28 Day "Jump Start Your Marriage"
from www.HopefulSolutions.net
Dr. Andrew D. Atwood, LMFT

Welcome to my "28 Day Jump Start Your Marriage" Program!

This is Day 1.

1. You will receive an email from me on each of the next 28 days, without a stop. That means 7 days a week, including weekends. I sure hope you can find a way to check your email from home or work, because the next 28 days will provide you with specific directions that will help you to "Jump Start Your Marriage." And, because you are subscribing to this free service through www.HopefulSolutions.net, where we offer the e-book *You Can Save Your Marriage* (And many others!), you will note that the focus of the next 28 days will be clearly on helping you to "Jump Start " your marital relationship. You might want to go to www.HopefulSolutions.net/sexless_marriage.htm for a 28-day program that will help you to "Jump Start Your Sexless Marriage." The format there is very similar to this one, but focused more on your sexual relationship. Here, the focus will be on what it takes to have a great relationship with your lover!.
2. Why 28 days? It takes 21 days to break a habit, and about 7 to start a new one. That is why Substance Abuse Rehab Programs are generally "28 day programs." If you don't use it, you will lose it. This is about changing attitudes within, and behaviors without. 28 days is what it takes to build real change, and real change is what we are about.
3. Here is an outline, in brief, of what you can expect over the next 28 days. I will give you some instructions and outlines to complete, some exercises to strengthen your grip on life, a questionnaire to complete online (takes about 40 minutes), some guidelines on writing frankly and honestly to your partner, and some tools for managing your anxiety. Each of the next 28 days you will have something to do, and each day will build on the work that you have done previously. This is an active course I have set for you! If you remain passive about your sexless marriage problem, you will never see any change happen. Do something! I'll help you with a focused 28-day program.
4. Get clear about your intent. You must work hard (and I will help you with this) to build a positive intent. In fact, the first few days will be focused on this strength building activity. If the exercises I am inviting you to complete seem goofy, or too difficult, do them anyway!! In life there is this basic injunction: If you want THAT, you must do THIS first. Everything in life is set up that way. If you want to get in your car and drive off, you have to get your keys first. If you want to have a romantic evening with your partner, you have to build a lot of intimacy

first. You understand what I am talking about. I know you do. You are going to get a positive intent and HOLD ON TO IT!

5. You are also going to let go of your own ego needs. Yes, this is going to be an exercise in letting go. The more you hold on to your own personal wishes and desires, the more controlling you will be and the more you will be stifled from getting what you want. The secret to fulfilling your heart's desires is to let go of the need to have them fulfilled on your terms. You have to allow life a little room to work its magic. So, let go of your own needs. Don't forget about them; just let go of them. Or, at least hold them lightly.
6. Be compassionate to your partner. There is no quicker way to drive your partner away than to be critical. Criticism puts your partner on the defensive. You have already doled out enough criticism already. Let's practice compassion for the next 28 days, and you will be a better person for it, and your partner, hopefully, will begin to believe you about day 21.
7. Save every one of these emails in a safe place. You might want to set up a secure online file for all of the work you will be doing. Don't be alarmed. I am planning on about 20 minutes of your time each day. So go ahead and set up a secure file right now, and save this email into it.

An email a day for 28 days, all ordered and planned to Jump Start Your Marriage. You will be invited to be actively involved, to let go of your ego needs, to be compassionate to your partner, and to save every one of the emails in a safe file somewhere on your computer.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 2 of my 28 Day Jump Start Program for Your Marriage!

1. "If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else." That is a great line, packed with wisdom. What it says is that if you don't live with a focused intent, you will wander through life. Your intention focuses your attention, and what you pay attention to is what you put your energy into, and what you put your energy into is what you create. We are going to work on your POSITIVE INTENT today.
2. Here is a little story for you that makes the point. Some research was done some years ago in a High School. At the beginning of the year the students were given standardized IQ tests, but the School Administrators told the kids (and their teachers) what each kid's IQ was, not based upon fact, but upon some formula that was derived from each kid's hall locker number. It was all kept a secret by the people doing the research. Guess what happened . . . Yup, each kid behaved in line with his or her reported IQ score, even though the scores were derived from locker numbers, not reality. My grandmother told me, "Andy, your life will be what you make it to be." She was telling me that the vision that I nurtured in my mind, was the vision that I would direct my energy toward, and that what I directed my energy toward, would be that which I created in life. If I nurtured a low IQ image of myself, I would put energy into being a low IQ guy, and create a low IQ existence for myself. Here is the point: Create a positive intent for your relationship with your partner and you will put positive energy into your marriage. Put positive energy into having great sex, and you increase the likelihood of having great sex tremendously! If you think otherwise, you will create otherwise.
3. Spend the rest of the day; between now and when you get my next email, in "analytical meditation." That is, quietly consider the positive intent you wish to create for your partner, for yourself, and for your relationship. Those three right there. Your partner, you, and your relationship. What is the positive intent you want to create for each? Ponder that until tomorrow.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 3 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. There is only one assignment for today, and it is a critical one. Find 20 minutes and write non-stop about what you want out of your relationship with your partner. You spent some time in the last 24 hours reflecting and pondering on what your positive intent was for your relationship, and now it is time to focus your thinking. Just throw your fingers across the keyboard and write, non-stop, for 20 minutes. Keep going; don't worry about punctuation, spelling or grammar. Just write as much as you can in 20 minutes about what you want and get it ALL out there. No one will look at this but you, so let it fly. 20 minutes, non-stop! We will build on this in the days to come. **What positive stuff do you want from your relationship?**
2. Make sure you save what you write. Don't clean it up. There are better ways to spend your time than fussing over this quick 20-minute exercise. Save your rough letter and move on with your day.
3. Once you have written it, then put it away and let it go. Just let it go and don't think about it anymore until I coach you to do so. Just let it go. All of it.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 4 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Every now and then life gets tough. We all have to handle a variety of stressors in our lives, and that includes you and your life. So here are a few questions that you can write about. (I am strongly encouraging you to write about these issues. If you don't you will lose them too quickly. In a few days you will be asked to make use of what you write today, so write and save! Trust me on this, and keep a journal somewhere – privately!)
    a. What do you do that brings calm and serenity to your life?
    b. Where do you go for calm and serenity?
    c. What do you listen to that brings you calm and serenity?
    d. With whom do you talk that brings you calm and serenity?
    e. What do you read that brings calm and serenity?
    f. What "self-talk" goes on inside your head that brings you calm and serenity?
    g. What physical exercise brings you calm and serenity?
    h. If you needed to calm down right now and find an inner peace, what would you do, right now?
    i. What do you do to make yourself feel wonderful? To give yourself some positive attention? To lavish on yourself? To be extravagant with yourself?
2. Here is why I am having you do this. Every now and then something happens in life and we are wounded. When we are wounded, we need to do something to heal. The above list is a list of what you do to bring healing to your life. Remember, you have the power to bring healing to your life. If things get tough between you and your partner, you can do any one, or more than one, of the self-nurturing and life affirming actions on your list. Save this list for future reference - to remind yourself that you are able to take care of yourself, and to heal yourself.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 5 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

This is another list day. Don't worry right now where this is all going, because you are focusing on your own self for a while, and building up your strength. More action between the two of you will come in a couple of days. There is a method to my madness!! Trust me.

1. Why did you get together with your partner in the first place? Make a list of the positive reasons behind your choice to get together. Make a list of 10 of the positive reasons for getting together way back in the beginning.
2. Now, make a list of 10 positive attributes your partner has. This isn't about you, because you have probably been too concerned with your own frustration of late. I am intentionally trying to get you to focus POSITIVELY on your partner. If you think all the time about how big a schmuck your partner is, your partner will be nothing more than a big schmuck! Remember the lockers! Make a list of 10 positive attributes your partner has. Consider personality traits, responsibilities, and habits . . . try to focus on things your partner does that are wonderful. Do not quit until you have a list of 10. Do not quit until then!!!
3. Because we are focusing on the very best in your partner, review your list and check to see if anything there is a veiled criticism of your partner. If it is, change it or cut it out. There is not room here for criticism, because criticism is one of the 4 viruses that kill marriages. I write about that in my e-book, *You Can Save Your Marriage.*
4. Save everything in a safe place.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 6 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. You are going to think this is a little nuts, but I am telling you that this stuff works! Proven. Remember, I had you write for 20 minutes, non-stop, about the good stuff in your partner? That was a couple of days ago. Do it again. Yes, do it again. Don't revise what you wrote 2 days ago, but start all over and do this exercise one more time. Write non-stop for 20 full minutes, nothing less, about the POSITIVE stuff you find in your partner. Just fill the page, 20 minutes non-stop, with the positive and affirmative stuff you find in your partner.
2. I am training your brain to look for the POSITIVE stuff! That's what we are doing. It is so easy to get lost in the negativity, and this exercise is literally training your brain to look beyond the negative, for the positive. I've had people do a variation on this exercise by getting 30 3x5 cards, and every day, for a month, write one positive quality they enjoy about their partner. One positive quality per day . . . but NO REPEATS! It is easy for the first week, and then it gets harder and harder. Over the 30 days, you have to reallllly look hard for the positive stuff, but you know what, you will find it. You will be forced to look more closely and more deeply for the good stuff in your partner. And, you will find it! And in the act of doing so, you will become a person that is positive, and that will make you more attractive to yourself, and your partner. Maybe you want to begin this 30-day exercise yourself? If so, go right ahead. Get some 3x5 cards and go at it!
3. For now, write non-stop for 20 minutes about the POSITIVE attributes your partner has, and save it in your private file. Just let it flow! No corrections, just flowing thought and feeling!

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 7 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

I've got 2 exercises for you to do today.

1. I want you to practice a simple breathing exercise, which I have borrowed from William Martin. Oprah featured one of Bill's books in her *O Magazine*, and Bill is one of my dearest friends in all the world. We have been buddies since 1973! Below you will find a Chapter from Bill's e-book. Remember, Bill is a Taoist Scholar, and his e-book is titled *Practicing Peace.* Within his e-book, Bill has 26 exercises and meditations like this. You can find *Practicing Peace* at www.HopefulSolutions.net. Go to our catalogue.

Balance

Nature never adds
without subtracting,
therefore always remains balanced.
But each day we add to our knowledge
and neglect to subtract from our illusions.
Each day we gain experience
but forget to lose our preconceptions.

Each day we grow in age
but still hang on to our worries.
How can we ever keep our balance?

****

You will never find balance by constantly trying to gain control of events, circumstances, and people. You won't fix your relationship by arranging everything "just right." Balance comes from letting things come, and go, according to their own rhythms.

For this exercise it will be helpful to stand quietly in a comfortable room or in some peaceful outdoor setting.

Allow the force of gravity to firmly anchor your feet to the ground.

Let your weight be evenly distributed across the bottoms of your feet - front to back and side to side.

Imagine a silken thread attached to your tailbone gently pulling your bottom downward just a bit, causing your knees to unlock and bend slightly. At the same time imagine another silken thread attached to the crown of your head gently pulling up toward heaven, stretching your spine into a natural alignment of its four curves.

Let your arms drift a few inches from your sides and rest against the magnetic field of your body rather than remain pinned tight against your body.

(This standing posture is called the "Resting Posture" in the art of Tai Chi Chuan and is very meditative and refreshing just by itself.)

As you breathe in and out, repeat to yourself some of the natural opposites of life such as:

(Breathe in) "Come . . ."

(Breathe out) " . . . Go"

Use a variety of the opposites – "have - lose, up - down, here - there, hold - release, loud – quiet" and so on until you find yourself at a Still Point, a balance amidst the ever changing nature of life.

2. Now, I want you to go to a website and complete an online questionnaire. You will find the questionnaire at http://www.positivepsychology.org/strengths. I first learned about this website from *The Art of Happiness at Work* by the Dalai Lama. It is a great book, and I recommend it to you. This website has a questionnaire that will take you about 40 minutes or so to complete. There are 250 questions for you to answer. When you are done you will be given a list of your **personal strengths as a person.** This is so very important!!! I have 5 personal strengths, and when I showed my list to my wife, she recognized me immediately. This is a very affirming exercise, but it will take about 40 minutes. When you are done, make sure you copy the final page with the list of your personal strengths, and then paste it into a word document for later reference. Then save that word document in your private file. Make sure you save this stuff because you will need it later on. Learn about your strengths right now!

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 8 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Here is another "centering exercise" from Bill Martin's e-book, *Practicing Peace,* which you can find in our Catalogue at www.HopefulSolutions.net.

Approval

Receiving approval from others
is like sitting by a camp fire on a dark Winter's night.
It is pleasant and comforting.
It warms the cold regions of the mind
and keeps the fires of confidence alive.

But if it is withdrawn the darkness descends,
the mind freezes in fear,
and confidence dies.

But if a fire is built in the center of the heart
the warmth will permeate the whole body.
Nothing can extinguish it.
No one can take it away.
From it countless campfires can be lit,
bringing warmth to everyone you meet.

*****

Childhood is an insecure experience. Most of what we need for survival lies outside of our control. Other, bigger, stronger people must provide it for us. As children we are completely dependent on the good will of these "bigger people." Outgrowing this deeply ingrained conditioning is difficult. We carry into adulthood the unconscious habit of seeing our well-being, even our survival, as dependent on the approval of seemingly stronger persons outside of ourselves.

Approval is nice. It is warming. But if it is withdrawn, then how will you keep warm? You must have a source of warmth, of fire, within you. Unless you have a furnace of self-approval as the bottom line of your life, you will never truly be warm nor will you be of warmth to others.

This does not mean that you have grandiose opinions of yourself or that you must never make mistakes. It does not mean that you do not cherish the company and help of other people. It simply means that you understand the truth that, you are adequate for your life! No matter what happens, you are adequate for your life!

The following simple exercise is one of the most powerful in this whole book. Regular practice of it will transform your life. It is sometimes called the "Position of

Compassion."

Sit quietly and breathe naturally and restfully. Place your right hand over your stomach and your left hand over your heart. As you breathe, feel the warmth begin to grow beneath your hands at both these places. As any disturbing thoughts arise, let them sink either into the heart or the abdomen and be dissolved in the warmth. Let all of your attention keep returning to the warmth and comfort of these two areas of the body. You are building awareness of your own inner fire, your own inner power. As this awareness increases you will begin to notice that you are less and less dependent on the "fire" of others and therefore more and more available for healthy and true relationships.

This exercise can be effectively practiced for only a few brief moments, but is especially beneficial if a longer time - 10 minutes to 30 minutes can be allowed.

2. While breathing deeply, imagine you and your partner having sex together, making love together. The trick to this exercise, here on Day 8, is that you have to imagine making love with the best in your partner. Recall the strong and good attributes your partner has? You made that list a few days ago. Bring that list to mind and make love to that person. Imagine the best in you making love with the best in your partner. Breathe deeply while imagining. Spend 10 minutes doing this.
3. Then, later on in the day, spend another 10 minutes doing the same thing. The best in you making love with the best in your partner.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 9 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. This is one of the BIGGEST and MOST IMPORTANT exercises you will do during these 28 days. Do this with an open heart and an open mind! I just know you can do it!
    a. Get those two letters you wrote on day 3 and 6. Remember, you just wrote them non-stop for 20 minutes? Well now, I want you to write them carefully, from the heart, and word for word. Re-write them into a letter that you could give to your partner if you wanted to. Same length. This time, you are really writing a letter to your partner. Express your positive intent for your marriage. What are the great satisfactions you would like to give, and receive in your marriage?
    b. Make sure it is your positive intent! This is not a time to criticize. If you slip in to that, cut it out and redo it.
    c. Use the list of positive attributes you have created to talk about the positive stuff the two of you have enjoyed.
    d. Focus on the positive! The POSITIVE!
2. Then save the letter in your private file and sleep on it all. Don't give the letter to your partner. Just sleep on it. Trust me. Sleep on it.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 10 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Today you will plant a seed. It will take some time to grow. You have been preparing the soil, getting it ready for the planting. Some seed that is planted on hard ground just doesn't grow. The seeds that are planted at the wrong depth just don't grow. You want to plant this seed carefully. Take some deep breathes and get ready to plant the seed that will help turn this marriage on.
2. Give your carefully crafted letter to your partner.
3. But, give it this way.
    a. "Honey, I've been putting some serious time into thinking about you and me and our relationship, especially our sexual relationship. And while I know there is a fair amount of anxiety about this whole subject, I do want to let you know what I have been thinking. I really want something POSITIVE to come out of this, and I want you to take this from me in the most POSITIVE way. I've written a letter to you because this stuff is hard to talk about. I'm going to sit right here while you read it. I don't need you to respond to it at all. But I would feel better if I just sat here with you while you read it. When you have finished reading it, I will just get up and go about my business. That's it."
    b. When your partner is finished reading it, say, "Thanks a lot. I really appreciate your reading that letter. Hang on to it would you? I'm still thinking about me and us and our sexual relationship and maybe we will come back to this stuff. Thanks again."
    c. Then go about your business.
4. You do not want to turn this into a confrontation. You are just planting a seed. That's all. Let it go and move on.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 11 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Now, get the list out that talks about your partner's strong attributes. Print it out and share it with your partner. Your conversation with your partner should not be critical, but should be POSITIVE. Ask your partner if he or she has any questions for clarity. You can help your partner to be clear about what you have written on your list, but make sure it never dips into criticism. Stay POSITIVE.
2. Then, share the results of your online questionnaire, the one where you have a list of your personal strengths. Just share that with your partner for information, but also, if it seems right to do so, invite your partner to go online and take the same questionnaire that I introduced to you on Day 7. This is a great opportunity to build positive will between the two of you, and to get some good conversation going about POSITIVE stuff. Do not coerce your partner into taking the questionnaire. Just invite your partner to do as you have done.
3. When you do this exercise, make sure you share your perception of your partner's strengths BEFORE you share your own list from the "Inventory of Strengths." You want your partner to understand that it is safe to be with you, that you are putting your partner before yourself in this instance.
4. If there is any conversation that comes from all of this, let it fly! Just go with the flow, as long as it is . . . you guessed it . . .POSITIVE.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 12 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. We are taking a little bit of a breather today. Look at what you have done so far.
    a. You have worked at a more POSITIVE attitude.
    b. Written a couple of drafts, and then a good solid letter to your partner in which you share your positive intent for your marriage, for the most important relationship in your life.
    c. You've made a list of your partner's positive attributes, as well as a list of your own positive attributes.
    d. You've completed an online "Inventory of Strengths" and identified your greatest strengths. Maybe your partner has gone on-line and completed the same "Inventory of Strengths."
    e. You've begun to share with your partner some of your soul's sincerest desires.
2. If your partner hasn't written you back, this would be a good time to ask your partner to give you the same sort of vision back again. Ask your partner to share his or her vision for your relationship, to write it down in 20 minutes, and to just share it with you. Nothing complex, just something from the heart.
3. Maybe your partner needs some more time to work on this. That's okay. Just give your partner the time needed, because there is always more for you to work on.
4. Encourage your partner with compassion. Do not criticize or berate, because if you do, your partner will be on the defensive and that will be the 2nd of the 4 Killer Viruses to attack your marriage.
5. Look at yourself and ask, "How am I doing at building up my partner, and others? Am I a POSITIVE source of encouragement and strength?" If the answer is NO, then you should be doing some work to continually correct your attitude. Cultivate an attitude of gratitude!

The key here is to hold this all rather lightly today. This is a day in which the seed that you planted is growing. Your partner can tell that there is something different going on within you and, as a consequence, between you. Your change will become contagious.

Stay centered. Do some breathing exercises. Because the next thing we are going to do is look at the increase in anxiety that might be accompanying this slow, but important change.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 13 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1) Anxiety. Yes, today we are talking about anxiety. There is growing anxiety around sharing. At least that is what normally happens when two partners begin to change their normal way of relating with each other. I would expect you to be going through the same thing. You are making yourselves open and vulnerable to each other, and that produces anxiety.
2) Where do you feel the anxiety in your body? Is it in your gut, your chest, your head . . . where? I tend to put anxiety in the muscles in my upper back. Why? I haven't the foggiest idea, but that's what I do. Do a body scan and locate the place where you put your anxiety.
3) When you are anxious, where does you mind go? Anxiety is a form of fear, of course, and fear is a thing of the mind. You have certain thoughts that race through your mind. Maybe you have thoughts that you obsess about. Maybe you go back over your "familiar position." I speak of that in my e-book *You Can Save Your Marriage.* Make some notes about the way your mind works when you get anxious.
4) What happens to your soul, to your psyche, to your emotional well being when you get anxious? Do you feel frightened? Upset? Do you withdraw when you are frightened? Do you get angry? What happens when your soul is anxious?
5) And what happens to your Spirit when you are anxious? I'll bet you can't even plug into your Spirit well. But, on the other hand, maybe you turn to the Spirit within you a whole lot more in an effort to find comfort and release. What happens to your Spirit when you get anxious?
6) What have you done in the past to alleviate your anxiety, and how well has it worked. I have done some "comfort eating" in my past. I hardly do that anymore. I like to talk my stress out with my wife, or with a colleague at work. I exercise. What do you do to alleviate the stress in your life?
7) What have you done that has not worked for you? We all have done things to alleviate stress that have, in fact, perpetuated the very stress we were trying to get away from. Identify that.

There is a lot here. Make notes in your private journal and put it away in your private file.You see, when you run into challenges in your relationship with your partner you get anxious. Now you can see that, and you know what the signs of that anxiety are. Once you can name it all, you can begin to take control of it in a healthy way.

What you can't name, you can hardly control. Anxiety is a big problem. When we are not self-conscious with our sexuality, we can have a wonderful time. That's the wonder we are trying to create here.

That's it for today! See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 14 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. I am going to invite you to look at your partner today, and maybe for a few days. There are a few questions I want you to chew on.
    a. When does your partner feel anxious in general?
    b. When does your partner feel anxious around you?
    c. When does your partner feel anxious at work?
    d. When does your partner feel anxious with his or her own family, or yours, or with your kids?
    e. When your partner is anxious, how does your partner behave? I mean, what are the signs that your partner is anxious? How can you tell?
    f. More specifically, how does your partner put anxiety into his or her body, mind, soul, and Spirit?
2. What does your partner do to alleviate anxiety?
3. What does your partner do to alleviate anxiety around sex? (this is a whole subject in itself, addressed in my e-book, *Hopeful Solutions for Your Sexless Marriage.* Check it out in our Catalogue at www.HopefulSolutions.net.
4. Today you are focusing on your partner's anxiety. Be kind and gracious, compassionate in your understanding. If you lose your POSITIVE attitude, then back up and make an adjustment. After all, we are talking about your partner here, and your partner deserves to be treated with kindness and respect.

We are half-way through the 28 days, so stay the course, and you will build on the strengths that you have! I promise.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 15 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. We are headed into the second half of this 28-day program, so we want to dig into some more specifics. Take a moment to review the work that you have done over the last couple of weeks. It has been substantial. Congratulate yourself! Most people sit around and moan and complain, but you have been proactive and done something POSITIVE for yourself, and your relationship.
2. Here is a tough question. You have to be honest with this or it won't work. What specific thoughts, feelings, and actions of YOURS are making it difficult for your partner to relax around you? Think about this and write some stuff down in your private journal. What are you doing that is generating anxiety for your partner? Are you pushing too hard? Withdrawing too much? What is it? Be honest and fair. Take responsibility where responsibility is yours.

The key here is to be brutally honest with your self. The truth, remember, will set you free.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 16 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. As you might guess, we started yesterday with a focus on YOU, so today we begin with a focus on your partner. Always go first, because it is contagious. If you go first your partner will feel your strength, respect you more, and will volunteer to go first on his or her own. That's what you want to have happen.
2. What specific thoughts, feelings, and actions of your partner are making it difficult for you to relax and be with your partner? What is your partner doing that is generating anxiety within you?
3. Be as specific as you can, but watch out for being critical!!!
4. Make a list and put it in your private journal and file it safely away.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
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Welcome to Day 17 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Go back to the letter that you wrote, after the 2 rough drafts. Pull it up, or pull out a hard copy because you will want to reference it next.
2. Here is the first question: What about what you want is causing your partner to feel anxiety? Get that? What about what you want stirs some fear or anxiety within your partner? You might have to speculate a little on this.
3. Write a letter to your partner in which you share you thoughts about how your positive intent for your relationship, and for your sexual relationship in particular, might be causing anxiety within your spouse. Write the letter with loving compassion, and in a spirit of true co-operation. "Honey, I've been thinking about the letter I gave you a couple of weeks ago, and about how what I want might be causing you some anxiety. I just want to check that out at this point. Nothing big here, no pressure, just trying to get some clarity. I want you to know something of what I have been thinking." Again, write with compassion.
4. I am encouraging dialogue between the two of you, without criticism and defensiveness. Stay POSITIVE!
5. The act of writing and sharing yourself with your partner will provoke some anxiety within you, as well as within your partner. Stay centered! Breathe!

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 18 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. I am inviting you to revisit the first of the 2 exercises that I introduced to you from Bill Martin's e-book, *Practicing Peace.* My guess is that you tried the exercise, but then went back to your normal way of coping with life. Old habits die slowly. I am inviting you to try it again, because we are building new and better habits that will enhance the quality of your sexual relationship. So here is Bill, once again.

For this exercise it will be helpful to stand quietly in a comfortable room or in some peaceful outdoor setting.

Allow the force of gravity to firmly anchor your feet to the ground.

Let your weight be evenly distributed across the bottoms of your feet - front to back and side to side.

Imagine a silken thread attached to your tailbone gently pulling your bottom downward just a bit, causing your knees to unlock and bend slightly. At the same time imagine another silken thread attached to the crown of your head gently pulling up toward heaven, stretching your spine into a natural alignment of its four curves.

Let your arms drift a few inches from your sides and rest against the magnetic field of your body rather than remain pinned tight against your body.

(This standing posture is called the "Resting Posture" in the art of Tai Chi Chuan and is very meditative and refreshing just by itself.)

As you breathe in and out, repeat to yourself some of the natural opposites of life such as:

(Breathe in) "Come . . ."
(Breathe out) " . . . go"

Use a variety of the opposites - "have - lose, up - down, here - there, hold - release, loud - quiet" and so on until you find yourself at a Still Point, a balance amidst the ever changing nature of life.

2. Practice makes perfect, as the saying goes. "Come . . . go." Practice.

That's it for today! See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 13 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Okay, we are going to do the 2nd of Bill Martin's exercises today. I know, you have either done this, or you have forgotten it, and you are wondering why we are visiting this again. It is because we are trying to change your relationship, and that means stopping the old patterns, and building some new ones. Once again, I invite you to trust me, and the process of change. Here is Bill's 2nd exercise.

The following simple exercise is one of the most powerful in this whole book. Regular practice of it will transform your life. It is sometimes called the "Position of Compassion."

Sit quietly and breathe naturally and restfully. Place your right hand over your stomach and your left hand over your heart. As you breathe, feel the warmth begin to grow beneath your hands at both these places. As any disturbing thoughts arise, let them sink either into the heart or the abdomen and be dissolved in the warmth. Let all of your attention keep returning to the warmth and comfort of these two areas of the body. You are building awareness of your own inner fire, your own inner power. As this awareness increases you will begin to notice that you are less and less dependent on the "fire" of others and therefore more and more available for healthy and true relationships.

This exercise can be effective practiced for only a few brief moments, but is especially beneficial if a longer time - 10 minutes to 30 minutes can be allowed.

3. Practice. Practice. Practice.
4. Tomorrow will be a really BIG day, and your practice will serve you well.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 20 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1) This is going to be really BIG. Today, you are going to ask you partner, finally, to write you a letter in which he or she spells out, in intimate detail, what your partner would like for an ideal marital relationship. There may have been a lot of words shared over the years about your relationship, and maybe not. We have been building to this rather serious point. No room here for criticism and defensiveness. This is from the heart stuff!
2) Say something like this. "Honey, I would appreciate it if you would take some time to write me a letter in which you spell out for me, in kind words, exactly what you would like to have between us as an ideal relationship. I would appreciate your frank effort so that I can understand. Thanks a bunch." The line, "so that I can understand" is very important.
3) Maybe your partner has already taken it upon himself or herself to write you such a letter. If so, write one back today and thank them again for sharing, no matter how challenging you found the letter to be, no matter how much time has passed since the letter was written.
4) Practice some breathing exercises to stay well centered. You must be prepared to hear what your partner honestly thinks and wants. You probably think you already know, but this exercise will give your partner the chance to be totally open.
5) Be prepared for little response from your partner. The request might just make your partner anxious. In fact, I would bet on it. If that is the case, offer words of reassurance, and encouragement. Keep it POSITIVE.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 21 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Something different today. You might have noticed that I have given you no instructions up to this point, to even touch each other. Today, that changes.
2. This is where you want to begin "nonsexual touching." That means that you aren't going to grope, grab, squeeze, fondle, or in any way approach your partner sexually.
3. David Schnarch, one of the most creative Marriage and Family Therapists in the country, encourages couples to "hug until relaxed." This might sound ridiculously simple, but it is not. Couples who are struggling hug, but then anxiety comes in and one or the other breaks the hug and pulls back. Tell your partner that you are going to practice a simple exercise, or don't tell your partner. The point is to hug, and keep on hugging until you both are relaxed. If there is anxiety along the way, stop and ask what the deal is. Get some clarity, and practice hugging until you both relax.
4. Put your arm around each other, hand on a shoulder, whatever kind of gentle and understanding touch you can offer. But do it non-sexually or you will blow this part of the program. If there is pressure implied to have sex, the control will turn one or the other of you off. Then you will get into a "control drama."
5. A powerful technique is to sit together, or hold each other in bed, and just breath together at the same pace, at the same depth. It is almost frighteningly intimate. Men and women breath at a different rate, and this closes that gap. To do it, you must be conscious of your partner, and your partner must be conscious of you. Awkward at first, but intimate as it moves along.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 22 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Remember the list of POSITIVE attributes you wrote about your partner on day 5? Pull that list out and update it. You have been focused on your partner and the positive attributes your partner exhibits, and it is time to re-write and update your positive attributes.
2. Then, once the list is updated, write a letter again to your partner and share once again you estimation of your partner's positive attributes. Stay POSITIVE. This letter writing business can be extremely powerful if it comes from the heart and if it does not require a response. You will feel much better if your partner responds genuinely, from the heart, without coercion. So give your partner an opportunity to respond freely.
3. In your letter, add anything you can about the positive stuff that goes on between the two of you. Think about the fun you have with your partner, or the fun your partner has with you, and write about it. This letter should be affirmative.
4. Remember that we are building POSITIVE interactions.
5. Continue with some more nonsexual touching. Hug all you want, and touch all you want, but don't push it toward sex. We are trying to get comfortable with closeness and intimacy, and with just simple touch.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 23 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Now, go to the list of positive attributes you listed about yourself with the help of the questionnaire on the 7th day. The website is http://www.positivepsychology.org/strengths. What you need to do today is write a letter to your partner in which you share your thoughts and feelings about your own POSITIVE attributes. This might make you a little self-conscious, a little anxious, but it is important that you get comfortable with your own good strong self. You have strengths, and you need to share those with humility. This isn't a time to brag, but a time to humbly state your confidence in yourself.
2. And, of course, to remind your partner that he or she is married to a special person!
3. I once attended a conference on Spiritual Growth during which we were encouraged to turn to the person to our right and say, "God loves you." That was pretty easy. Then we were encouraged to turn to the person to the left, and say, "God loves me." There were all sorts of laughter and awkwardness as the 100 people in attendance displayed their self-consciousness. I am asking you to step over your self-consciousness and to share with your partner your humble confidence in your own abilities. Tough to do? Sure, but you can do it. If you can't do this, how in the heck are you going to play with your partner in bed?

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 24 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. More nonsexual touching today. It is so simple and straightforward. You did this a couple of days ago, and maybe you have been doing it since. Please take the initiative and give your partner, without demand, some nonsexual touching. If you partner responds, and you feel like responding back, do so. In fact, get it on if it seems right to do. Trust your gut.
2. Practice your breathing exercises. Remember, you can learn more about staying centered in this way with the help of Bill Martin's book, *Practicing Peace,* which you can find on our website at www.HopefulSolutions.net. Our catalogue is there and we have a number of helpful solutions, as you would expect.
3. There are 4 days left in our 28-day program, so stay the course!

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 25 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. 4 days left! I am going to invite you to do something special today.
2. Do something extraordinarily special for your partner today. Find something that you can do that would be very meaningful to your partner. You might have to spend some time thinking about it, but find that thing that your partner would know came from your heart. This is not a gift that YOU want to give, but the gift that your partner wants to receive from you. My wife has been knitting a scarf for the last 2 days. Go figure. Who would think that knitting would be making a comeback, but high school kids are doing in our community today! If I got her some special yarn from a really exclusive shop in our city, she would be thrilled. Do something like that for your partner, with no ulterior motive. Just as an act of kindness.
3. I want you to see that this is all about building all sots of good will and intimacy between the two of you. We make love with our minds and hearts long before we make love with our genitals. Today, you are making love with your partner through the gift you are giving, and it is a wonderful thing.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 26 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Today you are going to try a little exercise in which you get to practice being generous. It involves touching your partner, nonsexually. I am aware that there is often a lot of pain around the subject of touch for some couples. Abuse doesn't incline us to touch. As I am fond of saying, "We don't hug porcupines!" However, everyone loves to have their feet rubbed, or a back rub, or a head massaged. This can be the simplest of gestures, and it is meant to be that. Approach this with a "no big deal" attitude. If you partner is sitting on the couch watching TV, sit on the other end and say, "Hey, I want to try something different. Would you let me give you a foot massage? I'd like to try that. And no, you don't have to rub my feet in return. I would just like to give you a little gift." You see, I am betting that if you give without an attachment to outcome, without making it part of a game (I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine!).
2. Go find your wedding pictures and take a look at what was going on inside of you ethat day. Look at your partner and see if you can find out what is going on inside his or her heart and mind. Ponder the mood of that day, the dreams, the excitement, the POSITIVE intent . . . and then . . .
3. Share your wedding album with your partner, and do it in an openhearted way. Flip through your album and the other pictures you have, and talk with your partner about the POSITIVE intent that you began with.

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 27 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Here is another crazy assignment. Go get something new, something "romantic," and bring it into the house. It might be a book you pick up at your local bookstore (or out of town if you are more comfortable). There are a lot of great books with great pictures. You can purchase my e-book, *Hopeful Solutions for Your Sexless Marriage* by going to www.HopefulSolutions.net. There are a number of resources, which can be found in our catalogue. But you can also just go get a big fat bouquet of flowers, or put a bunch of candles in your bedroom, or buy something black and slinky for yourself. Don't push your partner toward sex, but create a sensuous environment in your home, in a way that won't embarrass yourself or your partner. A special meal prepared at home, or a special dinner out! The key here is that it has to be a special event, something special just between the two of you.
2. Now I need to have a frank conversation with you about the progress you have made. If you are doing better, terrific. Keep going. If you haven't made progress, I feel for you. I know it must be terribly frustrating. If you feel stuck, completely stuck, one option you have is to start over. You have been given enough tools in the last 28 days to get you stimulated into creating more of what you think will work. Keep at it. There is always more help in my e-book.
3. If you haven't tried therapy yet, you might want to do that. You can go to www.therapistlocator.net where you can find a therapist, hopefully, near you.
4. If you are still not satisfied, and you have done all the assignments over the last 4 weeks, know that you have done your best. You should feel good about yourself because you have given it your best. Never feel bad about that!

But, I sure hope that bringing something sensuous into your home will light the fires!

That's it for today!

See you tomorrow . . .

Dr. Andrew D. Atwood
www.HopefulSolutions.net

Welcome to Day 28 of my 28 Day "Jump Start" Program for Your Marriage!

1. Holy cow, you made it! I sure hope your attitude is more POSITIVE so that I don't have to remind you to be more POSITIVE one more time!
2. I hope you have found your own inner strength, your great strength, and that you like yourself more.
3. I hope you feel good about the effort you have made to connect with your partner, and I hope you have received some positive feedback from your partner.
4. I hope you have broken the ice, built some intimacy, and begun to get a little more action in your marriage.
5. And I hope you have gotten rid of the criticism and defensiveness.
6. And I hope you have a humble pride in your effort, because if you have taken this seriously, you have done a tremendous job.

If you need to talk with me, shoot me an email. I have a questionnaire that I have developed, and it is published by the folks at SurveyMonkey. I would appreciate it if you would take about 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire with your frank feedback on the worth of this 28-day program for "Jump Starting" your relationship. Your candid feedback would help me to help others. You can find the survey at

Dave – I have a link to go here.

Well, that's it!
God bless you, and have fun!

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