

Reflections

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The Demons of Married Life

In married love, the secret is to not struggle against age, but to struggle united with it. That is the rule of wisdom.

The infancy of married love. At the beginning, it is, above all else, joy and hope. Love is something new and intact. Both live in a state of permanent discovery.

Nevertheless, love does not escape the attacks of time. A **first crisis, disillusionment**, shakes up the budding home. The **demon of disillusionment** makes the ideal image one has constructed of the other to fade. To overcome this crisis, they must accept themselves in their imperfections. At this level, the marriage really begins to take shape.

Love's youthfulness. At the end of the adjustment stage, a mutual discovery impedes greater friction. Love settles in. But if the crisis of disillusionment was not overcome, time hastens the **second crisis which is silence**. If the **demon silence** grabs both of them, they fall into a kind of apathy. Then the couple regresses. They do not grow. They live without a secure rhythm, without dynamism. To overcome this second crisis is indispensable for the love to survive.

Love's maturity. After being married for about 15 years, the couple has matured. With mature youthfulness they live in tranquility. With mature youthfulness they live serenely. They are the most beautiful years of married life. Happiness is no longer spoken of as it was in the time of youthfulness. Now one is simply happy. The opposite can take place if they were unable to dialog and be united. A **third crisis** which is often fatal is that of **indifference**. Love has become a habit.....the habit has become a routine.....and finally, the routine has become indifference. They live together, but the hearts no longer are in contact with each other: time has paralyzed or better yet, killed the love that was there. Life in common is nothing more than an appearance which is maintained because of an obligation to the children or for social convenience.

With the **demon of indifference** in place, there is always room for a new love and now infidelity and separation can take place.

Love's noon-time. Between the ages of 45 and 50, a new danger appears. Both experience the difficult physical and psychological changes. The woman loses an attribute of her femininity.....her fertility. The man begins to lose a characteristic of his virility.....his sexual vigor. But before that decline takes place, there is often a kind of returning to adolescence.

That mid-life crisis has been given a name: **the noon-time demon**. If the marriage enters that stage undermined by indifference and routine, the noon-time demon has great opportunities for being triumphant.

Love's rebirth. If the couple has been able to overcome that turbulent stage, it now enters the stage of a second maturity. It is love's twilight, the moment when the marriage enjoys a long-sought-for unity, a profound harmony, and a new peace. It is now the time for serene happiness without clashes and conflicts. Time which does not forgive now offers the marriage partners the invaluable reward of love's rebirth.

Love's rest. Finally, the time will come for rest in which the partners, aged in love, will only recognize each other. Not even the painful prospect of death will be able to disturb the aged lovers. Having loved until the end turns death into a summit, a victory. Before men, as before God, a more perfect love does not exist than the love of two beings who have aged together and have helped each other overcome the final difficulties.....to enjoy the final twilights of the day.

Questions for reflection

1. Do I know some of these demons?
2. What can I do to face them?
3. How are we doing with our marriage dialog?

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