

## Post Marital Stress Disorder

Written by Scott C. Endsley

Wednesday, 01 November 2006 00:00

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"I never want to see you again!" She venomously hissed to my face. I stood there emotionless as she screeched away with my \$400 leather jacket, flagging in the wind (with arms flapping wildly) at 60 MPH. It apparently got caught in the passenger door as she slammed it behind me. Yes, after two brief marriages and one broken nose, I decided to try dating again, in spite of the fact I don't own an automobile. Which I admit kind of puts a damper on things, but heck; I can't afford an automobile right now... I gotta save all I can just to buy a car!

Anyway, I have to confess I'm a bit cynical when it comes to long term relationships. When somebody proudly announces they've been happily married for 40 some odd years, I have to ask, "Oh really, who's winning, and what's the score?" I used to melt with delight when a woman would utter, "You're so different from all the other men...." Now, a few years older, and no less wiser, I answer back in self-defense, "Yep, that's what makes me just like all the rest of them!" You see, I'm starting to come around in my early middle age.

Though I haven't proved it to be science yet, I think I know what happens to women not long after they marry. When you're dating, she loves to do your clothes, she begs to cook you dinner, and she graciously offers to wash your dishes. But then it happens! Not long after you slip that ring on the 3rd finger of her left hand, gold poisoning begins to gradually seep into the main artery going up her arm. After a month it spreads into the heart, where the poison is pumped even more rapidly into the brain. Another two months and she begins to have dizzy spells and mood swings. Then one morning she spots your dirty underwear napping on the bathroom floor (with many of its other more interesting bedfellows). Foam immediately drools from the corners of her sudden fangs, she may even vomit blood, as a lethal combination of hydrophobia and distemper sets in... and that once-immaculate angel suddenly arises from the pit of hell, and roars, "I'M NOT YOUR MOTHER!!!" And you being a typical stupid male, then offer the carnivorous beast flowers, hoping it will save your head from being bit off.

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Unfortunately most, if not all husbands in this world, suffer from Attention Deficit Disorder and there just isn't enough Ritalin to go around. Some of them are always the last to catch on to some of the most significant things in early marriage. In one severe case, a certain poor gentleman with whom I'm well acquainted, began to, by accident, brush his teeth with Desitin Diaper Rash Ointment one morning and immediately started asking questions. He thought "Dr Jones" was the young bride's current English Literature Professor in college when he called about 10 months ago to tell him how she fared on, what the groom assumed was, a "composition" test. The unsuspecting husband could've sworn the doctor's very words were, "Your wife is a very 'poignant' woman!"

As all new parents soon realize, new additions to the family never come equipped with a user's manual. And just because you've finally begun to figure out last year's model, the new one you invested in 9 months prior, is not going to be any easier to maneuver, or in some cases, manipulate, than the first one! For the first three years, a husband, who used to be the cock of the roost, soon realizes he's been demoted by this new little Five Star General to buck private. But around age 4, the once "commanding officer" begins to look up to daddy for all the answers. I recall fixing my first born breakfast one Saturday morning while mommy slept in. "How many eggs do you want this morning, Aaron?" I asked.

"Eggs?!" He cried, "you can't eat eggs, they're drugs!"

Huh?!" I quizzed.

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"Yeah dad... You know... 'This is your brain... This is your brain on drugs!' You know, that commercial!"

I laughed, "No son, that was just an analogy..."

"Uh... What's an analogy?"

I thought for a moment as to how to explain. "It's sort of an illustration."

"Oh..." He shrugged. "What's an illustration?"

"Well, it's uh... you know, something that represents the point you're trying to make..."

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"Represents?"

I sighed as I reached for the frying pan. "You're having two eggs this morning, son."

As we sat before our burnt breakfast after saying thanks, Aaron rudely reached over my plate to fetch the ketchup. "Son," I scolded, "you know not to just reach over my plate like that. What's the magic word?"

His inquisitive blue eyes seemed to stare right through mine. "Hocus Pocus?"

Those are the fun years. At that stage of life they begin to realize you hold the seat of power, and they are not part of a 'touchy-feeley' democracy, rather under the thumb of a tyrannical military regime. But about a decade later when the elder son discovers his Adam's apple, and daddy's little girl begins suddenly and vigorously re-inventing the telephone, you realize they have no intentions of re-enlisting, much less saluting you during bedroom inspection. Around this period you become bewildered by their dress, their speech, and no matter how much you swore to your parents that it would be different when YOU grew-up and had kids, their music. "But dad, I don't want to grow my hair long and play a guitar!" My son has often protested.

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But I must say that my kids have been the only saving grace of my first marriage. I observe their moral conscience and values. I sense their high aspirations for life. I marvel at how well they are exceeding through their academics in school... And I'm forced to confess with pride as to how well they've raised me. They took an apathetic and chronic procrastinating, under-achiever (that had no goals in his younger life other than to be a rock and roll star) and gradually groomed me from the time of their births, into maturity with the responsibilities of fatherhood. My son constantly feels compelled to teach me how to pick out clothes, while my daughter insists that I wear my hair a certain way, and most imposing, they're both very guarded as to who their bachelor dad goes out with.

So here I am sweating and rehearsing as to how I should introduce my latest flame to their scrutiny; which brings me back to my new lady-friend hydroplaning away, at a super-sonic speed, with my \$400 leather jacket, after our first brawl.

I don't really understand what makes anyone want to get up off the floor after two near technical knockouts, and try again for a third round to find that perfect someone. But I have come to some resolve. I've been going about it all wrong. If this newly budding friendship, in fact, does lead to a meaningful and lasting relationship, she's going to have to realize that I too fall short, by a slim margin, from perfection from time to time. The front yard might one day be declared a national wildlife refuge, as I'm prone to sometimes forget to mow the lawn for a few consecutive weeks. The dishes in the sink may stack so high once in a while that it requires an oxygen mask to get to the top of the pile. My clothes might often stage a week long "sit-in" next to the toilet every now and then too. But if she ever says she's had enough and leaves me; this time, I'm going with her!