



# Marriage Rules<sup>©</sup>

## “INFLUENCE, NOT FORCE”

By: Larry B. Gelman, Psy. D.

If you want to save your marriage, influence, not force is the way! In truth, no one can really make anyone do anything they don't want to do, unless they willingly consent. Consent may be expressed or implied, but when freely given, results in a receptive attitude and cooperative outcome. Consider my version of the Aesop fable of the Great North Wind, the Sun and the Traveler.

Once upon a time, the Great North Wind and the Sun argued about which of the two was the strongest. They spotted a lone Traveler, who was wearing a heavy overcoat, walking along a deserted path. The Great North Wind and the Sun decided to put their powers to a test and agreed that whoever could make the Traveler remove his overcoat would win.

The Great North Wind went first. He huffed and puffed and blew the Traveler's coat open, whereupon the Traveler refastened his coat without much ado. Again the Great North Wind huffed and puffed and huffed and puffed and ripped all the buttons away and even pushed the coat off the Traveler's shoulders. The Traveler hung on tightly and steeled himself against any further threats or assaults.

Once more, the Great North Wind huffed and puffed and huffed and puffed and huffed and puffed and knocked the Traveler down to the ground. The heavy overcoat flopped in the wind. One arm had completely come out of the sleeve. The body of the coat was also atop the Traveler's head. However, whenever a person is confronted with a hostile force, human nature seems to assert itself with an avenging counter-force. The Traveler, sensing danger, clung to his coat (of defensive armor) with all his might. The Great North Wind had failed.

Then the Sun came out and said “now it's my turn”, whereupon the Sun gently, but very slowly, warmed the sojourner's path. After a while, the Traveler began to wipe his brow and thought “hmm, it's getting a bit warm, so I think I'll take off my coat, now, for the remainder of my journey”. The Sun knew he could never force the Traveler to remove his heavy overcoat unless the Traveler consented to work collaboratively with the Sun to remove the coat by his own choice. The Sun succeeded where the Great North Wind had failed. So, too, in a marriage. If you want to save your marriage, “influence, not force”, is the way!

Dr. Larry B. Gelman is a licensed Clinical Psychologist at Northern Illinois Counseling Associates, P.C. (NICA) located in downtown Crystal Lake, Illinois.

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