

Is your marriage in checkmate or stalemate?

Marriage chess anybody? Every chess player knows that when the Queen is taken, the ability to win the game without her is in dire jeopardy. When the King is in check, he better get out of the way. If that piece is taken, the game is over. Checkmate! When the King can't move and is about to be taken, essentially the game is over.

Men, how valuable is the Queen regarded in your home? Is she being well cared for? Is she being given the latitude of freedom to make the moves on your board so she can do the best for you?

Ladies, how protected and esteemed is the King in your home? In chess, the King, though thought of as the ultimate strength as a male, in reality is the weakest piece on the board. His moves are limited to one short square at a time. He is very vulnerable and is easily susceptible to the opponent's moves. In the home, the male is more vulnerable than most women appreciate. Men feel loved when they feel they are respected and held in esteem.

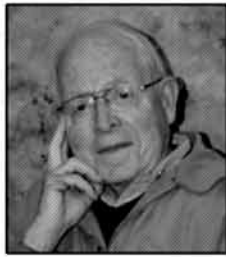
Women often need to know they come first in a man's life and that they hear the words, "I love you" frequently and matched with the deeds of a courteous respectful Knight.

Not too long ago Cartoonist Dan Piraro in "Bizzaro" depicted a rather trampish-looking man in royal robes with a crown on his head. He sits in an ill-kept doorstep lamenting to a man seated near him, "home is my castle and I AM THE KING, and that's the way it is! But then my wife divorced me and left me with nothing but my crown and cape."

What gaineth a man and his kingdom if he looseth his queen? And what gaineth the Queen if she loses her King and both loose the Kingdom?

Insisting on having one's own way, not knowing when to defer, standing on one's alleged "rights" with neither party willing to yield often results in the loss of the Kingdom, the marriage, the family. As in chess, the Queen has a tremendously important role. Proverbs 31 describes the man who has a wife as blessed and that a truly good wife is worth more than precious gems. "Her husband can trust her, and she will richly satisfy his needs. She will not hinder him, but help him all her life." She is described as industrious and energetic, is frugal and yet generous to the less fortunate. She is a pearl beyond price.

In chess, one wrong move or a few successive wrong moves may often mean the loss of the game. The Kingdom goes under



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because the player did not foresee the consequences of his prior moves.

While there are numerous reasons why marriages end in divorce, some factors clearly play a predominant role over other ones. Heading the list are lack of communication and conflict resolution skills and money management issues. Coming in a close third is a disagreement about child behavior management. Often the child is a symptom, a pawn, used by struggling parents to claim their prideful rights.

Here are some other factors that impact marriages negatively.

■ **Lack of common courtesy.** Simply put, a failure to use good manners such as, "please, thank you, could I ask a favor of you? Would you consider?"

■ **Failing to acknowledge** the other person's feelings or to deny they should feel a certain way. "Go on, that's ridiculous. You have no reason to feel angry."

■ **Unspoken expectations** of what is wanted from the other partner. "Why should I have to ask him for help. Can't he see I am overwhelmed with the kids?"

■ **Mind reading** is supposing you know what your partner is feeling or thinking. "Oh, I can tell she is mad at me. I know her expressions." Unless one is a fortune teller, suppositions are rare guesses which may or may not be accurate. Even fortune tellers are not infrequently wrong. When in doubt what the feeling is, check it out by asking the partner what is going on.

■ **Inability to recognize carryovers** from one's own childhood that inject the unresolved issues with one's parents or other experiences into the marriage. The agendas may not even be recognized by the mate nor is one consciously aware of what the cause of conflict stems from.

■ **Unbroken umbilical cords** with the family of origin allows parental influence to analyze your marriage and give advice rather than doing one's own problem solving. Excessive contact or constant parental visits to the exclusion of other friends rather than spending more time with one's own mate will hurt a marriage.

■ **Sexual dissatisfaction** which goes unspoken or unresolved leads to a sense of rejection and inadequacy. Improperly handled, particularly for men, it becomes an issue that can lead to infidelity.

In chess, every move has a consequence, every chess piece has a role. Each inexorably affects the outcome of the game - the marriage game. Good chess players learn their plays from those more experienced as well as reading the chess books. What steps do you need to take to make your next best move?