

F*** It. Get A Divorce



The guide for optimists

Steven Kane

Welcome



We're living one of the greatest experiments in the history of humankind, to try to create what has throughout history been considered a contradiction in terms: the passionate marriage. We're asking so many things from one person. We're asking one person to give us what once an entire village would provide. And couples are crumbling under the weight of so much expectations. Very few people achieve marital bliss. A lot more are miserable from it. They think they're deficient.

—Esther Perel

Get happy



Happiness requires the ultimate sacrifice: To give up one's unhappiness.
—Marty Rubin

Are you unhappy?

What is happiness? Philosophers, artists, preachers, therapists and gurus eternally ponder that, grasping for *positive* definitions, distillations of the essence of contentment.

Not me. I give up. The question's too neat. Happiness isn't a *thing*. It's a whimsy, a "know it when I feel it" ephemera. And each person's happiness is unique to them, evolving and changing moment by moment.

So then, *what the heck?* The main premise of this program is that we all deserve to seek happiness. And should do so. And so

therefore, by definition, we should not stay in unhappy relationships. But if I can't even be bothered to say what happiness *is*, how dare I tell people to turn their worlds upside down, to go after it?

Easy.

See, here we rely on a *negative* definition of happiness. Meaning, I'm pretty confident I know what's it's *not*.

Happiness is *not being unhappy*.

I know, that's messy. But stay with me, I think it'll do.

I'm not going to try to convince you I know what happiness is for you. Or for anyone. But I am going to try to persuade you that we can best pursue happiness, whatever it may be, by eliminating people and things that make us *unhappy*.

And I daresay: We all know what *unhappiness* is. And we all know what it feels like when we manage to remove a cause of unhappiness from our life.

It feels good.

Or at least, it feels like relief. Like our inner balance scale, with happy on one side and unhappy on the other, is tilting just a wee bit more to the happy side.

For me, that'll do.

I mean, if I jab you with a pin, when you grab the pin away, you feel happy, not because grabbing the pin is a "happy" event in and of itself, but from getting rid of the poking. Imagine I wasn't jabbing you. Would you feel happy grabbing a pin away from me?



I know, it's not a shattering or novel insight. But I'll take it. Because it works here. Here, it doesn't matter that I don't have a clue what happiness *is* for you because if I *do* know you're in an unhappy situation, then I feel confident saying that eliminating *unhappiness* is a positive. It's just common sense.

Clear as mud?

- 1) I won't pretend I know how to make you happy.
- 2) If you say you're unhappy, I accept that you are.
- 3) I'll try my best to help you become less unhappy.

Deal?



By the way, this is not relationship therapy. Or personal therapy. The world is full of valuable and wise “fix your relationship” and “fix yourself” counsel. But this isn't that.

Probably, you're perplexed how you got from “there” to “here”—from delight and sex to tedium and texting. We blink and ten years have passed. What happened? Naturally, we want to try to understand. Just, not here. Relationships go sour in a million ways, but for our purposes, it doesn't matter how you got to an unhappy place. All that matters is, you're unhappy. And that, maybe that can change.

Yes, it does matter why your relationship isn't working or may never work again. Yes, it matters what choices you made, what you did well and poorly, and what you may be able to do better going forward by being more reflective and self-aware. But still, this isn't therapy. It can't be. I don't know you. And in any case, I believe that regardless of how one gets in a funk, the single most important step towards getting out is to be able to say, *I'm in a funk. And I want it to stop.*

It doesn't matter how you got there. You're in an unhappy relationship. And that's totally OK. And marriage is indeed a valuable, important institution. And commitment is essential to successful relationships. But it's no sin, no failure, to find oneself feeling unhappy to be bound to one human for an entire life. On the contrary, it's utterly predictable. Most couples today end up unhappy. In the modern age, it's just not reasonable to think two people will meet, randomly, then commit for life, then not come to regret that decision, ever, decade after decade. *Both of them.*

Of course, the decision to move on is a *huge* one, a literal life changer in every possible way. To even think about making such a momentous choice, maybe it's best to start small, carefully consider whatever factors should go into such a resolve. Say, like answering a basic question:

Are you unhappy?

Exercise

Of course, most people feel they are just one “me,” just one person for their entire lives. But there’s an interesting counter view:

Actually, we’re not just one person. The “me” of 20 years old is quite literally a different “me”

at 40. And 60. Or wherever we place the age breaks. Consider: if the “you” of 20 met the “you” of today, would they agree on everything? Violently disagree on some things? Think the other one was an utter fool or even repugnant about anything?



For this exercise, try to imagine: What will make your “me” of, say, 20 years from now unhappy? Or happy?

And don’t just imagine all this in your head. Make a visual aid. There are several, excellent, free smartphone apps that can eerily, accurately age your selfie pictures, showing what you will probably look like X years in the future. Download one of these apps. Age your own picture 20 years. Print out that “Future Me” picture, put it in a nice frame on your desk or someplace you see it often, and get in the habit of asking “Future Me”: What are you unhappy about? How long have you felt that way? Was there anything I (now) could have done to make your life less unhappy?

There are many “make me look old” apps. Search “make me look old” on the Google Play or iTunes App Stores. Or here’s one well reviewed app, Oldify: <http://www.oldify.net>