Just so...damn good!

Soon they were both exhausted, satisfied and asleep.

Their intimate connection was nothing like the "good old days". It was SO much better than that.

Pete knew they were creating something new - something they both always wanted. And he finally felt **confident** in his role in leading the way!



There's a point at which a man gets whacked upside the head with a 2x4. We call it the "2x4 of Clarity" and that's what has hit Pete squarely on the noggin. This is an incredibly satisfying moment when we realize that there's a whole new way of living within our Mountain Lion frame.

Every Man's Marriage Nightmare

CONSISTENCY is the key here and our changes will seem only temporary without a clear and conscious desire to stay in this frame.

Barb's realization and acceptance of Pete's changes occurred only because she believed he was doing it for himself and not to change, control or impress her. This is the next step of moving into "unconscious competence" which is a natural state of being for Pete. It's trustable, believable and safe. It's also INSPIRING for Barb to want to meet him at this new level of honesty and trust.

It's the STARTING POINT for a healthy, mutually loving and respectful relationship. **And Pete accepted the challenge to lead the way.**

Will you accept the challenge? Are you ready to start moving in a direction of YOUR choosing?

This is the direction of self-reliance, self-respect and unapologetic leadership toward and new way of thinking and being in a relationship.