

## Are You In or Out?



In the United States, the greatest numbers of first time divorces now occur near the end of the third year of marriage. The “7 year itch” has become the “3<sup>rd</sup> year itch.” What does this mean? Partially it reflects the culturally shaped unrealistic expectations people bring into marriage. Have you seen a good movie lately? Many people leave a “good” movie believing that a good relationship is about romance, love and passion. By implication, if your marriage does not make you feel these, something must be wrong. Combine those expectations with our disposable/recyclable lifestyles and it is no wonder that divorce is considered a viable option. Too many people marry “in love” and begin to consider divorce when they don’t “feel the love”.

Check out the statistics:

- 50 % of first marriages end in divorce; remarkably, the divorce rate is even higher for second marriages;
- In 2002, 10.7% of the U.S. population was divorced. This is up from 2.6 percent in 1960;
- Approximately 1 million children are touched by their parent’s divorce and its aftermath each year.

Although researchers debate the degree to which parental conflict and divorce are damaging to children, there is wide agreement on one point: couples that claim they are “no longer in love” make up the greatest percentage of divorces. Researchers are willing to concede that children of these marriages may well be better off if their parents could work things out.

So what is a couple to do when struck by the “itch”? First, have realistic expectations about the normal “cycles” of closeness and distance

in any long-term relationship. Disillusionment is a normal part of the experience. The 3<sup>rd</sup> year of marriage is often when we begin to see who we have married more realistically... warts and all! This is also when we start to contemplate exiting or we get busy trying to change our partner. Either of these responses can prove disastrous!

Secondly, understand that the feeling of “love” occurs when our fundamental bonding needs are being satisfied. If we can learn how to meet those needs in our current relationship, we can re-experience the feelings of love and pleasure with each other that brought us together.

Sometimes we may feel the relationship has reached a point where divorce may be the only option. Before deciding to “throw it all away and start over,” consider an innovative approach called Controlled Separation®. For couples in distress, it provides a highly structured and explicit model that allows them to separate physically, in order to put sanity and good feelings back into their relationship. Couples are professionally guided to get the knowledge and the tools to make one of life’s most difficult decisions... ”Should I stay or should I go?”

As opposed to the usual “trial separation,” Controlled Separation® is designed to take out the guesswork, lower anxiety and break up the marital impasse. Instead of adding more pain, frustration and anxiety, the Controlled

**TWOgether, Inc.**

**(847) 581-9444**

**[www.TWOgether.org](http://www.TWOgether.org)**



Separation process requires couples to spell out the detailed terms of the separation beginning with time limits and the goals of the process. Each person is allowed their needed space to allow reflection, self-discovery and better understanding.

