

WHEN HOLES EXPLODE: WHEN S/HE WAS GOOD...

Part V

William Penzer, Ph.D.

(954) 475-1371 x301

www.williampenzerphd.com

www.stopglop.com

Many women meet seemingly kind, caring, sensitive men and fall in love with them. They can tell many stories that illustrate the uniqueness of this most special person. They can justify choosing him as their life partner. What they can also describe are times when that person behaves oppositely, going from the proverbial Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde. This article is about that confusing, complex, sad and destructive situation. "When he was good he was very, very good, but when he was bad he was horrid." When holes explode, toxic waste spills over love in ways that convert to hate. No one should ever have to live under those circumstances for very long. Though not as prevalent, the same scenario can happen in reverse. She can be as horrid as he!

Take My Husband, Please!

I'm inverting the old Henny Youngman joke to make the point that has been made to me so often. Men who have the capacity to lose total control in raging, hysterical fits and tantrums are very difficult people with whom to live. They are intermittent emotional abusers. Jack, for example, threw his dinner plate against the wall last week, because he said the food was not hot enough. Jim puts his fists through the walls so often that he has the handyman on retainer. Tom's specialty is red-faced screaming and cursing at his wife of twenty odd years saying things you wouldn't say to the most hated of enemies. Richard just stops talking to his wife, at times for as long as two weeks. Fred has never hit his girlfriend with whom he lives for the past five years, but repeatedly threatens to in the heat of the moment. Arnold just walks out slamming the door so hard that the reverberation is felt for a long time thereafter and comes back in an hour or a day or sometimes as long as a week. Some men mix and match from the above depending on the situation. This article speaks to the extreme case. That there are less dramatic situations does not mean they are any less traumatic. Obviously, there is a continuum of abuse. Any where on that is a less than healthy or appropriate place to be.

Here's what the woman with a "When He Was Good..." (WHWG) partner must contend with:

- Constantly walk on eggshells.
- Suppress feelings both positive and negative.
- Suppress complaints, annoyance, conflict.
- Cater to and indulge his desires.
- Limit social contacts with others, particularly those that annoy him.
- Tolerate behaviors from him that are unacceptable.
- Submit to sex when not really interested.
- Avoid or limit pleasurable activities that he is against.
- Do what he wants when he wants with whom he wants.
- Suppress children to avoid provoking him..
- Defend or explain to children his moods, tantrums, rages, language, etc. (i.e. your father is stressed, having a bad day, doesn't mean it, works hard, etc.).
- Downplay his behavior to other family members (i.e. parents, in-laws, siblings, coworkers, neighbors).

It is no wonder that such women eventually burn out and throw him out. What's amazing is that many can hang in for relatively long periods-years of being hurt, demeaned and abused in these ways.

She's Got The Problem, Doc. Fix Her.

Fundamentally, WHWG men have the same set of problems. They are unable to put a lid on their tempers. Nor are they able to take responsibility for their tantrums. Not always, but often enough, relatively minor provocations can unleash major reigns of terror. The triggers may be minimal, but the reactions are maximal. It is as if a switch has been turned on that cannot be easily shut off. In the aftermath, most of the men will usually admit they were wrong. Those who don't are even more disturbed. Sometimes the latter will admit their mistakes when the partner finally takes definitive action to separate and disconnect. Those that still won't acknowledge their inappropriateness are the most disturbed of all.

Clinically speaking, we are talking about people who most likely fall into some variant of Bipolar Disorder, formerly known as manic depression. Many have intermittent explosive disorders. Some of them could definitely

be helped by medication, but most won't consider it or stay with it. These men also tend to fall into the classic Type A Personality. They are hyper, intense, obsessive, driven and very egocentric. The vast majority of WHWG men deny their own responsibility, either blaming others for tripping their switches or justifying their reactions in some way. The following is often heard:

- “It’s just the way I am. I’ve always been this way.”
- “I believe in telling it like it is. How can people learn unless they get feedback.”
- “I’m not one of those soft, sensitive, touchy-feely guys. Where I come from people tell it straight out.”
- “I work my butt off to support my family. That’s all I do. I expect respect from them. Is that unreasonable?”
- “If they would just listen to me for a change everything would be okay. My wife and kids just don’t listen. That’s the problem.”

All of these statements and others like them are akin to the addict saying, “I can stop drinking/drugging anytime I want-I’m not hooked.” They beg the question and deny their problems. Unfortunately, the women who hang with, live with and marry the WHWG guy are in denial and hooked on them as well. Their relationship is a complex, contradictory and coordinated set of compulsive-addictive dynamics. They fit together in all of the right and wrong ways.

When She Was Hooked...

Love addiction may very well be the most powerful one of all. It’s overlooked by addictionologists and other mental health practitioners in favor of the more compelling ones related to drugs, gambling, eating, etc. There is no denying the reality that countless numbers of women are physically and emotionally abused as a result of being hooked on a man who hasn’t consistently earned their loving feelings. I guess my bias comes out quickly. It’s just not good enough to be good most of the time, when the “bad” can be so hurtful and destructive. While there is probably no one in a serious relationship who hasn’t really lost it occasionally, those who lose it serially and aren’t able to change their patterns need serious help. Or their partners need serious help to let go of their dependent, destructive love connection. When the love bug keeps biting it’s time to get some repellent.

Curiously, these women usually don't view it as abuse. They frame it as the way he is and accept it as their misfortune or poor choice. In a "made your bed, lie in it" manner they keep going and going. Some say it's for the kids and their desire to create a "normal" family. When he's being "good," it can resemble a "normal" family, although the underlying tension waiting for the next explosion is felt by all. The damage done by explosions is hardly worth the "normal" times.

What allows many women with WHWG partners to accept his abuse in whatever name-family, finances, love-is that their underlying low self-esteem and self-image does not permit them to disengage. All addictions survive because of early damage to self-acceptance and self-worth. Somewhere in their personal history feelings of shame, unworthiness and unlovableness programmed them on a trajectory to fulfill those self-negating feelings. What better proof of her fundamental worthlessness is the man she loves and serves calling her ugly names?

Abuse Hurts the Abused and Any Observers

The most vivid of all examples of the power of this addiction occurred when I volunteered at a homeless shelter. Each Tuesday night I met one, if not three women, who had been beaten by their partners in a rage. In every case this had occurred over and over again for relatively long periods of time. As I listened to their sad stories that seemed to start the day they were born and continued right up to that face-to-face moment. I gently asked, "what keeps you with him?" In every case, without exception, the response was, "down deep he's a really good man and a good person and I LOVE HIM. I REALLY LOVE HIM!"

I soon realized that no one time crisis intervention was strong enough to debug these programs. I discontinued going to the shelter. I wasn't helping them and hearing these stories over and over and over again wasn't helping me. It painfully made me aware of how hurtful abusive relationships can be to the family or children of a WHWG partner. Nor does it have to be physical to be hurtful. In some ways, contrary to the ditty, "sticks and stones" hurt less than words, which can be the most abusive and destructive of all.

There is more hope for helping a woman with a WHWG man in an outpatient setting where the stories are typically not that extreme and the women not as dysfunctional. There is also the element of time which allows for greater continuity to the therapy and for the likelihood of resolving the problems-one way or the other. Even in that setting the power of love addiction, co-mingled with the force of inconsistent reinforcement, are significant obstacles to resolving the problem.

Inconsistency Can Breed Consistency

One of the things I remember learning in graduate school has to do with inconsistent, intermittent reinforcement. The most obvious example is a slot machine which keeps people playing for very long periods of time. The less predictable the reward the more it keeps us in the game. In the laboratory, rats were taught to press a bar to receive a pellet of food. When the result was predictable (i.e. every fifth press a pellet would result), the rats quickly learned to correlate their “work” with their hunger. They knew that they could get a pellet when they pressed the bar five times. When the pellets were dispersed randomly, (i.e., sometimes after five presses, sometimes after 20 presses, sometimes after 50 presses, sometimes after 7 presses) the rats became frenzied in their “work” behavior. Some would literally press the bar till they dropped.

It is very much the same in the case of the WHWG relationship. When he’s good it is like manna from heaven or a pellet of food for a hungry rat. When he was good he was charming, delightful, kind and caring. When he was good he was really, really, really good and he was like a big jackpot pouring out of a slot machine. WHWG partners get as easily hooked as rats in a cage pressing an unpredictable bar that intermittently feeds them. They get as hooked as gamblers in a casino pulling a lever that inconsistently feeds them coins. The more inconsistent the rewards, the more consistent the behavior. Intriguingly, love, food and money are often inextricably tied together fostering dependencies and addictions of all kinds. But, that’s another article.

Important to note, is that like all addicts the woman who is hooked on love is in denial She repeatedly believes, “he will change...learn...grow...realize...stop... APPRECIATE ME...LOVE ME!” Denial allows unacceptable behavior to continue for far longer than rationality would predict. Typically, such denials were learned well before the woman met her WHWG partner. Most of the time she was denied the love she deserved and needed in childhood, which created the need to deny her need for love. Often, in growing up that same woman was prepped to be at the other end of the accusatory finger of blame. In a certain sense the WHWG partner confirms what the woman already learned. Love was a contingency-a conditional contract that was given, if at all, when it was “earned.” She feels, consciously or otherwise, “If only I was gooder he would be good all of the time.” He feeds into that feeling by always highlighting and blaming her shortcomings, rather than owning his own.

That this is a total distortion of reality makes it no less compelling for the woman to think or feel. In just about every case I have ever observed, the woman is fundamentally good just about all of the time. She is or tries to be there for her man in every way possible and keeps on forgiving and trying to learn how to be an even better wife and a less provocative partner. That it’s a mission impossible often eludes her until circumstance or therapy finally wakes her up to his behavior not being her fault. With the shrewdness and cunning of a prosecuting attorney, the WHWG man is adept at putting all of the blame on his partner. He uses the following statements and lead-ins over and over again:

- “If only you didn’t...”
- “If only you did...”
- “Why did you have to...”
- “Couldn’t you just leave it alone...”
- “Couldn’t you just tell them...”
- “Why’d you have to tell them...”
- “How many times have I told you...”

If all of those sound a bit parental, it is because WHWG men are very parental. They do a great imitation of a critical parent-most of the time doing it based on experiences with one or both parents. The WHWG partner spends too much time trying to convince him that it’s not her fault, how much she gives, how much he takes and that she is GOOD. She is, but he

won't acknowledge it except sarcastically. Unfortunately, she wastes her time and energy in a fruitless bid for affirmation.

When he's not pointing that not so fickle finger of blame and culpability, he is saying some of the most abusive statements known to humankind. He is able to look this woman whom he does love in his own inimitable fashion, straight in the face and spew forth a monologue of explicatives and criticisms that would make anyone feel useless, worthless and helpless. The woman may respond with tears, curses or criticisms of her own, but they simply become ammunition that fuels further retaliation.

Most of the time, the WHWG man is unscathed, while the woman is left torn into many emotional pieces. The man may go watch TV, take a drive, have a sandwich, drink a beer, be ready to make love in a couple of hours or give her the silent treatment until she apologizes. The woman, on the other hand, is crushed into a ball, feeling very much like she felt at times when she was younger. Not only was no one there for her, but she was made to feel worthless. Oddly enough, it all passes after a while like it did when she was a kid. The addictive cycle starts anew. It's only a matter of time when all is forgiven-not forgotten, but buried away in some inner vault so that life goes on, love goes on, making love resumes and he returns to being good--for a while. Remember, he is a WHWG man!

Patterns and Profiles

We know opposites tend to attract. Sometimes they can complement each other in positive and powerful ways. When it comes to this particular syndrome of relationship, the opposites come together like oil and water unless the woman is willing to succumb and totally submit to his control. Typically, if the woman is relaxed and calm, he is type A squared and intense. If she is emotional, he is shut down. If he likes the fast food equivalent of sex, she loves love in all of its romantic forms. If she likes opera, he loves country. If she values communication, his lines are clogged and closed. If he loves fast moving vehicles, she prefers a greater sense of feeling in control. If she loves shopping, he loves watching football and if she loves watching football, he really prefers golf.

Any one, or even two of these, might be okay, but the across board

nature of the differences often makes for chronic tension, agitation and oppositionality. This is especially true because the WHWG man is often “good” only when he gets his way and is really not very able to compromise. He needs total control of those around him. He must feel in control of his partner, his children, other family members as well as those with whom he works. Typically, he will devote himself to work where the payoffs are more predictable and within his “control” and put family, friends, etc. much lower down on his list of priorities. He may verbally place them at the top of the list, but his actions and inactions speak louder. He does not consistently behave as if they are important.

Control/Out of Control Issues

Intriguingly, in most cases, but not all, this man has the potential to lose control-not only in his vile and violent tantrums, but also in some of his behavior. He may work very hard to earn his money, but be willing to risk it in some form of gambling. Often he drinks to excess or eats to excess or both. In fact, even in healthy areas, he can lose control by overdoing it. When he goes on a diet he eats only lettuce for weeks on end loses weight, which he quickly gains back when he returns to his excessive eating. When he takes on a new hobby he overkills it and burns out while abandoning those around him in pursuit of his latest set of goals.

The WHWG man doesn’t know from the gray or the balanced or the middle of the road. He is the original “all black or all white” person simultaneously gaining and losing control over and over again. From many angles, he is a tower of strength and emotes a powerful passion in many different areas. It’s those forces that fuel the woman’s addiction as she unwittingly still searches for the strength, security and protection that she never received from her family of origin. When he is good he embodies every dimension that fills the void of her past and gives her the feelings of safety and support that she never had. When he is “bad,” however, and the rug gets pulled out from under her she is back to square one and has recreated in one way or the other the dysfunctionality of her youth. When she finally comes to realize this, there is hope that she can unhook from this compelling, but destructive relationship.

Repetition Compulsion Times Two

One need not be a Freudian analyst to understand his belief that the unfinished business of a person's past will be repeated over and over again. In the WHWG relationship we have both parties playing out old scenes that feed the problems. The majority of women living with WHWG men acknowledge they knew early on that they had problems. That they hung in there and discounted their instincts, suggests they had needs to be in a hurtful love scene.

Intriguingly, hurtful love is not love, but it is the view of love many people receive. Physical abandonment due to death or divorce hurts children. Emotional abandonment due to parental dysfunction, sibling issues, time and money pressures, etc. hurts children too. Wounded children tend to grow into wounded teens and adults.

Teens and adults can also be hurt by love. First loves and marriages that fall to divorce, death, cheating, abuse, etc. leave emotional scars and bruises too. Adding those to the ones from childhood leaves strong barriers to love and loving. Yet, despite these experiences and the perceptions they have regarding love, the woman in a WHWG relationship believes in love. She embraces it, wants it and sometimes idealizes it to a romantic love boat connection. She wants and needs attention, affection, help and support. A WHWG man (especially in the courtship stage) is able to give that and she feels wonderful. He gives her love, she gives him control and sex and both are happy. Their wounded little girl and little boy are getting the salve they each need to feel whole and adequate.

Sooner than later the "honeymoon" ends. He still wants control and sex, but he's not so involved anymore. What I call fore foreplay is reduced or eliminated. He's distracted by work, hobbies, sports, kids from past marriages or other "problems." He wants his needs met, but is less interested in meeting hers. Truth is most WHWG men are short term lovers. Unlike their partners, they don't believe in love, understand it or even like it. They often confuse love and sex, wanting the latter without the former. Like many power hungry men, love for the WHWG man is a woman on her knees. It feels good, powerful and in control. He gives nothing but his inflated sense of self.

The WHWG man learned early that to believe in love was to buy into pain. Often, at least one parent was abusive, demeaning and ridiculing. Physical or emotional abuse occurred often. In many cases, a WHWG partner had a father who was hardly ever good. In fact, the WHWG partner can look like a saint when he compares himself to his own papa. Yet, to his partner, the WHWG man seems like he does an excellent imitation of her papa. He periodically makes her feel like crap just as her dad did by being abusive, abandoning or both.

The WHWG man learned early not to trust feelings in general. They learned that feeling emotions equaled vulnerability which led to being hurt. Feelings, other than anger and lust, were not manly. Therefore, they have suppressed many feelings that are hidden behind walls and barricades. They built images that felt safe, secure and independent. These include hard worker, fearless, aloof, above others, persistent to a fault, judgmental, critical and quick to stereotype. To them, my colleagues and I are wimps. To sit with us is to be one, too. This goes against the grain of their self-image and forces them to avoid or limit therapy involvements.

It is from this angle that we come to understand the complex and paradoxical control issues of WHWG men. All of that emotion that has been suppressed ferments into fear and rage. They unconsciously fear that the walls will tumble and all will come busting through showing their “wimpiness” after all. To feel love, to be tender and compassionate for any length of time is to risk an emotional tidal wave that is scary to them. This causes them to be control freaks and control failures selectively. It also causes much anger that builds up so that the WHWG man is a veritable time bomb set to blow up periodically.

Usually that time bomb blows when something symbolizes his out of controlness potentials. That occurs at the intersection of his fears and his rage. Deep down he is terrified he will lose control of his suppressed emotions. That which suggests real or symbolic loss of control pushes his buttons and unleashes his angers in out of control ways. The opposite of a wimp is a raging bull. He unwittingly chooses that position. Here is a partial list of what can trigger a WHWG man to be “bad” and raging:

- A traffic jam or parking problem
- Disrespect (as he defines it)
- A family member who behaves unacceptably (as he defines it)

- Someone cutting him off while driving
- His wife taking control (as he defines it)
- His wife not following his control demands (i.e., spending too much money, not cooking or cleaning good enough, not liking people he likes, being too tired, etc.)
- Being cheated, a loan not being paid back, losing a deal
- Not being appreciated
- His kid borrowing his tools and not returning them to the right spot

As I've said, the paradox is that the WHWG man is also selectively out of control. He works too hard, drinks or eats too much, smokes, gambles, is a womanizer, all or some of the above or in some other way/s. Or, he's just plain miserable and depressed. What drives this engine is the self-destructive nature of the underlying self-hate the WHWG man carries. He continually shifts from feeling in the hall of fame to being in the hall of shame. Sometimes he just feels stuck in the latter despite wonderful and prideful achievements. He learned self-hate when he was young, covered it up into adulthood and is forced to prove himself worthy over and over again. Oddly enough, he's still the bad boy his father and/or mother told him he was - reliving that unfinished business over and over again. He inflicts that over and over again on his partner, so she relives her unfinished business over and over again, too. What's more is their kids are programmed to keep this family drama going. Like a genetic disorder, it is passed along from one generation to the next.

The Dysfunction Stops Here

If you are with a WHWG partner it may be time to take a stand. If not for you then for the kids. If there are no kids then for you. You deserve and need better. It would be nice if he could be that person, but if he isn't able, it's time for you to move on. See a mental health counselor, go to a support group, work on your SELF in some way and tell him you're not going to take it anymore. Get legal help if need be, but call his bluff and call time. The reason I suggest this is my guess is that you've suggested couple counseling and he has refused or given lip service without sincere effort. If you haven't suggested counseling, go for it, but the odds are he'll go twice and say you're nuts and so is the shrink. You keep going till you can resolve

your love addiction and other problems.

Once you leave, one of two things will happen. He will be forever angry, fight you every step of the way, but you'll finally be free. Your challenge will be not to marry the next WHWG guy to come along. Therapy can help you to not do that.

Or, he will get a wake up call like he never got before, realize he doesn't want to lose you, and make significant and consistent changes in his behavior. It will take counseling to sustain those and possibly medication as well. My guess is that only about one-third of the WHWG men can actually make long lasting changes. A major problem is that by the time a WHWG partner calls time, much time has elapsed. Her nerve endings are shot, her self-esteem is in the toilet and her trust level is minus. Most likely, the WHWG man will say he wants to be different, but soon reverts to getting his high control needs met. A strong therapist can help, but runs the risk of recreating the original child-parent scene (i.e., "How many times have I told you...").

The third of the group who succeed are the strongest, healthiest and most willing and able to compromise and reduce exaggerated needs for control. They are able to get out of the parent box long enough to create an adult to adult partnership. They are able to leave their dysfunctional work based behaviors at the door. They are able to bring in those functional controls of temper they use at work to succeed. They are able to slowly, but surely lower walls, increase their tolerance of softer more loving interactions and be able to tolerate mutual need satisfaction. They realize it's not wimpy to be kind, caring and compassionate. They are able to more often shift to neutral instead of being stuck in high gear. They become less sensitive to issues of respect, appreciation and not always being king of the mountain. They feel much better about themselves. Part of the problem is that it's too easy for the WHWG man to find a new woman to initially seduce, win over and eventually turn on. It is a slow process and there are plenty of wounded women to replace you.

Although WHWG men may read this article, I'm writing it more for their partners. They deserve better. They deserve respect. They deserve to be treated with TLC. They deserve real love. I hope they accept no substitute. I want them to expect equality and demand mutuality. They need to get back at least what they give. They finally need to finish the unfinished business of

their past, so they don't have to keep replaying old scenes like a DVD. So do you. Even aloneness is better than a WHWG relationship. Know that with your heads on straight and programs updated, the likelihood of aloneness is low, unless you so choose.

When She Was Good...

There are also, "When She Was Good" (WSWG) partners, too. They exist in fewer numbers than men, though they are a force with which to reckon. Sometimes they partner with WHWG men, but it's an ugly war zone that is short lived at best. Sometimes they partner with kind, caring, sensitive men who do their best to please them. Like the women with WHWG partners, the men with WSWG women succeed only some of the time.

Two main differences exist. Whereas WHWG men have many sensitive trigger zones, WSWG women typically have one. The WSWG woman is a very, very jealous person. She didn't get her fair share growing up, learned early that men couldn't be trusted, had some hurtful relationships in adolescence and young adulthood or all of the above. She can be jealous of ex-wives or girlfriends, children from past relationships, his work, female coworkers, the TV, the family dog, golf, unknown women that pass by, men friends, etc. When her sensitive meter registers someone or something being more important than she, she blows like a dynamite stick. She can go from sweet to sweat in a flash. She can do an impressive imitation of a foul mouthed, high school boy's locker room fight. She can smash things and throw things at him or punch, bite, and kick him. When he tries to subdue her, she cries abuse and can call 911. She's as big a hell mate as her WHWG soul mate.

The other difference is that men aren't typically as patient or as willing to suffer as women tend to be. I realize that sounds chauvinistic, but nonetheless believe it to be true. Though love addictions affect both sexes, men leave first. Those who do say, "You're too much work" and move on. Those with kids stay longer, but probably not as long as women with kids tend to with WHWG partners.

In all other respects, it's the same story. Early warning signs were

evident, though easier to ignore during courtship. The man choosing a WSWG partner experienced hurtful scenes in the love connections of his family. In many ways the WSWG partner replicates those scenes and reaffirms his worthlessness and unlovableness. Like the WHWG partner, the WSWG one finally exits bearing all the scars of hurt, distrust and vulnerability setting him up to choose another WSWG woman.

In truth, all of these people need some type of therapy and healing experience. This seems to help them understand and own themselves. It helps them to heal their wounds and be conscious of their choices-past and future. It helps them to rebalance their control issues and to be better able to take true emotional control. It makes them less sensitive to symbols of out of controlness so as not to react to them. It also teaches anger management which helps them stay in neutral to positive space more of the time. The red zone of rage is reserved for rare times, if not completely given up.

Obviously, all of this takes time and commitment. It is not easy to debug these complex programs, but it is doable. The alternative of replaying these scenes over and over again is much worse. This will occur with the same partner or different ones. No one will ever pass the litmus test of the WHWG man or WSWG woman. Neither are built to be able to keep their promises “to be good” for very long. Both need some form of therapy as do their partners. Some will need medication as well. All will need time to learn, time to heal and time to make major changes in their way of seeing and dealing with life, family, love and partnership.

To the WHWG man and WSWG woman I say, I’m sorry you are as you are. I wish I could change your oil, give you a tune-up, balance your emotional tires and send you on a happier road. It’s not that simple, but it can be done. If you have the courage to try it, call me or one of my colleagues. If not, know it’s not your fault, but it is your responsibility. Ultimately, your out of control potentials will take you down. That alone demands your attention and commitment to you and those you love. Forewarned is truly forearmed! Good Luck!

People who read this article frequently say, “this helps me to understand how I’ve gotten into this mess, but doesn’t tell me how to get out of it. What should I do?” I find that comment intriguing and reflective of the

basic problem. People with WHWG or WSWG partners are quite dependent and prone to getting stuck. Denial combines with their passive natures and low self-esteem to maintain their dependency.

There is no formula to cover so many diverse situations. The practical details determine how and if one proceeds. The problems clearly demand that one proceed, but there is no one prescription that applies. Extricating yourself from an abusive situation can require counseling, family support, legal, police and social service resources, help from friends and a little bit of luck thrown in for good measure.

In counseling you can learn to see yourself more positively and value yourself more appropriately. You can finally recognize and realize your worth. You can draw a line in the sand to protect your children and your self. You can learn to apply assertive principles to all aspects of your life. With those skills in hand, you will be able to start planning your escape route and see it through to completion.

That journey will take you to sanity and safety. If you are lucky your choices will wake up your partner to join you. Either way, however, you will have reached a better and healthier place than where you are currently. If this article fits your life then it is time – overtime – to take some beginning steps onto a bridge I call “transition”. This will take you to a place where you no longer have to live with the contingencies, challenges and consequences listed on page two.

Here is a list of resources and references to draw upon:

- Women in Distress (954) 760-9800
- No Boundary –Ken Wilber
- Boundaries and Relationships: Knowing, Protecting and Enjoying The Self –Charles Whitfield
- The Secret of the Shadow –Debbie Ford
- Getting Unstuck, Breaking Through Your Barriers to Change –Sidney Simon
- Love and Betrayal: Broken Trust in Intimate Relationships – John Amodeo