



3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

couples face living with illness

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Hello! I'm Dr. Jackie.

I wrote this guide for you because I know, first hand, the anxiety and the heartache you and your partner are feeling facing life-threatening or chronic illness.

I know because I worked with couples facing illness as a therapist from the mid-1980's to 1999.

I know because I've guided couples facing illness to LIVE an extraordinary life together since 1999 when I transitioned into Marriage Coaching.

I know because I met and married Mark, the love of my life, and lived happily-ever-after until his death from cancer in 2005.

I want to help you make sense out of what you are experiencing and inspire your curiosity about LIVING well together with life-threatening or chronic illness.

I'm so glad you're here.

THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

Getting Caught in an UN-Loving Trap

The diagnosis of an illness is always a shock. No one is ever prepared.

You don't see any of the 3 UN-Loving Traps before you get caught in one. You don't even know to watch out for them.

The 3 UN-Loving Traps will alienate loving, caring partners from each other, and trap them in anger because you don't have the skills to deal with the emotional trauma that is a normal part of living with, and loving someone living with, life-threatening or chronic illness.

Being smart (IQ), or educated, or successful in your career will not help you when you have BIG, normal and natural feelings; and when you try to extend support to someone who has BIG, normal and natural feelings about facing illness.

Either of you can get caught in an UN-Loving Trap. The energy and pull of each Trap are so powerful, that it takes both partners down with it.

NOTE: Testimonials reflect individual experiences and are not a guarantee of outcomes.

THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

4 Top Reasons You Might Get Caught in an UN-Loving Trap

Reason 1:

You are both yanked out of your life and catapulted into panic mode followed by survival mode. Unfortunately, most couples stay in survival mode.

Reason 2:

Sometimes, you can dig down deep and find coping mechanisms to deal with what's next, and what's next after that. But coping isn't LIVING WELL.

Reason 3:

Sometimes, you can't find any coping mechanisms. You fall into feelings of denial, numbness and checking out through "feel-better" behaviors. Denial and checking out make everything worse.

Reason 4:

And sometimes, you can't even believe this is happening to you. You can't talk about your worries or your fears. You feel hopeless and defeated, or overwhelmed and powerless.

Now, you are fair game for any of the 3 UN-Loving Traps.

THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

Getting Caught in an UN-Loving Trap is Not Your Fault

Many couples living with life-threatening or chronic illness are surprised to find out that, as you do your absolute best to deal with all the different challenges that come your way, you start relating to each other in new and not-so-good ways.

Shock and disbelief are normal. And how long you are married or how solid your relationship is, is not an indicator of how you will personally react to this significant loss event, or how it will impact your relationship.

The only thing that is for sure is that it will impact you, and it will impact your relationship.

Even if you have been happily married for decades, you are vulnerable to the (expected) shifts and changes in how you interact with each other following the diagnosis of life-threatening or chronic illness.

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“Illness had us stuck in panic and survival mode. Dr. Jackie helped us feel grounded, connected, and like partners again.”

—Brad & Margie C

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THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

1 The UN-Loving “Super Hero” Trap

The partner living with illness acts as-if they are **Superman or Wonder Woman** and insists they are fine and they don't need any special treatment or attention. Their approach is “business-as-usual.” The Super Hero's partner wants to be supportive, and in the spirit of being the supportive partner, doesn't push back or make waves.

Martha and Bob both had demanding careers, were parents to twin boys going into high school and cherished their downtime together. Martha was an HR Vice President for a major corporation and Bob was an attorney in his own firm. They were active in their community, avid travelers and loved extreme sports.

“Dr. Jackie made the emotional chaos of illness understandable and manageable. **The shift in our relationship is profound.**”
-David and Monica F.

And there's more 

THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

1 The UN-Loving “Super Hero” Trap

Martha had been suffering with a number of non-descript symptoms for months. Once she and Bob decided it was time to consult her doctor it was the beginning of a four-year-long ordeal.

Once Martha was finally diagnosed with Lupus, she and Bob were, at the same time, very relieved and devastated.

While they were very proactive about the medical side of things, Martha became the best version of **Wonder Woman**, insisting, most of the time, that she was “okay” and could manage everything herself—just like she always had.

Bob wanted to be supportive and so he followed Martha’s lead. He had nowhere to express what he was experiencing; and unfortunately, he and Martha became more and more distant from each other.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The UN-Loving “Super Hero” Trap destroys the closeness and connection you enjoy, and causes both of you to feel alienated from each other, and feel isolated and alone in your marriage.

THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

2 The UN-Loving “Chicken Little” Trap

The partner loving the partner living with illness is scared, worried and completely overwhelmed. You imagine only the worst possible outcome.

In an early 19th Century fable, after an acorn falls on his head, Chicken Little mistakenly believes that the sky is falling and disaster is imminent. Like Chicken Little, this loving partner puts a negative spin on everything and creates a reality around those thoughts as if they were true.

“The sky is falling” thinking kills the possibilities for seeing any positive outcomes. It is paralyzing.

Everyone said that Barbara and Roger were two peas in a pod. They were both long-time educators and happily married for six years, both for the second time. They loved spending their time together at the college and at home. They were both gourmet cooks and their home was often filled with friends, students and family enjoying whatever they were cooking up in their grand kitchen.

And there's more 

THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

2 The UN-Loving “Chicken Little” Trap

Barbara was diagnosed with breast cancer after a routine exam.

This threw both of them into hyperdrive until they could identify the doctors and medical procedures that promised the best outcome.

Barbara was very optimistic and had a lot of confidence in her doctors and the treatment plan they recommended.

Roger was completely thrown off kilter, which is not unusual, especially if treatment is projected to take months.

Roger spiraled out of control.

He was inconsolable.

He worried about the worst possible outcome.

He was unable to feel confident about Barbara’s doctors or the treatment plan that was in place.

And there's more

THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

2 The UN-Loving “Chicken Little” Trap

And the worst part was that he became fearful and hopeless about the future.

Roger deeply wanted to be a strong, supportive partner for Barbara, but he simply couldn't stop worrying about the worst possible outcome.

His inability to stop “the sky is falling” thinking ultimately compromised their closeness, and jeopardized their marriage, even after Barbara's successful treatment.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

The UN-Loving “Chicken Little” Trap destroys the closeness and connection you both enjoyed, it causes the partner living with illness to feel alone, unsupported and deeply disappointed in their partner. Their loving partner becomes anxious and completely ineffectual.

THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

3 The UN-Loving “My Hero” Trap

The partner who is living with illness is more and more overwhelmed with each passing day. They make their partner their **Hero**, depending on them for emotional, moral and physical support.

And the Hero takes on this impossible role to the exclusion of paying any attention to important things going on in their own life.

Marc and his wife Michelle, were both successful entrepreneurs who worked hard and played hard. They were people-people and were always happily engaged with family, friends and charity events.

Marc had been feeling run down and tired for a long time. He made an appointment with his doctor and found out he had Diabetes.

Immediately following his diagnosis, Marc was overwhelmed by the enormity of what he was facing, so he started counting on Michelle to take care of more and more.

And there's more 

THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

3 The UN-Loving “My Hero” Trap

At first, Michelle was happy to support Marc in anyway she could. But after a few months, Marc depended on Michelle for everything.

Gradually, Michelle became exhausted, depleted and resentful. Her life became all about taking care of Marc, and neither of them was attending to anything Michelle needed or wanted in her life.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

The UN-Loving “My Hero” Trap destroys the closeness and connection you both enjoyed; crushes the Hero and traps them in a no-win situation with no way to get out.

“Dr. Jackie’s non-judgmental guidance helped us **regulate, reconnect, and build a meaningful life alongside illness.**”
-Don and Jen G.

THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

Being Caught in an UN-Loving Trap is Real

A very real, incomprehensible and terrifying event has happened.

That is a fact. And that fact caused an earthquake of gigantic proportion rocking you and your relationship to the core.

Many partners of people who are ill don't believe that they have a right to have any upsets, or be going through any tough times, at all.

In fact, both partners agree to the unspoken set-up that all the focus and attention belongs on the ill partner and the other partner doesn't count.

You and your partner are each experiencing a complex set of thoughts and feelings. Your assumptions about life are being challenged.

You are no doubt having competing needs and priorities coming up. You don't know that's normal, never mind how to manage them, effectively.

And there's more



THE 3 UN-LOVING TRAPS

Being Caught in an UN-Loving Trap is Real

The partner who is ill already feels like they are a burden, or they are busy taking Herculean measures not to be a burden on their partner.

All too often, when one or both partners notice a change in their closeness and connection, neither is comfortable or brave enough to bring it to the attention of the other.

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“We stopped protecting each other with silence and **learned how to share safely**, even when things are scary.”

-Maurice and Sue B.

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MY STORY

I remember the moment when Mark and I heard those words:
You have colon cancer.

Immediately I said to myself, "I've got this! We've got this.

The truth was, I was completely unprepared for my husband having cancer.

My left brain was totally hijacked by my shock, numbness and disbelief. And, did I forget to say fear?! Mark having cancer was incomprehensible to me.

What we learned quickly over the next few days was this:

♥️ *We were unstoppable.*

♥️ *I could walk this path with him* so long as I didn't have to be the strong one, he would remain my person and the one I would go to when I was worried, upset and scared, and that we would both value and validate my experiences being as legitimate as his.

♥️ *He could walk this path with me* so long as he could do it his way, ask for what he needed, say no to anything he didn't want or didn't want to agree to, and he could depend on me always being there with him.

What have you and your partner learned, so far?

GETTING UNCAUGHT

Inside Our Work Together

Couples living with illness face unique and polarizing circumstances. Together, we'll create personalized ways for you to reconnect and deepen your connection that will become your trusted practices for finding your way back to each other, even in the presence of illness.

No matter what health challenges you are facing, I would be honored to partner with you and guide you to make sense out of what you are experiencing, and to live a REMARKABLE life together with illness.

Each month, I open a limited number of private conversations where we take a thoughtful look at what's working, what feels hard, and what you wish were different.

These conversations are by application, and I personally review each one. If it feels like the right moment for you and your partner, I would love to meet you.

If you would like one...

[Your Application Is Here!](#)

I don't work with every couple. I work with the ones who are still all in — and want a relationship that feels rich, not just functional.

My private programs are for couples who don't need fixing — just the right way forward. If you're ready, so am I.