

Life Hack: When Your Spouse Doesn't Meet Your Needs

Your spouse *should* do more to meet your needs. Really, how could your husband or wife be that insensitive, clueless, even hostile? You've tried to tell them over and over again how much you need help around the house, or someone to listen, or an engaged sexual partner or someone to help shoulder the brunt of the in-law attacks or financial burdens. Is a little kindness, respect and love too much to expect? But regardless of what you do or say, your spouse doesn't meet your needs.

It gets old, doesn't it? You expected certain things, and your spouse hasn't lived up to those expectations. Wasn't getting married supposed to assure your needs would be met?

Well, no.

News flash: Your spouse is *not* going to meet your needs. Guaranteed. And if you keep waiting for them to do so, you are certain to become bitter, empty and angry.

Intellectually, you may realize that a human being was never intended to meet all your needs. But surely your spouse is the exception! You really need that respect, intimacy, attention, tenderness, partnership, support and love. Isn't that why you got married?

Actually, no.

Your needs don't get met by you trying to pull it out of your spouse, manipulating or shaming them into trying or wilting away in the corner, hoping they will wise up.

Yes, you have needs. Real needs. It's more than wants; it's needs. But here's an inconvenient truth: Every human being has unmet needs, including you and your spouse.

You can either sit in misery, whine and complain and make you and everyone around you unhappy.

Or you can decide to stop going to a turnip for blood or to a dry well for water.

So instead of griping about it, just assume your spouse can't or won't meet your needs. For any that they do meet, be grateful. And then go about getting your needs met from healthy sources.

Here are five things that will help keep you sane when your spouse doesn't meet your needs.

1. Focus on giving rather than receiving.

Constantly looking for and expecting your spouse to give you what you need is certain to disappoint you. Instead, focus on bringing what you have to the marriage and giving generously, and both of you will be happier. Don't keep score. Care for yourself well enough that you have something to bring. And as you offer it freely, you will likely be surprised that more of your own needs are getting met than you expected.

I've written about things a wife needs from her husband and things a husband needs from his wife. In the most mature, healthy marriages many of these needs get met—not because you are trying to wring the things you need from your spouse, but because you are learning to meet your spouse's needs better and better.

And this goes for outside your marriage too. If you make your life about helping others in need, you'll be much less prone to self-pity or emptiness.

2. Invest deeply in your marriage.

Many people have the mistaken idea that marriage is about happiness. It's not. Instead, it's about learning to love well.

Yes, there are likely to be many times of happiness if you and your spouse both invest regularly in your marriage. But even then, many needs will not be met. Make the decision to invest anyway. Your needs that do get met in marriage will be the result of the relationship you both give yourselves into rather than you trying to extract something from your spouse. The relationship becomes bigger than either of you individually, and that's where some of your needs get met.

3. Take responsibility for feeding yourself.

As an adult, you no longer wait for parents or anyone else to feed you. You've learned to feed yourself. For those needs your spouse is unable or unwilling to meet, you're responsible for finding other healthy ways to get some of that nourishment your soul and body need.

No, that does not mean getting sex from anyone outside your marriage. Ever. But do you need affectionate touch? Hug a friend, or a child. Do you need adventure? Find some girlfriends or buddies to go adventuring with. Do you need conversation? Call a same-sex friend, or meet for lunch or coffee. Need intimacy? Invest deeply in a small group at church. It's not the same, perhaps, as getting that from your spouse. But learning to feed yourself may also result in you having more to give in your marriage.

4. Look to God for what human beings cannot give.

It's natural for humans to look to other humans whom they can see and hear to get their needs met. But no human being can fully meet your need for validation, healing, respect, love, support, and so on. No human can make you feel good enough, beautiful enough, wanted enough. Defining yourself by what anyone else, even your spouse, believes about you will always lead to disappointment and emptiness. No human being can give you a sense of purpose, convince you that you have what it takes or keep their promise that that you will

never be alone.

We so easily try to fill a God-shaped hole in our soul with anything else—addiction, accomplishment, busyness, things or a person. Learn to sit long enough in God's presence for Him to speak to your heart. When He tells you to do something, do it. When He says something to you, believe it. Invest in your relationship with God to the point that He becomes your enough.

5. Become comfortable with unmet needs.

Ever since Adam and Eve left the garden of Eden, no human being has ever had all their needs met. It's not because God doesn't want us to have our needs met; it's because we're in a war zone until the enemy is destroyed in the end. Our desires, our longings, our true needs that go unmet, will have an end. This world is not intended to be enough. Only in eternity, when God makes new heavens and a new earth (see Isa. 65:17, 66:22), will anything be enough.

But be assured that in the end it *will* be enough. It's not a matter of becoming resigned to unmet needs. Instead, it's coming to understand that we're in the in-between time. We're in the middle of the story. Even the best marriage is only a taste of the final act. Keeping that perspective is the only way anything makes sense now.

Here's to getting all your needs met—some of them now, through investing in healthy relationships, and some of them in eternity, when every molecule of your being will be fully satisfied.

Your Turn: How have you responded when your spouse doesn't meet your needs? How can you go about that in a healthier way? Leave a comment below.

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