**Short Articles for the Seriously Curious Professional Helper or Anybody Else!**

**Warning: Worldwide Hanger Shortage Threatens US Infrastructure!**

***Dr. Howard Rosenthal***

I just finished reading one of the latest books on diet and nutrition and came to a rather sobering conclusion. According to the author there is not one food in my entire house that is totally safe to eat. (Well, maybe my dog food and my bird's seed, but I haven't really investigated that yet.) Everything had some sort of drawback. Even my nutritional supplements had to be perfectly balanced otherwise they could do serious harm.

After completing the book, I was in a somewhat depressed state. I fired up my car and then I drove to the cleaners. I was emotionally paralyzed thinking of all the damage every single food in my house was having on my body from the soy protein isolate to the organic orange juice. Not a pretty picture folks. I was down and out, and I wasn't even in Beverly Hills!

As I entered the cleaners I was hit with another bolt of lightning. I was confronted with a huge sign that read: Warning: Worldwide Hanger Shortage Threatens The US!

My entire mood changed for the better as I began laughing to myself uncontrollably. Now I know this doesn't sound very clinical coming from a professional counselor, but I came to the simple conclusion that if you worry about every possible danger in life, you'll drive yourself crazy.

I don't know about you, but I stubbornly refuse to spend a sleepless night worrying about a world-wide hanger shortage. What about you?

*Dr. Howard Rosenthal is a Professor, a Licensed Professional Counselor, and a multi-book author. His website is* [*www.howardrosenthal.com*](http://www.howardrosenthal.com)*.*

**Would Wally Cleaver take Hannah Montana to the Sock Hop?**

***Dr. Howard Rosenthal***

I was once asked to give a mental health presentation to girls between the ages of 10 to 14. It was sponsored by a major teen magazine. The speaker before me was a young woman who had graced the cover of the magazine several months earlier. Her message to the 300 or so young ladies in attendance that day was basically that if you do this to your hair, that your make-up, and wear such and such brand of jeans, then you might just be the next cover girl.

As I listened to the former cover girl speak there was just not quite right about her, nevertheless, I couldn’t quite put my finger on precisely what it was. I was able to speak with her after our lectures, but my feeling of uneasiness did not go away.

Finally, it hit me like a ton of bricks. I went up to one of the magazine representatives and asked, “How old is she?”

“She just turned eleven,” I was told.

“But she looks like she’s . . .”

The magazine representative interrupted my sentence. “I know Dr. Rosenthal, with the make-up and the tight clothes and everything she looks like she’s about 25 or 26.”

As I exited the building, I saw Miss Cover Girl surrounded by a pack of girls eager to get a fashion tip or perhaps an autograph. I also spied guys up to four times her age in search of her phone number for a date.

Is this the role model we want for our children? Do you really want *your* 11-year-old to look like she is a mid-twenties sex symbol?

**Hannah $9000 a ticket Montana**

Are kids really, truly role models for other kids? Hello, do birds fly? Disney Channel superstar Hannah Montana, 14-year-old Miley Cyrus, was able to command an average of $240 for resold tickets for her recent concert. According to media statistics, that figure surpasses what mega-stars like Van Halen or even Bruce Springsteen can garner. But wait, perhaps even more amazing, is the fact that Hannah Montana tickets on auction sites broke into the (gulp!) $9000 range! Add $500 more and you can watch the concert in an executive suite in some instances. (Hey, you can see Hannah, or you can buy a nice used car; it’s your choice.)

Cyrus even told *TV Guide* her performances are “not worth $2000 a scalped ticket.”

**Will somebody please loan Hannah a little eye make-up remover?**

And although Cyrus portrays a wholesome young woman on her show, you must ask yourself: Do you want your daughter wearing that much make-up? On her show when she goes from Miley Stewart, an ordinary teen-ager, to Hannah Montana, a rock star, the amount of make-up seems to be bumped up a few notches along with a more risqué hair style. Or to quote a *Glamour* website headline: “Hannah Montana needs eye make-up remover!”

**You wouldn’t understand it’s a guy thing!**

Nickelodeon, faced with the challenge of taking on blockbuster shows like Hannah Montana, fights back with shows like The *Suite Life of Zack and Cody.* In some of the episodes Zack and Cody sport hybrid hair styles that seem like a synthesis of the Beatles with a little early Beach Boys mixed in. To say my eleven-year-old son thought they looked cool, would be putting it mildly. He thus began to let his own hair grow out to nearly Zack and Cody length until it began to look . . . well . . . kind of cool too.

Cool that is, until first day of school when several parents, a couple teachers, and an administrator all remarked that he needed a haircut. Seemingly, the Zack and Cody dew was in violation of school standards. Of course, the good news is I can recognize my son again!

**Wardrobe wanted for Annette Funicello look- a-like contest winner: functioning or malfunctioning**

In the 1950s Disney was well-represented by Mouseketeer Annette Funicello. Today that honor belongs to Vanessa Hudgens, a star of *High School Musical* productions and has appeared in numerous Disney shows. The first musical made its way into Hannah Montana financial territory, bringing in a mind-blowing $100 million from 100 countries! Unfortunately, this role model for teens from one end of the globe to the other was recently at the hub of a scandal after a nude picture of her surfaced on the Internet in September 2007. She subsequently apologized for her behavior stating that the picture was intended for her co-star and boyfriend Zac Efron. Oh, well, why didn’t you say so earlier . . . that makes it perfectly okay . . . right?

So back to our question at hand: Would a perfect gentleman like Wally Cleaver ask a temptress like Hannah or Vanessa to attend the sock hop with him? (For those of you who are fifties illiterate, a sock hop is a rock and roll dance.)

A better question might be: Would Ward and June Cleaver allow Wally to attend the event with either of these teen-queen sirens?

**Readers share their views: Are Disney and Nickelodeon stars good role models for your children?**

There can be no doubt that shows like *Hannah Montana*, *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*, and *High School Musical* versions one and two, are superb entertainment and markedly superior to a lot of the drivel intended for adults. But the quintessential question is whether today’s crop of teen role models is (e.g., Miranda Cosgrove, Hilary Duff, Jamie Lynn Spears, Linsay Lohan, Drake Bell, Josh Peck, Brenda Song, Raven-Symone Christina Pearman, Ashley Tisdale, etc.) good role models for our kids?

**They aren’t good role models until you say they are good role models!**

Feel free to discuss this issue with your children and allow them to add two cents!

*Dr. Howard Rosenthal is a multi-book author and a Professor of Human Services. His website is* [*www.howardrosenthal.com*](http://www.howardrosenthal.com)*. Copyright 2007, Dr. Howard Rosenthal, General Guidance Group.*

*Note: Needless to say, this is a classic article and today, 2025, Hanna Montana is all grown up, age 32 and Milie Cyrus an accomplished singer, song writer and actress. Many of my current readers have grown up in this generation, so you might know better than anybody how these role models impact, or did not impact, your life.*

**Free Advice to Newspaper, Newsletter, and even Online Advertisers**

**And yes, these ideas work to sell nearly any product or service!**

***Dr. Howard Rosenthal***

Counseling and psychology have a lot of techniques to help people with emotional problems, but I am often asked if these disciplines have any strategies to help businesses. I am happy to say that the answer is a resounding yes!

A lot of research has focused on how any business can secure more customers through advertising. The data show that the most important part of any advertisement is the headline which is sort of like the title of a book. Most experts in the field of marketing, selling, and advertising agree that a crummy ad with a terrific title is superior to a terrific ad with no headline or a poor headline. I mean let's think about it for a moment. You wouldn't purchase a book that said . . . well . . . ***Book*** on the cover. Well, would you?

So, the obvious question becomes: What makes a good headline? I thought you'd never ask!

Here are some of the best methods to create a winning advertisement:

1. Use the words "How to" in your advertisement. For example: How to find the best contractor to design the kitchen of your dreams.

2. Use the word "secret." Thus, a headline targeted at golfers might say: The secret of perfect putting. Or: Secret reveals how to pick a competent counselor or therapist.

3. Use a number in your headline. Wonder Bread builds strong bodies 12 ways. Or perhaps: 6 Key Reasons why chiropractic sessions can immediately help stop your back pain. Or: An Atlas body in 7 days.

4. Ask a question. Do you know these 7 secrets super models use to create a perfect hair style? Here's a great one I created for an automotive polish company: Would you gamble one dollar to make your car shinier than new?

5. Tell the person not to act until they read your ad. A plumber might say, don’t even think of calling a plumber until you read these little-known facts.

6. Use the word "why." Why do some investors always make money in a bad economy.

7. Begin your headline with the words "Who else." Who else wants to have whiter teeth in just 7 days? Or my ***Encyclopedia of Counseling*** classic line, Who else wants to say, “I passed?”

Try these ideas that have stood the test of time. Put them into action and watch your advertisement pull in sales and customers like a vacuum cleaner juiced up on steroids.

**I don’t have a life, my child plays soccer**

***Dr. Howard Rosenthal***

Every few days as I pull up to my office I am reminded of a very important aspect of parenting. The sage advice is courtesy of an excellent bumper sticker that graces an aging van that is in dire need of a wax job. The sticker says, “I don’t have a life, my child plays soccer!”

Molly is a somewhat typical parent. Her 9-year-old son Max plays soccer on Monday, baseball on Tuesday, has his martial arts class on Wednesday, and spends his Thursdays trying to master the glockenspiel, (The glockenspiel, hello, whatever happened to piano lessons for gosh sakes?). Did I mention that Molly has three other children under sixteen years of age? Yeah. Add up the activities of all 4 children and presto, you’re well into double-digits. Good golly, Ms. Molly!

Look, I don’t have anything against a few extracurricular activities. For the most part I think they are excellent and serve to build character. Tonight at 8:30 when parents from my childhood era were winding down to go to bed, I’ll be watching the first pitch of my 11-year old son’s baseball finals. (Has anybody heard the mosquito report yet? Just asking.)

What we as parents should strive for is balance. You don’t want to overstress your child and, in the process, rob them of a childhood. Twenty years from now you don’t want your child to be sitting in some shrink’s office asking, “Who stole my childhood?” Behavioral scientists have a name for parents who *force* their children to engage in too many activities; we call it hyper-parenting.

Just what are a few of the tell-tale signs that you may be a hyper-parent?

1. You can remember the last three times you yelled “good eye” when your child didn’t swing at a pitch that missed home plate by 40 feet, but you can’t remember the last time your family had dinner at home together. Sorry, but the fast-food lane of the local McBurger joint doesn’t count.
2. As a child you had dreams of becoming the next Eddie Van Halen, but flunked fifth grade flutophone, so now you insist that your child take guitar lessons even though he thoroughly hates it.
3. Your neighbor tells you that her kids have participated in nine soccer games this weekend and you one up her by proudly announcing that your kids played in eleven matches. Gotcha! Worse yet, instead of seeing this as a sign that your family might just be a tad dysfunctional, you see your family as superior to hers. We have a name for that too: we call it delusional!
4. You can’t recall the last time your child got out and just . . . well . . . played; no uniforms, no $300 barrel bats, no refs, no dance instructors, no math tutor, just playing.
5. You have a night in which your child has no extracurricular activities and you and your spouse don’t have a clue what you will do with the spare time.

A lot of parents have told me that they are pushing their kids to the hilt *even if their child doesn’t enjoy the activity* because they want him or her to become a professional athlete. Really? Some will, but how many?

Well, if your child makes it as far as high school basketball the chances of him becoming a professional are 3 in 10,000. I purposely said “him” because the chances for women are even lower. The statistic for football is nearly identical. And try this one on for size: your child is 4 ½ times more likely to get struck by lightning than he or she is of becoming a professional tennis play. Hey, I don’t have to tell you those aren’t good odds folks.

Moreover, contrary to what most people think, there isn’t always a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Let’s say that your kid does beat those jaw dropping impossible odds and becomes a pro tennis player. According to the United States Department of Labor in 2002 he or she will earn an average whopping salary of approximately $45,000 a year! And you thought all professional athletes made millions like the ones on television. Fat chance.

The bottom line is that you can have a life, and your child can still play soccer, take dance, karate, piano, and gymnastics, although the jury is still out on those glockenspiel lessons. It’s just that you must keep in mind that more usually isn’t better . . . especially if the child despises the activity. And if you’re living through your child’s life vicariously, then hey dudes and dudettes, get a life of your own. Your child will thank you.

*Dr. Howard Rosenthal is a multi-book author. His book* ***Help Yourself to Positive Mental Health*** *is available through most Internet Book Sellers and there is a link on this site. Therapists nationwide use his study materials to prepare for state licensing and national board exams. His website is www.howardrosenthal.com*

**Could my child be the next big thing?**

***Dr. Howard Rosenthal***

Dear Dr. Rosenthal,

Hi! I read your last column *I don’t have a life; my child plays soccer* with great interest. My 11-year-old daughter is a very good tennis player, and I have dreams of her becoming the next big thing. After reading your article, I wonder if I’m pushing her too hard. I make her practice during every spare moment of the day and by her own admission, she doesn’t like it one bit. You seem to advocate positive, optimistic thinking, but you also seem to be the type of person who will tell me the truth. – Andrea

Dear Andrea,

It’s always great to hear from readers. A lot of parents have told me that they are pushing their kids to the hilt *even if the child doesn’t really enjoy the activity* because they want him or her to become a professional athlete or celebrity. Really? Some kids will go on to achieve stardom, fortune and make more money than they can ever count, but how many?

Try this on for size: A child in the United States is 4 ½ times more likely to get struck by lightning than he or she is of becoming a professional tennis player. Hey, I don’t have to tell you those aren’t good odds folks.

Moreover, contrary to what most people think, there isn’t always a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Let’s say your child beats that lightning charged improbable odds and does become a pro tennis player. Will he or she be able to buy a 8000 square- foot mansion with a Ferrari gracing the massive circular drive? Hey Andrea, I don’t think so. According to our own United States Department of Labor, in 2002 the average pro tennis player earned a whopping salary of approximately $45,000 a year! And you thought all professional athletes made millions like the ones on television. Fat chance! Famous actors and actresses command millions, but did you know that a new person working in Tinsel Town right next to that star as an extra might bring in an anemic forty bucks a day! Geez, and I thought working as a mental health specialist and a professor paid low!

To repeat the sage wisdom of my last article: If your child makes it as far as high school basketball the chances of him becoming a professional basketball player are 3 in 10,000. I purposely said “him” because the chances for women are even lower. The odds for football are nearly identical.

The major league baseball roster at the beginning of the season lists 750 players. There are over 300 million people living in the United States plus a glut of athletes from other countries vying for those 750 slots. I’d give you the odds, but my online calculator doesn’t compute numbers with that many digits.

Having a daughter who is a top pro tennis player is awesome. Having an eleven-year old daughter who enjoys her activities: priceless.

Tennis, anyone?

*Dr. Howard Rosenthal is a professor and the author of a string of mental health books including* ***Help Yourself to Positive Mental Health****. His website is* [*www.howardrosenthal.com*](http://www.howardrosenthal.com)*.*

**What really causes depression?**

***Dr. Howard Rosenthal***

Since this marks the month for depression and mental health awareness, I thought I might tackle the age-old question: What causes us to be depressed?

The answer (drum roll please) is: It all depends on who you ask! For example:

1. The psychoanalysts and psychodynamic therapists usually claim it has something to do with your childhood. Hence, you’ll need to analyze your past. Put that in your Freudian pipe and take a puff.
2. The new cognitive therapists say it’s your stinking thinking. Generally, that would consist of irrational ideas (such as if everybody doesn’t like me, I’m not a good person) or pessimistic thinking (if I don’t land this job, I’ll never get a good job). They’ll teach you to change your thinking.
3. Most psychiatrists will tell you the problem could be genetic (you stupidly picked the wrong parents) . . . nice going. They might also assert that your problem is biochemical, and you need medicine such as Prozac, Zoloft, or prescription lithium.
4. The natural, orthomolecular, or alternative health folks insist it could be your diet. These experts recommend vitamins, minerals, amino acids, or supplements such as 5-HTP or herbs like St. John’s Wort. Lack of sunlight, assaulting your skin with a massive overdose of sunscreen on a regular basis, or not getting enough sleep would also fall into this category.
5. Complementary medicine practitioners would agree with number 3 and number 4.
6. A few experts mentioned above would also want to know about hormonal balance; especially if you are over 40, and blood sugar.
7. Finally, a significant loss in your life such as a breakup of a relationship could be instrumental.

If you need help, quit fooling around, find a counselor or therapist your trust and get some professional assistance! Just remember, it is a strength and not a weakness.

*Dr. Howard Rosenthal is the author of the new book* ***Therapy’s Best, Practical Advice and Gems of Wisdom from Twenty Accomplished Counselors and Therapists*** *as well as the* ***Encyclopedia of Counseling.*** His website is [www.howardrosenthal.com](http://www.howardrosenthal.com/) Copyright 2006 Howard Rosenthal

**The Easiest Way to Pick a Really Bad Counselor or Therapist!**

***Dr. Howard Rosenthal***

Now that the latest advancements in AI have started to reshape our daily lives, I figured it might be best to stop obsessing about cutting-edge tech and go back to supporting my eBay addiction. While surfing the auction site I came upon a listing that would allow me to secure a Ph.D. in counseling for $225! Hey, not bad. I mean, compare that to my 11- or 12-year stint in college and grad school (you lose track when you go to school that long), replete with a 10-year student loan.

Should you see a counselor or therapist with an Ebay degree? Sure, when you decide it is okay for your pet parrot to perform a root canal on you!

You could ask a therapist where he or she snared his or her degree. Nevertheless, with a glut of colleges and universities, how would you know if the school was for real? Moreover, a helper can have a boatload of degrees but still be unqualified to help others.

Instead, I suggest you ask to see the therapist’s license. Yep, I said license. Licenses are conferred by the state, not the federal government. The license should be displayed in the helper’s office. Popular ethical credentials include licensed psychiatrist or psychologist, LPC or licensed professional counselor, and LCSW, licensed clinical social worker.

Most states have licensing websites where you can check out whether your therapist, chiropractor, or even the guy or gal who cuts your hair is properly credentialed. And just in case you missed the point, I’d pass on the Ebay degreed folks.

*Dr. Rosenthal is the author of numerous articles and the book* ***Therapy’s Best, Practical Advice and Gems of Wisdom from Twenty Accomplished Counselors and Therapists.*** *His website is* [*www.howardrosenthal.com*](http://www.howardrosenthal.com)*. Copyright 2025, Dr. Howard Rosenthal, General Guidance Group.*

The Psychology of Writing the Perfect Ebay Ad

**Dr. Howard Rosenthal**

Yes, I am well aware that this column is usually devoted to mental health and social service issues. Normally, I’m pontificating about depression, anxiety, the latest psychotherapy modality, or how to handle your out-of-control monster, excuse me, I mean mother-in-law. (Note not always true. Mine couldn’t be nicer!)

Nevertheless, lately people have flocked to online auctions trying to sell everything from the junk in their garages to the belts holding up their pants. Hey, let’s face it. This isn’t a bad way to make a quick buck.

Just a quick personal revelation here: For a number of years I taught a continuing college course titled, you guessed it, “The Psychology of Writing the Perfect Ebay Ad,” and sold an audio program of the same name on the auction site.

So, trust me when I say that as a person trained in the behavioral sciences -- and very well versed in the psychology of direct mail marketing -- I am horrified at the horrendous copy I see passing for advertising when I peruse auctions such as Ebay.

Look, if you are selling something very rare such as a piece of jewelry owned by Britney Spears or perhaps a Pristine 1957 dual quad Corvette you can write *anything,* and your product will sell for a mint. (In fact, if you have an extremely unusual item you can go to the next article in this newspaper since you surely don’t need to waste time reading this one!)

On the other hand, let’s be honest and forthrightly admit that most of us aren’t selling earrings owned by Taylor Swift or a one in a million classic car. Most likely, the average reader perusing this piece is trying to unload something mundane such as the tie your Uncle Max gave you for your birthday last year. You know, the one had had the nerve to admit he snared at a Blue Light Special. If this is the case, and you are selling a typical item, then yes, you desperately need my help . . . keep reading!

Hence, without any further ado let’s examine several strategies that could pump some life into those tired anemic Ebay Ads of yours.

Your first order of business should be to specifically, tell fellow Ebayers precisely what in Sam Hill it is that you are selling. I’m serious. Here is a case in point. This morning, I was reading an ad and when I got finished, I wasn’t sure whether the guy was selling a blank cassette, a cassette with music on it, or a cassette recorder. I don’t know about you, but most sane folks won’t buy something unless they know what it is!

Always begin your ad with a headline just like a newspaper article. Hint: 99% of all Ebayers don’t! Horrors! What in the world are these people thinking?

Thus, if you are selling grass seed you might begin with something like, “Amazing New Grass Seed Will Give You the Best-Looking Lawn in the Neighborhood in 7 Short Days.” Anytime you can, use a number or numbers in your headline. Hence, an ad for a weight loss product might begin with “Lose 14 pounds in 28 days,” if, and only if, it is true.

Next, describe the features of your item (e.g., the toaster has a special setting for toasting bagels). Next share the product’s benefits (e.g., this television is identical to the ones the national chains are selling for three times the price).

Use short paragraphs for your ads. Research indicates that short paragraphs look easier to read and there is better chance folks will read what you have to say.

And oh yes, let me answer the age- old question once and for all: Long ads do sell better than short ads. Sorry, but that’s the truth. The more you tell, the more you sell.

Whenever possible tell a story about the item. For example, “My great, great grandfather acquired this rare political button while fighting in World War II.”

If there is something negative about your item always bring it to your reader’s attention. This is not a misprint. People would rather buy from honest sellers. For example, I’ve sold over 250 educational audio CDs on Ebay by pointing out that they do not have labels and therefore I can give the buyer a better price.

Finally, if you only have one item like the one you are selling, be sure to mention this fact in your ad. It will spark people to act now. Remind the reader they may never see the ad again.

As for me, well, let’s just say like the Ebay ad listings ending shortly: I’m going, going, going, going, going, gone.

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**LAST CHANCE TO GET IT RIGHT!**

# How to Avoid Seven Deadly Mistakes Made with New Year’s

# Resolutions

Most people make 7 key mistakes when creating resolutions that set them up for failure.

1. Let’s begin with an obvious blunder. You set a goal that you personally have no interest in, not to mention, no motivation to achieve, but somebody else thinks it is important. **Solution:** Forget it and move onto something you personally care about. Put yourself first for once in your life. It feels good, doesn’t it?
2. You tell your family, friends, neighbors, the staff at the fast oil change, and the *New York Times* editor about your resolution hoping such people will be supportive. Never, ever, ever, ever (that’s three evers) tell others about your resolution unless you can be 100% sure they will be supportive. 99% of the time others won’t be supportive. **Solution:** The *New York Times* has more news than they could use in a decade. Keep your resolution to yourself and surprise the world when you achieve it.
3. Your goal isn’t specific enough. You say, “I’m going to lose a little weight,” or “I’m going to improve my financial situation.” What the heck does that mean? **Solution:** Get very specific such as, “I’m going to lose ten pounds by June 1st.”
4. You set a large goal without setting smaller ones. **Solution:** Switch to a strategy that professional behavior modification experts call shaping with successive approximations. It’s really quite simple. Begin setting a smaller realistic goal that leads up to the big goal. Each time you reach a small goal it will boost your confidence. Moreover, always reward yourself when you reach one of the smaller steppingstone goals. Onward!
5. You don’t write out your resolution. **Solution:** People who write goals down have a better chance of achieving them. Join the club.
6. Deep down you believe you have no chance of reaching your goal. **Solution:** Quit being so darn negative. If somebody else can master the goal, so can you.
7. You, like nearly everybody on the face of the planet, don’t have a clue what other strategies are available to help people change. **Solution**: Take a moment out of your busy schedule. Turn off the soap reruns (they probably just depress you anyway), and the Dr. Phil Show (even more depressing than watching the soaps), so you’ll have time to order a copy of my lively book *Help Yourself to Positive Mental Health*.This book reveals techniques that help you change your behavior fast. So there, I got in a plug for my book, furthered my own New Years resolution to sell more of my books, and helped you in the process. Let’s make 2006 your year.

*Copyright 2006, Syndicated Column. He is the author of the* ***Encyclopedia of Counseling*** *and the* ***Human Services Dictionary****. His books are available on www.amazon.com*

Divorce American Style

**Dr. Howard Rosenthal**

Dear Dr. Rosenthal,

My 21-year-old son is getting married to a young woman who is approximately the same age. They fight constantly and disagree about nearly everything. I am truly worried that the marriage will end in divorce. My son says that things will get better after they are married. He just tells me I worry too much. What do you think? Joy

Dear Joy,

Since I don’t know your son or the young lady, I can only respond from a statistical vantage point . . . but believe me it won’t be positive!

First, the U.S. divorce rate began to soar in the mid-1970s. Today, the odds of getting divorced are equal to flipping a coin. Simply put, about 50% of all first marriages fail in about seven years. The odds for a second marriage soar to about 64 or 65%.

Worse yet, young marriages have an even more dismal track record since there is often a discernable change in personality around age 24 or 25.

My take is at odds with your son on another issue: I have rarely, if ever, seen a problem that got better after a couple got married. Indeed, my vast experience doing marriage counseling has taught me that such problems get worse after the couple signs on the dotted line!

My advice is to haul the couple in to see a counselor before they decide to get married. Otherwise, my crystal ball tells me that this is not a marriage made in heaven but rather another that will battle it out in divorce court.

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Dr. Howard Rosenthal

**What In the World Is This New Brief Mental Health Treatment?**

Dear Dr. Rosenthal,

My best friend told me that she solved her personal problems in just a few sessions by seeing a brief therapist. I personally went to therapy years ago and I attended sessions for several years. I’m experiencing difficulties again and was wondering if brief therapy might work for me. What in the world is brief therapy? - Lisa

Dear Lisa,

Brief therapy – which also goes under the names of brief solution-oriented therapy, brief strategic therapy, solution focused brief therapy (SFBT), an offshoot, dubbed as narrative therapy, and possibility therapy – is extremely popular right now. Many textbooks and graduate schools are pushing this model to the hilt. In addition, I’ve received a number of questions about this approach since I began writing this column.

One advantage to brief therapy is that . . . well, it’s brief . . . and generally takes less time to complete than traditional psychotherapy and counseling. Insurance companies, HMOs and managed care programs often prefer this model since it helps keep treatment costs down. There is not an insurance company on the face of the earth (at least that I’m aware of one, nor or other the experts I’ve consulted with) that will pay the whole bill for you to see a classical Freudian analyst for five days a week for approximately three to four, or even five or six years. Simply put: In most cases an insurance company would prefer short- term treatment to a long-term approach.

I can’t truly do justice to this form of intervention in this short article; however, here are a few insights into this paradigm. In brief solution-oriented therapy, the emphasis (just like the name implies) is on the solution, not the problem. Hint: Your therapist won’t allow you 30 sessions to talk about your childhood or the fact that your mother liked your sister best! (They always do you know.)

The therapist will help you focus on exceptions to your problem. For example, if you are depressed, are there ever times when you are not depressed? If you can’t get along with your teen-age daughter, are there ever times when you do get along with her?

By focusing on what occurs during these rare periods, the therapist can often help you behave in a more productive manner. Therapists of this ilk often give homework assignments for you to perform after each session.

If you are looking for a therapist to build a long-term therapeutic relationship with or a helper to analyze the nuances of your childhood, let me state forthrightly that this isn’t the treatment of choice for you.

On the other hand, if the aforementioned factors are not an issue why not give brief therapy a whirl and see if it does the trick? Many, though not all, of the people who have tried this approach have given it thumbs up. Remember that no model of treatment works in every case.

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**How To Pick a Winning Name for Your Child!**

***Dr. Howard Rosenthal***

Dear Dr. Rosenthal,

We are having our first child and my husband, and I want to give our child a name that will help him (or her!) succeed. Any suggestions? Kiana

Dear Kiana,

There’s an old true story about Robert Lane of New York who in 1958 named his first son Winner, and then three years later named his second son Loser. When the two boys grew up, the one with the name Winner had a rap sheet that overflowed with 30 arrests, while Loser (who never hid his name) was an extremely successful police officer!

The problem with attempting to pick a great name (or simply a common or trendy one) is that popular names for boys and girls seem to change at the speed of light. For example, Social Security Administration data indicate that Jacob is currently the most popular name for boys, while Emily tops the list for girls. The question, nevertheless, is whether the name will stand the test of time.

Assume you had a child in 1975, which would make the child 30 years old today. Those same Social Security statistics indicate that the names Jacob and Emily didn’t even make it into the top 20 slots! Consider the name Joshua that currently holds the number 3 spot. Joshua is in the 26th spot for 1975. The name Madison is quite popular and ranks number 3 for girls in the US and number 2 in Missouri. If you had suggested to parents in 1975 that they name their little princess Madison, they probably would have questioned your sanity!

Folks often assume that names become popular because of celebrities. Hence, parents might name their daughter Britney after Britney Spears. Most research indicates this is a fallacy. A family is more likely to choose Britney because a little girl down the street named Britney is unusually successful.

Behavioral scientists and economists also note that an affluent name may become popular with those who are at the bottom of the economic ladder within 20 years or less. So much for picking a power name!

There is some evidence to show that names that incorporate alliteration such as Marilyn Monroe, Ronald Reagan, Clark Kent, Lois Lane, and Mickey Mouse are easy to remember and can help the individual. But would you really want to name your first- born Tiny Tim?

Of course, some names are better than others. Imagine if John Wayne used his real name, Marion Morrison . . . not very macho . . . or Marilyn Monroe, sporting her birth name Norma Jean Baker . . . not very glamorous. Or how about Richard Starkey instead of his stage name Ringo Starr? Hey, I don’t think so!

Trying to pick a winning name is a little like trying to figure out who will win the 2035 World Series. My name (Howard) now comes in at the 779th spot. My advice would be to forget about all the research and recommendations from books and pick a name you and your hubby feel is appropriate.

*Dr. Howard Rosenthal is Professor and Program Coordinator of Human Services at St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley. His book* ***Help Yourself to Positive Mental Health*** *is available on* [***www.amazon.com***](http://www.amazon.com)*. Copyright 2006 Dr. Howard Rosenthal, Syndicated Column.*

Top names for 2024. Boys: Noah, Liam, and Oliver. Girls: Olivia, Amelia, and Emma.

**Do Blondes Have More Fun?**

**The Final Word!**

**Dr. Howard Rosenthal**

Okay, we’ve all heard it a million times: Blondes have more fun. Great. But is it true? Can we honestly say that the statement about blondes achieving an enhanced state of happiness is an ironclad scientific fact?

To do justice to this thought-provoking question we’ll need to take a stroll down memory lane. If we could fire up a time machine and travel back to the roaring twenties you would discover that except for chorus girls and women working in related professions, very few women dyed their hair. Even if we decided to kick the time machine into passing gear and fast-forward to the 1950’s, you would discover that only 7% of all women (mainly actresses and models) colored their hair. Nevertheless, a woman by the name of Shirley Polykoff was about to change all of that.

Shirley Polykoff, who was born in 1908 and died in 1998, was one of only five women in history who was ever inducted into the Advertising Hall of Fame. In 1955, Shirley changed history as well as American culture after she landed a job at Foote, Cone & Belding, ad agency. It was there that she created the famous words*” Does she, or doesn’t she? Only her hairdresser knows for sure.”* This slogan, created for Clairol, was destined to become the 8th top advertising slogan of the century.

Polykoff, further enticed us with the unforgettable, *“If I have only one life . . . let me live it as a blonde.”* She then hit us with the knockout punch, with those famous ad words for a Clairol jingle that are now firmly entrenched in the annals of history *“Is it true blondes have more fun?”*

According to some bean counters, the number of women who decided to color their hair blonde shot up 413%, due to the genius of Polykoff.

Just for the record, Polykoff, a living, breathing iconoclast herself; had dyed her own hair many, many years before she spawned the craze. Her mother-in-law once told her son that your wife “painted her hair.”

Some experts now estimate that today blonde hair dye outsells all other colors by a mind-blowing five to one ratio!

So, do blondes really have more fun? Sorry to say that if it is true, we can’t prove it. A 1985 article in the *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality* volume 13 entitled “The Influence of Hair Color on Eliciting Help: Do Blondes Have More Fun?” certainly didn’t prove it. Two males and two females (who worked with the researchers) stopped 72 males and 72 females, who were pedestrians, to ask for help. For 50% of their interactions, they donned brunette wigs, while the other half of the time they appeared to be blonde. The study indicated that women helped women and men equally. Men were more apt to help a woman than a man; however, at no time in the study was hair color a factor.

In a revealing, yet slightly less scientific study conducted by the *South Wales Argus*, Sophia Cahill, Miss Wales, was used to examine the issue. Miss Wales, a natural brunette, roamed the streets of Newport first as a natural brunette and then as a blonde. The armchair research clearly demonstrated that Sophia turned more heads and received more wolf-whistles as a brunette.

Professor Jonathon Rees, a dermatologist at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, who is researching the genetics of hair color, points out that the majority of people around the globe have black hair. Those with naturally red or blonde hair have higher rates of skin cancer and are more prone to sun burn.

A 1971 study appearing on pages 311 and 312 in the February issue of *Psychological Reports* noted that “dark men clearly preferred brunette women; blond men were equally divided in preference for blondes and brunettes; blonde, brunette, and red-headed women clearly preferred dark men; and artificial blondes preferred dark and blonde men.” The researcher concluded that stereotypes regarding hair, though evident, differ based on the sex of the respondent.

A 1989 study published in Volume 10 of the *Irish Journal of Psychology* set out to test the validity of the so-called “dumb blonde” and “temperamental redhead” stereotypes. The research revealed that men did indeed buy into both stereotypes (e.g., men shown pictures of blondes and brunettes rated the blondes as having lower intelligence and redheads as more temperamental than blondes or brunettes).

The *Irish Examiner* in an article entitled *Blondes Are For Life, Brunettes For Fun* reflects on the research of a German Professor Hans Juergens, who claims that we may just have it backwards. That is to say, maybe blonde women are not sex objects. In fact, the antithesis may indeed be true. He placed identical personal ads for a 26-year-old woman in search of a husband. The only difference was that in one ad the woman was a blonde, while the other described her as brunette.

To quote Juergens: “The men were interested in an affair with the dark-haired woman but were thinking of sharing their lives with the blonde.”

So there you have it. As of this moment the jury is still deliberating. One’s psychological attitude and self-esteem most likely influence happiness more than hair color. Many men and women insist that coloring their hair (sometimes changing from natural blonde to another color) improves their self-image. In these cases, even the stodgiest experts would generally agree that the change is a positive thing.

So, here’s the million- dollar question: Do Anna Kournikova and Pamela Anderson have more fun than J. Lo and Catherine Zeta Jones? My final answer: Only their hairdressers and therapists know for sure!

*Dr. Howard Rosenthal is the author of several books and audio programs including the academic bestseller the* ***Encyclopedia of Counseling****, the* ***Human Services Dictionary****, and* ***Help Yourself to Positive Mental Health***. *His website is* [*www.howardrosenthal.com*](http://www.howardrosenthal.com)*.* Copyright 2006. Dr. Howard Rosenthal, Syndicated Column.

**MOM UPSET THAT HER SON HAS THE LOWEST IQ IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

**Dr. Howard Rosenthal**

Dear Dr. Rosenthal,

I am very upset. My 17-year-old son was given a se of psychological tests and he has an IQ of 117. He seems very bright, however, when I talked with the other mothers in the neighborhood, I discovered that their children all have IQ’s significantly higher than my son. Is my son mentally deficient? – Carole

Hi Carole,

Let me share a little secret with you. Everybody I’ve ever met gets better gas mileage than I do, pays less for insurance than I do, and have a significantly higher IQ (or Intelligence Quotient) than I do.

Every mom seems to have at least one child with a gifted or what we once referred to as a “genius IQ. In fact, some of my friends have quoted me scores higher than the highest possible score on the test! Simply put, they are lying! Okay, I’ll be kind. They are exaggerating.

The average IQ is roughly 100 with the average range checking in at approximately 85 to 115. When researchers tested Nobel Prize Winners – perhaps the brightest and most creative folks on the fact of the planet – they discovered their IQ’s were a little over average; in other words, they had IQ’s almost identical to your son’s!

So, don’t lose any sleep over it. Your son has the mental firepower to become a doctor, a lawyer, or if he really buckles down and plays his cards right, a mental health columnist.

Note: In 2025 the highest possible score for the WAIS and the Binet (the most popular IQ tests) is 160. A score of 117 would put Carole’s son at the 87% percentile or higher than 87% of the population. In plain everyday English, a very strong score.

**WHAT WAS THE AMAZING QUICK CURE YOU DEMONSTRATED AT YOUR WORKSHOP TO STOP SMOKING?**

***DR. Howard Rosenthal***

Hello Dr. Rosenthal,

Several years ago, I saw a demonstration at the Holiday Inn where you helped your secretary stop smoking in a matter of minutes. I can’t recall what you did and need to know so I can personally stop supporting the tobacco industry. LOL. Torrey

Hi Torrey,

Geez Torrey, you’re dating me. That demonstration was a long, long, long time ago.

Anyway, since it was (and is) a very effective technique, let me share my magic.

Keep in mind that my secretary had no idea what she was in for on that fortuitous day. First I whipped out her favorite brand of cigarette and told her to take a few puffs. (Yes, smoking was still allowed in public places back then when dinosaurs roamed the face of the earth.)

I then asked her to rate how much sheer enjoyment she received from smoking the cigarette using a scale of 1 to 100, with 100 being the most enjoyable cigarette she ever smoked. She remarked that the cigarette was “a pretty good smoke,” and gave it a rating of nearly 100.

Next, I pulled out a brand of cigarette that she found disgusting and asked her to take a few puffs. She exclaimed the cigarette was “repulsive” and lowered her rating to 40.

She chided me in front of the audience stating that it was “still better than not smoking at all.”

Since eagle eye Rosenthal (that would be me!) noted she smoked using her right hand I told her to continue to smoke the disgusting cigarette but smoke with the left hand. Her rating dropped into the 20’s. Score one for team Rosenthal!

Next, I had her swig a popular brand of mouthwash and begin smoking. Her rating slipped into the teens (Yes! We were making some serious progress here.)

For the coup de grace I placed a four-pound ankle weight on her wrist – a strategy that also works well for persons who pull their hair out formerly known as trichotillomania --- and told her to smoke. My secretary said, “forget it,” and the rest is history. Now I must be brutally honest and admit I am not certain whether she stopped smoking permanently, but I do recall she didn’t speak to me for an extended period of time. Hmm, the price we pay for success.

The good news is if enough folks read this column, it might be a great time to sell your stock in the tobacco industry.

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**SHOULD I TAKE MY STUDENT’S FRIEND’S SUICIDE THREAT SERIOUSLY?**

Hi Dr. R,

I’m a teacher at a high school here in the Midwest. Yesterday a student came to me and said her best friend was suicidal. I didn’t take any action for two reasons. The first is that I recalled from my college psychology class that people that talk about suicide don’t actually take their own lives. The second was that I was convinced that if her best friend was genuinely suicidal she would have asked for help directly. Did I do the right thing? Kary

Kary,

I was taught the same drivel years ago because the mental health field didn’t know any better. I’m afraid to say you did not do the right thing and need to act immediately!!!!!!! First, when a child or an adult threatens suicide, you should always take it very seriously. Merely everyone who takes their own life has talked about it. In addition, when a student tells you that another student is suicidal, we call that a second- or third-party suicide message. Crisis helplines have discovered third party calls usually made by females and are reporting on behavior about somebody in their family.

Some research indicates that third party messages are even more serious than first party messages (example: the child comes to you and says they are suicidal). Even the data that disagrees illuminates the fact that third party messages are still extremely serious.

Right now, in 2025 Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death, with approximately 47,000 US citizens dying via suicide in a single year. In most years suicide is the second leading cause of death in teens and college students.

Here are some concrete steps you can take:

1. Find out who the child is and contact his or her parents. In instances of suicidal behavior the ethical thing to do is to break confidentiality.
2. Refer the parents to a qualified psychiatrist and therapist.
3. Give the parents the 988 hotline/texting number and the number of the local suicide prevention center. 988 is available 24/7 every day of the week.

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Let’s all pitch in and put the brakes on suicide.

*Dr. Howard Rosenthal is the author of the classic book* ***Not With My Life I Don’t,******Preventing Your Suicide and That of Others****. Suitable reading for 8th grade through PhD level. Highly recommended as bibliotherapy and reading for survivors who have lost a friend, family member, or loved one via suicide. A link for the book appears on this website.*

[Not With My Life I Don't: Preventing Your Suicide And That Of Others –](https://www.routledge.com/Not-With-My-Life-I-Dont-Preventing-Your-Suicide-And-That-Of-Others/Rosenthal/p/book/9780915202775?utm_source=author&utm_medium=shared_link&utm_campaign=B027808_km1_5ll_7pp_d717_referrallink-howardrosenthal)

**DAUGHTER’S POOR SPELLING IS WRECKING HER SELF-ESTEEM**

Good morning, Dr. Rosenthal,

My daughter’s poor spelling is hurting her self-esteem. She misses a lot of words on her spelling tests and then feels like she is stupid, I’ve tried everything to assist her and nothing seems to work. -Melissa

Melissa,

Seriously, not on my watch! We’re not going to let this continue to happen.

Next time give me a difficult problem I might have to struggle with to solve! The good news is that improving your daughter’s spelling is relatively easy. In fact, the strategy I am going to share has reportedly worked wonders for adults and children alike

First, every time your daughter misses a spelling word, look up the correct spelling and put it on a list. Next place the list in a place where she will see it daily, say a bulletin board in her room or the door of your refrigerator using a magnet.

Next, using a voice recorder such as one on her computer or cell phone have her spell the word letter by letter. Do this for each word on the list every day while looking at the list.

If you can’t find a recorder, and your grandmother is too stingy to even loan you her vintage boombox with a classic cassette player (I’ll pause while you Google “cassette”) from her teenage years, just spell every word, again every day, out loud.

If you travel frequently, take the list and the audio recording with you for even faster results. You can even turn a boring traffic jam on Highway 64 West or whatever into a world-class learning experience. Trust me when I say audio learning is a remarkable tool. A trip to your daughter’s school each morning can become a powerful listening experience capable of turning her into a fierce competitor the next time her class hosts a spelling bee.

I created this technique based on the work of high paid Madison Avenue business psychologists who discovered that many people are audio learners (i.e., they learn better and faster by hearing) rather than visual learners . . . you know, looking at stuff.

My strategy uses both written (aka visual) *and* auditory(akaaudio) for supercharged results leaving no stone unturned.

Now if society would only spend as much money researching educational and psychological difficulties as we do on selling priced athletic shoes and smart phones which are priced higher than my first two cars. Ah never mind, don’t get me started on that topic.

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**CHECKOUT LINES SCARE HER TO DEATH**

Dear Dr. Rosenthal,

I have a weird condition and truthfully, I was almost too embarrassed to write to you. I often wonder if I am going crazy. Each time I find myself in the checkout line at a store I am afraid I will faint or even die. My heart starts racing, I begin shaking, and my palms sweat profusely. I can’t breathe correctly, and I don’t want to be trapped. I live in fear that this will occur and truthfully it has been going on for years. My doctors have checked a lot of things but have found nothing. Have you ever heard of this strange condition before? – Monica

Hi Monica,

First let me assure you beyond a shadow of a doubt that you are not going crazy. In fact, the condition you have described is so common that you have done our readers a favor by being so honest and open because many of them likely suffer from it as well.

There is a very high chance you are experiencing what therapists call “panic disorder” or what loosely referred to as a “panic attack” or “anxiety attack.” Anxiety is now the number one reason clients seek out a therapist or to put in another way anxiety disorders now top the list! This problem is very common.

The trigger is different for different people. In your case it is checkout lines. In other folks the panic might occur while riding or driving over a bridge or being on a highway. For others, the reaction occurs only when they reach a certain distance from their home.

It is common for individuals with panic disorder to avoid school and work.

Panic is often associated with a condition mental health professionals call agoraphobia which simply means a fear of open spaces or leaving home.

The good news is that treatment is very effective. It often consists of visualization, relaxation, a strategy called biofeedback, and ways to change your thinking. It is almost criminal how many people go for years suffering in silence with this problem. Remember that on planet earth anxiety doesn’t really attack, only your thoughts, feelings and reactions attack your mental health.

In many instances talk therapy can do the trick without the necessity of swallowing a single prescription medicine. Make what may well be a life changing decision and contact a professional counselor or therapist today.

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**CAN THE HYPNOTIST FROM AFAR REALLY HELP ME STOP SMOKING IN ONE SESSION?**

Hey Doc,

Help! I’m smoking 3 packs of cigarettes a day and I’ve tried to quit cold turkey many times without success. Recently, I was listening to the radio, and I heard about a hypnotist who comes to town and guarantees you will “quit smoking in one session or your money back.” Please tell me this is the answer to my prayers. Also just wanted to say I’m a big fan of your counseling column! Good advice and good humor.

Hey Jim,

Thanks for contacting me. Sorry to inform you -- since you are a Rosenthal fan, and thanks so much for that -- but this is not the answer to your prayers. (Oh, I forgot, you told me not to tell you that). Okay, here’s the scoop.

Mr. Hot Shot hypnotist will come to town and put on a seminar where he performs group hypnosis with a large audience of people. Now in defense of Mr. Hot Shot, a very small percentage of audience members who are excellent hypnotic subjects will quit. The rest of the people who don’t quit (translation nearly everybody) will be urged to purchase an expensive audio program never mentioned in the original advertisements. Now for the Iron Clad Guarantee. Mr. Hot Shot will announce at the seminar that he will hypnotize you free of charge if you did not quit. That’s a deal! Right? **Not!!!**

That’s a deal until you discover he doesn’t live near us here in Missouri, the Show Me State. Next week his traveling road show will be in Arm Pit Wyoming, which is approximately 1270 miles by car, but I hear that part of the country is breathtaking at this time of the year.

In the long run it would be effective and cheaper to pick a professional near where you live. One word of warning, however. 20 states in 2025 have no regulations on hypnosis including Missouri. This means that anybody including your aunt Martha can throw up a shingle and start telling clients to stare at a spot on the ceiling and feel sleepy.

Therefore, I insist that if you decide on hypnosis as your treatment of choice make certain you are dealing with a licensed helping professional with a minimum of a master’s degree. How will you know? Well, here’s a vest pocket guide: You could see an MD or DO psychiatrist; a licensed psychologist with a PhD or PsyD, a licensed professional counselor or LPC with an MEd, MA, MS, PhD or EdD or a licensed clinical social worker or LCSW who holds an MSW, PhD, or DSW degree.

Also, you might want to count the dimes in your kid’s piggy bank since most insurance companies will not cover hypnosis.

Finally, don’t buy into the session cure bull. When hypnosis works, like every other treatment modality, it often takes multiple sessions, and you have my word as a gentleman, scholar, and therapist who did practice hypnosis, it isn’t going to work for everybody.

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**PETRIFIED TO SEE A COUNSELOR AFTER LISTENING TO A RADIO TALK SHOW**

Hi Dr. Rosenthal,

My physician insists I need to see a counselor, but I heard a therapist on the radio who was really mean to the clients who called in. Things got even worse after I saw a popular television show where the guy does therapy, and he was even meaner. Now I’m petrified at the thought of going into treatment. -Susan

Hello Susan,

If all counselors were as abusive to their clients as *Doctor You Know Who* on the radio or the fellow you saw on TV, they wouldn’t have any clients left!

A radio or TV, aka media therapist’s job is twofold: 1. To entertain millions. 2. To bring in as much advertising revenue as possible. Some media therapists have tried to do serious treatment over the air waves. The result: People lost interest and changed stations or channels. Efficacious helping can be slow and boring.

Licensed therapists, although they can confront their clients, are generally caring, compassionate, and empathic. Good treatment can move slower than a turtle with ankle weights strapped to its feet, which is not action packed. Truth be told, I often joke with my college or graduate students that if they do the exact opposite of radio and television therapists they will be outstanding helpers.

So, Susan, the bottom-line is that if you see a therapist and he or she remotely reminds you of the renegade folks on radio or TV please don’t hesitate to report them to your friendly state ethical board. Therapy is not intended to be a mental judo match.

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**CAN THIS MARRIAGE BE SAVED?**

Hi Doc,

My fiancé and I are having severe problems. We argue daily and one of us always stops out of the house. The trouble is we are scheduled to be hitched in 3 weeks. What are the chances of this marriage working? -Rob

Rob, look I believe in being brutally honest, so here’s my assessment even based on this tiny nugget of information. The chance of your marriage working is about the same as me winning the lottery today and I haven’t even purchased a ticket!

In the US marriage is a bit like flipping a coin or playing the ponies. About 50% of all marriages bite the dust and the figure climbs to a stunning 65% for second marriages. And what about the saying “the third time is a charm.” Sorry but not on this planet. The statistics are so alarming you don’t want to know. Okay, okay, you twisted my arm; the divorce rate for third marriages hovers a tick below the 75% mark. Well, I don’t know about you but I’m not liking those odds.

Thus, Rob, I think the best solution is to get your keister into a licensed therapist’s office and take your fiancé with you. Otherwise, my crystal ball with more experience than I care to remember tells me this won’t be a marriage made in heaven but rather one dissolved in divorce court.

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**HOW TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL HELPER**

Dear Dr. Rosenthal,

I’m sure you hear this all the time. You are my hero. I’d like to become a counselor and help other people just like you have done. I am currently a senior in high school, and everybody tells me their problems. I should I do next to follow my dream? – Mindy

Hello Mindy,

Quite frankly I don’t hear this all the time. I fact my two boys, 5 and 8, often cite Chris Pronger (a hockey player) and Mark McGwire (a baseball star) as their heroes. Strangely, my name hasn’t really surfaced lately. In any event I commend your decision to become a professional helper.

As soon as you graduate you should run, not walk, to the nearest community college and sign up for human services as a major. Why? The answer is easy.

The human services program culminates in a two-year degree that will give you the firepower to land a wide range of entry level jobs in agencies that help people. The degree (usually an AAS or Associate of Applied Science) will allow you to transfer to a four-year school. Moreover, it will save you a boatload of money you would spend if you decided to attend a four-year school for the first couple of years.

Your next step is to transfer to a four-bachelor’s degree program in human services, social work, or psychology. Psychology is king if you ultimately want to become a psychologist. In the case of social work, the degree should be a BSW or BSSW. If it says anything else (e.g., BA or BS) keep shopping for another school. Onward!

I’m going to keep the rest of my answer very compact since in one of my college classes I spend nearly eight weeks on this topic, so I’m just scratching the surface here. Okay. For the very best jobs in the field, or to throw up your own shingle (translation: open a private practice), you will need a master’s degree and a license after your name. A master’s in counseling (MEd) and LPC or licensed professional counselor is hot right now. This route could also land you a job as a school counselor if you play your cards right. But check your state regulations for school counselors since a BA or BS in education might make more sense than say psychology, social working, or human services for your four-year degree.

Nevertheless, a master’s in social work, generally the MSW degree with a license LCSW or licensed clinical social worker, is currently the most marketable set of credentials in the field.

Ironically, psychology, the program that pops into most people’s minds might just be the least desirable route for most people. To become a psychologist, you will need a doctorate PhD or PsyD to secure a license rather than a master’s degree to snare a license. Please don’t misquote me here. Indeed, you will find counselors and social workers who do have doctorates, but you only need a masters in those fields to get licensed. For psychology you will need extra years of education for a doctoral degree.

Also, and this is huge, getting accepted to a doctoral program in psychology is extremely difficult. I often share with my students a chart from a major graduate school in psychology. Their statistics indicated that at this point in time out of 200 plus students who apply to their PhD program in psychology the psychology department only accepts a handful each year; maybe 4 or 5 graduate students! (Not a misprint.) A top 100 physician told me he chose medical school because he didn’t think he could get accepted to a PhD program in clinical psychology. Wait a minute, that seems backwards. Just for the record it is not. Just to be clear admission to a doctorate in psychology might be as difficult to conquer as getting into medical school. Who knew?

Lastly, to get accepted in psychology a grade point average hovering near the mythical 4.0 mark makes it easier to get in.

My advice. Since you are already listening to your friends’ tales of woe you might as well get the education and credentials to get paid for your work.

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