

4 Signs of an Impossible Spouse

When you entered marriage, you probably assumed that you were marrying a responsible person. You knew that your roles would be somewhat different, but you assumed that you would both use your gifts and talents for the benefit of the marriage.

After a few years, or maybe a few months of marriage, you may have discovered that your spouse is not the responsible person you thought you married. You may find yourself thinking, *It's just not fair. I work hard. Why can't she?* Or you may reason, *I don't think I'm expecting too much. I just want him to be responsible.*

This irresponsibility may be total or partial. The first step is to always analyze the source of the problem. You must come to understand what is going on in the mind of your spouse. What lies behind this lack of ambition?

Let me suggest four possible sources:

1. Poor role models. Your spouse may be following the model of their mother or father.

Look at the parent's lifestyle. Is your spouse simply doing what he/she learned from their mother or father? We are all influenced by the model of our parents.

2. Rebellion. Your spouse may be rebelling against the model of parents.

Maybe a parent was a workaholic, and he or she was never there for him/her. So, your spouse decided that work was bad, and that he/she would never repeat their parent's mistake. Often, these efforts lead to extremes.

3. Self-centeredness. Your spouse may have developed a self-

centered attitude. At the root of many irresponsible individuals is pure and simple selfishness. Perhaps his or her parents gave him/her few responsibilities growing up. He or she developed the mindset that the world owes them a living, and sooner or later the world will deliver.

4. Resentment. Your spouse's behavior may be an expression of resentment toward you. Whatever you request, they will lean in the opposite direction.

These are not the only possibilities, but they are four common sources of an impossible spouse. The more clearly you can understand the source of your spouse's behavior, the more likely you are to determine positive steps that you can take to stimulate constructive change.

How to Make Positive Changes

If you are going to be an agent of positive change in a marriage with an irresponsible spouse, you must always consider what motivates his or her irresponsible behavior, what is going on inside the individual. Unless you are able to address these issues, you are not likely to see positive change.

Sometimes your efforts must be geared toward getting your spouse to a Christian counselor. The problem may be so severe that neither spouse will be able to handle it alone. Other times your efforts must focus on identifying the role your own behavior has played in compounding the problem of irresponsibility in your spouse.

Taking responsibility for your own attitude and behavior is often the first step in getting your spouse the help they need. You can't change your spouse, but you can, and do influence them by your attitude and your behavior.

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