

Why Would a Woman Surrender?

By Laura Doyle

When I was newly married at 22, I had no idea I would ever call myself a surrendered wife. At that time, I would have been repulsed by the whole idea.

I did know that marriage was risky because I had watched my parents go through a brutal divorce. Still, I was hopeful that I could do better. I was amazed that my husband, John, could love me as much as he did, and part of me believed we could make our marriage work simply because there was so much goodness in it to start with.

At first I treated him with respect and kindness because I was so impressed with him. Then, as his imperfections grew more familiar and glaring, I began correcting him as a way of trying to help him improve. From my point of view, if he would just be more ambitious at work, more romantic at home and clean up after himself, everything would be fine. I told him as much.

Needless to say, he didn't respond well to this. In fact, the more I tried to control him, the more strained things got. While my intentions were good, I was clearly on the road to marital hell. The more he resisted, the more I tried to control him, and the more frustrated and irritable we both got. In no time I was exhausted from trying to run my life and his. Even worse, I was becoming estranged from the man who had formerly made me so happy. Our marriage was in serious trouble and it had only been four years since we'd taken our vows.

My loneliness was so acute I was willing to try anything to cure it. I went to therapy, where I learned that I often used control as a defense. I read John Gray's *Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus*, which gave me some understanding of our differences. I talked to other women to find out what worked in their marriages.

One friend told me she let her husband handle all of the finances, and what a relief that was for her. Another one told me she tried never to criticize her husband, no matter how much he seemed to deserve it. I decided I would experiment with doing things differently in my marriage and hoped that it wasn't too late for us. I desperately wanted to save the relationship, and I also hoped to save my self-respect, which was fading with each episode of anger and frustration I unleashed on John.

Fortunately, the steps of surrendering helped me with both marital tranquility and self-respect. Today I call myself a surrendered wife because that's what's helped me have the marriage I've always dreamed of. The same thing will happen to you if you follow the principles in this book.

None of us feels good about ourselves when we're nagging, critical or controlling. I certainly didn't. The tone of my voice alone would make me cringe with self-

recrimination. Through surrendering, you will find the courage to gradually stop indulging in these unpleasant behaviors and replace them with dignified ones.

You will also have more time and energy to focus on what's most important to you. Whether your desire is to have a more harmonious family, run a top corporation, or both, you'll feel increasing pride as you realize your goals faster than ever before. Surrendering has a way of bringing out the best in us, both as individuals and as wives, which is why it's so worth doing.

The Return of the Man Who Wooed Me

There was no single moment when the surrendered light bulb went off in my head. Instead, I changed little by little. I experimented, first by keeping my mouth shut, and sometimes even my eyes, when John drove. When we arrived in one piece, I decided that I would always trust him behind the wheel, no matter how strong my urge to control.

Next, I stopped buying his clothes (yes, even his underwear), even though I worried that he wouldn't buy any for himself. (I was wrong.) I learned what not to do from making painful mistakes, like criticizing the way he maintained the cars, which made me feel like my mother when she was cranky and caused him to watch TV for four straight hours. I prayed for wisdom, and took more baby steps towards approaching the relationship without control.

Slowly but surely, things started to change.

As I stopped bossing him around, giving him advice, burying him in lists of chores to do, criticizing his ideas and taking over every situation as if he couldn't handle it, something magical happened. The union I dreamed of appeared.

The man who wooed me was back.

We were intimate again. Instead of keeping a running list of complaints about how childish and irresponsible he was, I felt genuine gratitude and affection for John. We were sharing our responsibilities without blame or resentment. Instead of bickering all the time, we were laughing together, holding hands, dancing in the kitchen and enjoying an electrifying closeness that we hadn't had for years.

For our ninth wedding anniversary, I changed my last name to match my husband's. "Now that I know him a little better, I figure I'll give it a shot," I joked to my friends. What I really meant was that I wanted to be intimate with John in a way that I never was before. I wanted to do something that symbolized my tremendous respect for him, and to acknowledge outwardly an inward shift. This was the natural development of a path I had started some time ago without realizing it.

I certainly didn't change overnight. At first, I felt uneasy when I held my tongue instead of expressing my opinion about everything. Restraining myself from correcting my husband felt like trying to write with my left hand. Life had become awkward!

Surrendering was a gradual process that steadily reinforced itself with positive results. Over time, I formed new habits. When I found myself slipping back into my old ways, I stopped to ask myself, "Which do I want more: To have control of every situation or to have an intimate marriage?"

Naturally, emotional connection, lack of tension, dignity, having kindness and being able to relax always trumped getting the chores done or having things my way all the time. To remind myself of my new priorities, I adopted the word "surrender" as my mantra, because it was shorter and more to the point than saying, "stop trying to control everything." I repeated "surrender" to myself silently over and over again.

For more information, go to <http://www.surrenderedwife.com>.