

Week Eighteen

Maybe The Grass Is Greener

No matter how good or wise a choice you have made in a spouse, there will be times when you will not be completely satisfied with that choice. So, what is to be done in those circumstances? Your commitment needs to be put into high gear! This is best done by protecting your mate from unfair comparisons - “what-ifs” and “maybes.”

Here is the cascade of events that occur when people become more than just friends. Enjoyable common experiences can lead to attraction. Recent research has demonstrated that if the attraction is not properly handled, within 30 days that attraction becomes an obsession. Again, if the obsession is not recognized and ended, research tells us that within 60 days a physical relationship develops. At that point, the viability of the marriage is obviously threatened.

This version of events, thinking seriously about alternatives, happens equally among men and women. This is the definition of a clinical term known as *alternative monitoring*, which is thinking seriously about what it would be like to be with someone other than your mate.

How is this situation best handled? Rather than indulging in alternative monitoring, it is important to recognize that this is a significant warning that someone (possibly you) is unhappy with their mate. The solution is to re-inject high levels of dedication into your own marriage, in order to protect it from attraction to others. With low levels of dedication, the monitoring of alternatives will be taken more seriously, and the marital relationship becomes threatened.

Next week: Characteristics that lead to infidelity.