

# ATTRACTION CONTROL INSIGHTS

## Three Things You Do To Ruin Your Relationship

With Tina Tessina



### Interview Introduction...

**David Shen:** Hey, there! It's David Shen here.

**Renee Wade:** And Renee Wade. And welcome to another session of Attraction Control Insights, where we interview leading experts in the field of dating and relationships.

**David Shen:** You see, here is the thing. In the many years that we've been teaching, coaching, and helping women, we realize that there's no faster way to make progress, than to have multiple perspectives from people who are the leaders of their field.

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**Renee Wade:** Mm! And this is why we've found the best experts to share with us their knowledge and experience in finding love, triggering attraction, establishing that loyalty and trust, and frankly having the relationship that other people envy.

**David Shen:** So we really think you're going to enjoy this interview. I suggest you sit back, take some notes, and let's get started!

*(intro music)*

**David Shen:** Hello, everyone! David here, and I have the privilege, today, of interviewing a lady who has had over thirty years of experience in relationship counseling. She has dedicated her life to helping, and healing, relationships and marriages. You see, counseling and resolving relationship conflict is her art—and she's truly an artist. She's also a psychotherapist, a licensed marriage and family therapist, not to mention she's also got a Ph.D behind her. She's the author of thirteen books in seventeen languages, including *The Unofficial Guide to Dating Again; Money, Sex, and Kids: Stop Fighting About The Three Things That Can Ruin Your Marriage*, and *The Commuter Marriage*. She is known in her circle as "Doctor Romance". Her name is Tina Tessina. So, Tina! Are you there?

**Tina Tessina:** I am here! Glad to be here!

**David Shen:** It's great. It's great to have you on this call, and thank you again for being here. I mean, it's really my pleasure to have you share your thoughts and your thirty-plus years of experience, because I'm sure that there's a lot that you've seen, and a lot that—you know, we can all learn from you, and your experience in that time. So, can we actually start by having you share with us how this all started for you? I mean, what got you into actually wanting to help others in their relationships?

**Tina Tessina:** *(wryly)* Here's a surprise: I had a bad marriage and a divorce.

**David Shen:** *(laughs)* Yes, so did you—

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**Tina Tessina:** So, then I had to figure out what to do, you know? As far as I knew— I got married very young, I got married at twenty—as far as I knew, I was doing everything right and nothing worked. So, I had—Once the whole thing fell apart, and I managed to hang in there for seven years, but, once I finally got my—got extricated out of that, then I had to figure out what really does work in relationships. So, I went into therapy for myself, and, um, went back to school, and got my—all my hours, and everything I needed. It's a big deal, to get your license as a therapist.

**David Shen:** I heard you need—what, three thousand hours? Is that correct?

**Tina Tessina:** Three thousand hours, yeah.

**David Shen:** Jesus! That's a lot of time.

**Tina Tessina:** That's a lot! And, so I got myself educated, and licensed, and started figuring it out. And then, right after I got licensed, I met my second husband—and we've been married for thirty years, now. Happily.

**David Shen:** Wow, that's amazing—yeah, absolutely that's amazing!

**Tina Tessina:** Yeah, so I did learn something! See?

**David Shen:** *(laughs)* And, through your journey, you must have come across so many people with the same kind of problems, and I guess that's what you can share with us today. What are those common problems, why do people actually have problems in their relationship, and—I mean, you probably see a few common themes and common problems in relationships. Is that correct?

**Tina Tessina:** Absolutely. Absolutely, I see a lot of the same things, and, the reason I write my books is I keep seeing the same thing in my practice, and I keep having to teach the same things, and, um—you know, work out exercises for people to do, to learn

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thing. And, when I see myself doing the same package of things over and over, then— And I can't find a book, that's already written, that does those things the way I think they need to be done? That's when I write a book.

**David Shen:** Yes. Yes, and you have—what, thirteen books already? There must be a lot of problems out there.

**Tina Tessina:** Yeah. And, they're actually published in Australia, too.

**David Shen:** Oh! Very nice. Fantastic.

*(Tessina laughs)*

**David Shen:** Now, would you mind sharing, what are some of the most common problems in relationships? I mean, I'm guessing that when people come into your private practice, you know, things are not smooth sailing at that point.

**Tina Tessina:** No. Very few—I do get a few people who come in— to me, before making a commitment, to see if they're, you know, in good shape. And that—I love that, when that happens, because I get to help them, um, avoid so many things that can go wrong, and things—and, there a lot of mythology, there's a lot of mistakes people make, without realizing— um, that they're messing things up. You know? And, so, there are three main things that you can do to ruin your relationship.

**David Shen:** Okay. Would you mind sharing them?

**Tina Tessina:** I would not mind sharing them at all. The first one is, to pick the wrong person. This is the most common one. You pick the wrong partner for the wrong reasons. You pick your partner because you're sexually attracted, they're charming, they're wonderful, they make a great date... This is what happened: My first husband was the world's best date—and he was really bad as a husband! You know? You have to learn to look beyond what's charming and what's fun, if you really want to share a life

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with somebody, they've got to be the right kind of person. They've got to have some stability. They've got to be able to work with you. They've got to be able to—The two of you, together, have to be able to deal with, oh, getting angry, being disappointed, going through tough life things together—and still maintain a good connection and do it as partners. So, you have to have the right person to begin with. That's absolutely essential. My first husband was a gambling addict. Made it impossible to have a real life with him, because people kept showing up at the door and repossessing the car, you know?

**David Shen:** Absolutely, absolutely—No, that's never going to work!

**Tina Tessina:** *(laugh)* No, but I didn't know that, and I didn't know how to tell!

**David Shen:** How far into the relationship did you actually realize this?

**Tina Tessina:** Well, it was after we were married. I never realized that while we were dating, so...then...

**David Shen:** I guess if you didn't know at the time, you would have gone through with it.

**Tina Tessina:** Yeah. And then, I didn't know how serious being a gambling addict was. And—And people don't understand how out of control people can be with their lives. You know, you can't marry somebody who's not in control of his anger, not in control of how much he drinks—or drugs, or gambling, or any of those things. Because it's just going to be disaster after disaster. So, that's the first one. Picking the wrong partner.

**David Shen:** Yes.

**Tina Tessina:** The second one, is to nag, scold, bitch and yell when things don't meet your expectations. You can ruin your relationship really fast, that way.

**David Shen:** In other words, blame the other person.

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**Tina Tessina:** Blame the other person, lose your—Even if you're not blaming the other person, losing your temper all the time. You know? You have to keep the lid on it. If you couldn't get away with it at work, you're not going to be able to get away with it very long in your marriage or your family. And, most everybody can do that. There are very few people on the planet who can't control their temper, and their behavior, when their work depends on it. There's a few people who blow up at the boss and get fired, but there aren't very many of those. Most people know how to keep a lid on it, even if the boss is a really irritating person, or the situation's tough, they know how to keep a lid on it—um, but they don't, at home.

**David Shen:** So, how would you actually help people discover if their partner or their newly found boyfriend is someone who is going to be able to put a lid on it, or someone who is going to be able to put a lid on it, or someone who's actually going to get angry later on. Are their signs that you should look for?

**Tina Tessina:** Yeah. There's an article on my website, called "How To Avoid Loving A Jerk".

**David Shen:** *(laughs)* Okay!

**Tina Tessina:** Okay? And a jerk can be male or female. I mean, there are lady jerks, too. There are women who are financially out of control, or they're hysterical all the time, or—you know, women also have alcohol problems and all those problems, so I'm not saying it's just men. It's—you know, it's your girlfriend or your boyfriend. If you're in a relationship with a girlfriend, and you haven't even really gotten serious yet, but she's always in tears, she's always got a big problem, she likes drama—that's going to be a problem. You might be able to fix it together, and you might not—but you better find out before you get too far along.

**David Shen:** And be aware of that, yes.

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**Tina Tessina:** Right. One of the things you need to do while dating, is get anybody who seems like a possibility. You don't have to be at the "I want to marry this person" stage, yet, but when you start to feel this is looking pretty good, you need to get that person around other people. Around your friends, around your family if they're available. Because a person can't con a whole group. They can con you one-on-one. They can con me one-on-one. But, they can't con a whole group, because what con artists do is they scope you out, to find out what you want them to say, and then they say that. An honest person can't do that. And, a con artist can't do that to several people at once, because they'll be saying different things, to different people. So, it exposes them right away. It just gives you a lot better picture of who they are. I like to teach people to do what I call the "Get A Life Method of Dating."

**David Shen:** And what's that?

**Tina Tessina:** Instead of being in on the dating sites, and whatever—singles' bars—go out and get a life. Get involved in stuff that you really love, that you enjoy, and when you do that, A.) number one, you're going to find other people that you already have something in common with, just by virtue of where you are. You're at that sporting event, or that class, or that play group, or whatever it is you're doing. You already have all that in common.

**David Shen:** It's a great base.

**Tina Tessina:** That's number one. Right. And, number two, you'll see the people interact with each other. So, before you have to decide you're interested in somebody, you'll already know if it's a person of character, if they keep their promises, if they treat everybody fairly—All those things come right out. You can see them right there in front of you. So, you've already got to where the big thing is handled.

**David Shen:** Right.

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**Tina Tessina:** The third thing that people do, to ruin their relationships, is to try to do it all by themselves.

**David Shen:** Oh, I see. So, what do you mean by that?

**Tina Tessina:** To do—Well, to be everything in the relationship, and fill in all the gaps, and make excuses to their partner, and do everything their partner isn't doing—and give their partner a free ride.

**David Shen:** Right. Make it too easy.

**Tina Tessina:** That's not a partnership! And, sooner or later, you're going to be completely exhausted and frustrated and worn out, and you don't have any evidence that your partner has a commitment towards you, because they haven't been asked to do anything.

**David Shen:** Right. I see.

**Tina Tessina:** So, what I say, is that you need to do what I call "the tennis match approach". You know? You lob something in that person's direction, and then you wait for them to lob something back in your direction. You don't just keep—

**David Shen:** —serving, and then they're not returning anything, but you think that they are.

**Tina Tessina:** Right. Right. And, you know, you find out that you've just been playing tennis with the wall.

**David Shen:** *(laughs)* That there's no one on the other side!

**Tina Tessina:** *(laughs)* That there's nobody else there in the relationship but you! And, you know, people can—um, they want so much. Everybody wants to be loved, and

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wants a happy life, and a wonderful relationship. People can say they don't want a relationship, but I've never found anybody who really doesn't. They just don't believe it's possible for them, so they give up. But, everybody wants a relationship and a happy life, and so they try really hard to get it to work with whoever comes along instead of keep going. You know? Don't stop there, with the first person who comes along—and waste six months or a year—or five years, or seven years, like I did—in the relationship with the wrong person that's not going to go anywhere. Instead, keep looking until you find somebody who really can do it with you, who can have that back-and-forth, that partnership, that—You know, their oar is in the water, and your oar is in the water, so your boat isn't going in circles.

**David Shen:** *(laughs)* Yes. I guess I tell a lot of people that most people end up in relationships with people who just gave them some attention. You know? Most of us are starved of attention.

**Tina Tessina:** That's right. That's right. And I understand that temptation, you know. It's really wonderful if you've been all by yourself for a while, but I also find that people are all by themselves for a reason. You know? They've been hiding out. They've been not getting out there where there're other people. They've been ignoring friends because they want a relationship. But, you know, your friends are going to get you through times of no relationships, better than a relationship is going to get you through times of no friends. You really have to have people around you, and have a life that works. And then, first of all, it's not so critical that you find that one person which paradoxically makes it more likely that you *will* find them.

**David Shen:** Someone once said that if you're out looking for love actively, you're less likely to find it. It usually occurs as a side effect, even, of the things that you're already doing in life.

**Tina Tessina:** Mm-hmm! The way I've heard it put is, "If you're expecting company, you'd better be home."

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**David Shen:** *(laughs)* That's interesting!

**Tina Tessina:** You have to have a life. You have to be in a life, and be doing things, before somebody's going to show up in it.

**David Shen:** Definitely. If you're standing still, chances of people actually coming by you and finding you attractive... I think that's unlikely, because you're not doing anything. There's no energy to you.

**Tina Tessina:** Exactly.

**David Shen:** Now, a lot of women have this issue. A lot of women get into dating, and sort of, you know, six months down the track, and they start to realize that their man is sort of pulling away emotionally and sort of disappearing or withdrawing at times. Now, what would you say to a woman who is sort of experiencing that? Is that normal? Should she be sort of expecting that to happen? What are your thoughts?

**Tina Tessina:** Yeah, that is going to happen. I think that's a pretty normal thing. And it may also mean that you've been spending too much time together. That's one of the other things we do, to get taken for granted, is to try to spend all of our time together. But then what happens is, you become boring to each other.

**David Shen:** Yes, you do!

**Tina Tessina:** But, if you've got separate things going on in your lives, and you come together—I mean, the thing when you're dating is, "When can I get to see you again?" The thing when you're living together and committed and all that is, "Um, when can I get away from you?" And that doesn't feel so good! So, if you understand that that's natural, people need to be individuals, they need a little space—it varies from person to person, but everybody needs some space—and you don't take it as a disaster sign, but you take it as, "Oh, maybe we need a little space," and you take some space and you do something

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interesting for yourself, with your space—then, when you come back together you’ve got more to share. It renews things, it refreshes things.

**David Shen:** Absolutely, absolutely. I think, you know, the law of proximity when you’re spending—you know, the quickest way to get sick of something is to do it every single moment of the day! You know? You get so sick of it. I even speak to my wife—Renee—we’ve sort of decided a long time ago that we’re going to have separate homes. Now, that doesn’t mean that we’re going to live apart all the time, that just means that we’re going to have sleepovers and it’s kind of fun! You know?

**Tina Tessina:** It is fun! It really refreshes your energy with each other. My husband and I have a saying. “How can I miss you if you don’t go away?”

**David Shen:** *(laughs)* That’s fantastic!

**Tina Tessina:** Because we need that, “I miss you.” What happens, when we’re together all the time, is what gets our attention is the stuff that’s irritating, or annoying, or frustrating. But, when we’re apart, all that irritating stuff goes away and we remember *(gasps)* “Look what I had, that I’m missing now!” I mean, even such things as—around the house, he does his stuff, I do my stuff—I can—I am very clear what I’ve done during the day, the chores I’ve done and everything, but I completely forget about what he’s done. If he leaves for a day or two, or a week or something—And I have to do all his chores as well as my chores? I certainly appreciate him *(emphatically)* a lot more. I really, you know, understand, “Oh my gosh, he’s done all this stuff that I just was accepting as done— without thinking about it.”

**David Shen:** Absolutely, absolutely. I think that’s something that we need, actually. To built into the routine or the rituals of any relationship.

**Tina Tessina:** And the getting apart—even if it’s going to work, you know, in separate locations, or taking the afternoon off with the guys or the girls, or taking a class that your partner doesn’t take—it really does refresh the energy.

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**David Shen:** Absolutely. So, in that sense, I mean, you know, sometimes if you get into a sports' group, or if you do everything with your partner, that could actually be a bad or negative thing for the overall polarity and the overall, I guess, the chemistry in that relationship.

**Tina Tessina:** That's right. You need a balance. You need a balance between time spent together and time spent apart. Times working together, times playing together. You know? All those things have to— Balance is the thing that works best, in life. A little bit of this, and a little bit of that.

**David Shen:** And on that point, I know that you have a book called *The Commuter Marriage* which is all about the long-distance relationship. You know, how to deal with that. Because I know that—I read the other day, that there's over fourteen million couples who claim to be in long-distance relationships. That's fourteen million. And, stats show that over forty percent of them actually end up breaking up.

**Tina Tessina:** Yeah. 'Cause it's not easy. There's reasons why that's happening right now. First of all, there's all the military deployments. That automatically makes you a commuter couple, you're already split in different places. There's drives for work, like, here in Los Angeles people drive a long way for work, and it may mean they hardly see each other during the week, during the work week. Or, people often live in another place four or five days a week. I have friends right now, where—He's got a—I'm in Long Beach, and he's there in Long Beach, and he's got a job there in San Diego, and he just stays for four days a week down there. Because the commute is too much to go back and forth every day. And, you know, and then there's people who meet online, and they don't live in the same place to begin with, or people who have to move for a job because jobs are scarce, and so they have to take this job that's out of town somewhere or a distance, or I have clients who are—who work at universities and they—You know, one of them gets a chance to get a tenured position in a university that's not where the other person's teaching. So, there's all this stuff going on. We've got two—career couples, now, are the norm, and people travel a lot more than they used to, and employers

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expect more travel than they used to, so. And then there are jobs like being a fireman, in our country— I don't know how it works in your country, but in our country firemen are, like, three twenty-four hour shifts off and four twenty-four hour shifts off. So, they live right at the fire house three days a week, and the rest of the time they live at home. So, they have two problems. They have the problem of being separated for three days, and then they have the problem of, "you're not going anywhere for four days!" (*laughs*) And truck drivers are the same way, they are away from families for a time. So, there's all kinds of reasons why people are married, but are not spending all their time together.

**David Shen:** Is there a way to actually feel close, and keep your relationship close, in that particular situation. And, is there a time frame in which, you know, let's say—a month away is too long. Or, three months away is too long. Is there something that you've noticed in your practice? Is there a common theme, in terms of how long a relationship needs to sort of—How long between meeting in person?

**Tina Tessina:** Well, you know, a lot depends on the foundation that the couple laid in their relationship before the separation happened. People are deployed in military, they may not be home six months to a year. And, they have children together, they have families and property and everything—they don't want to lose the marriage because of that. So, there are ways to stay together, you know? There are ways to keep it together. It's not particularly easy, in a lot of times... but, um, I—For people who are separated for long stretches of time, I recommend phone sex, I teach 'em how to do phone sex—

**David Shen:** Nice!

**Tina Tessina:** (*laughs*) Because it's really important, to have that connection, and to know that you've got that intimate connection with each other. And, I teach commuting couples things like, "When you're on the phone, or on Skype, and you have that connection? Save that for being close to each other, and being warm, and sharing intimate feelings and that sort of thing. You can do the 'Who's paying the bills?' And 'What's going on with the kids?' and stuff by e-mail or texting, but the phone time is

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often the most precious. And so you need to keep that for special moments. Make special moments out of that.” Once in a while, you might need to do the business during that time, because that’s the only time you have. But most of the time, you can do the “what decision are we going to make about *this*” or “here’s what’s been going on in the neighborhood” or that sort of thing, by e-mail. And you can save the phone time for just enjoying being together.

**David Shen:** I totally agree. I think there’s a bigger impact than what people can realize. You start to associate their voice with being connected, and being loved, instead of, “Oh, that person’s talking again, we must be talking about business, or we must talk about the housekeeping” stuff.

**Tina Tessina:** Yeah. And so, it’s really important to keep that alive. It’s also important to understand that the away person is going to feel disconnected and left out, and the at home person is going to feel like all the responsibilities are dumped on them. And so, there’s ways to balance that. For instance, with a family where the dad’s a firefighter, I had him help the kids by Skype and e-mail and phone, with their homework every night while he’s gone. Unless, of course, he’s fighting a fire—which, really, is a very small part of the time that firefighters spend. They’re ready to fight a fire, but they don’t really, you know, fight them every day! So, he got to stay close to his kids and take responsibility for helping them with their homework, and that gave his wife a break from always being responsible for the kids. And, you know, it feels like a better division of power, and responsibility and chores. So, you can do things like that to divvy up—The person who’s away, can maybe take on paying the bills online. So, the person who’s at home, who has to do whatever chores there are at home, which is a lot, has at least that one chore that they don’t have to do. And, there are some ways that you can kind of even up the stuff a little bit. And it makes the away person feel more connected, and it makes the at home person feel less like everything is their responsibility.

**David Shen:** Yes, less overwhelmed with everything and—yeah, no, I totally understand that and agree with that. Then, you know, there’s cases where I have a client and my man is falling out of love with her. What can you do? What are some of the common

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signs that you've seen, that people fall out of love? What normally happens there? What are some of the things that you should look for?

**Tina Tessina:** Well, you know, it isn't magic. People don't just fall out of love by accident. Love lasts forever—I know people who were separated for fifty years and got back together and that original spark was still there. I really believe in love. But, if people—(pause) Like, you do that “nag, bitch, whine” thing? You're eventually going to turn your partner off. If you don't communicate and you don't stay in touch, and you take it for granted that your partner's going to know that you care and stuff—That's not going to happen. They're not going to know that you care, and eventually they're going to feel unloved and unwanted. If you let the sex go out of your marriage, you're really putting your marriage in danger. So, there are things you can do to keep your marriage working and happy and keep it growing. You need to keep growing. And, we get to focus on the kids and on the work and all that stuff, and what happens is the marriage comes in last, and it kind of languishes. So, I encourage couples that I work with, to add as much sweetness as they can to their marriage, all the time. You know, say please and thank you, give your partner a little squeeze or a little hug or a little kiss. Around here we have, like, “the Kibble Fairy”. If the dog kibble bowl gets filled up, the bowl from which we feed them, I always say, “Wow! The Kibble Fairy was here! Thank you, Kibble Fairy!” And that's my husband, you know. He just came in and magically—or, there's a toilet paper fairy, or whatever, you know— just came in and magically fixed something that needed fixing. And so, you need to thank them for that.

**David Shen:** Hmm. It's all the little things, that add up at the end of the day, isn't it?

**Tina Tessina:** The little things, the little touches—it's all the little things. It's all the touches and the little sweetnesses that keep—they're like the WD40. You know what WD40 is? Is that what you have in Australia?

**David Shen:** No, I'm not sure what that is.

**Tina Tessina:** It's a lubricant, like graphite.

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**David Shen:** Oh, right. Yes.

**Tina Tessina:** That sweetness is the lubricant of your relationship. It keeps everything running smoothly, and everybody happy. When people get thanked, they're happy to do what they're doing. And, I have an equation, which is that "celebration plus appreciation equals motivation".

**David Shen:** Ah! Very nice.

**Tina Tessina:** So, if you celebrate what's been done, that's good, and you appreciate people and feel appreciated yourself for doing it, then what you get is motivation. You get motivation for staying in the relationship, you get motivation for doing more good things... you know, if you and I are having a great time, and every time a problem comes up we can sit down and work at it and solve it and do whatever we need to do, and every time you have an issue at work, I'm there to support you and care about you and talk about it—why would you go anywhere?

**David Shen:** Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

**Tina Tessina:** You know? Add sex to that, and that's unbeatable. Nobody's going to go away, if that's going on. Now, if you let that all go and every time you see me, I'm cranky and I'm complaining at you, and I don't ever want to be close to you, and I'm not interested in what you have to say? Then, it's easy to leave that.

**David Shen:** Yeah, absolutely. You start to develop this negative association, that, any time the other person shows up, you actually feel bad inside, and you feel guilt or all these negative emotions that we possibly feel. And suddenly, it's better if you're better when you're not with that person!

**Tina Tessina:** Right. And somebody else, who is going to be sympathetic and attractive and nice to you becomes very very much more attractive.

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**David Shen:** Yeah! And they come along, and you know, suddenly you now have problems!

**Tina Tessina:** Yeah. So, I don't believe it just happens, you know, that people just fall out of love. They don't. They walk backwards out of love, very slowly.

**David Shen:** And they forget to focus on the things that they were focusing on, when they did actually get into that relationship—when they did fall in love.

**Tina Tessina:** Right. And I've seen a lot of couples who come to me, thinking, "I think we should split up, I think this is over—" and, of course, they wait until that point to get some counseling—

*(Shen laughs)*

**Tina Tessina:** —which makes it harder—but still, we can fix the problems. But then, all of a sudden, they're starting to feel excited about each other again. They're falling in love again. They're all, "Wow, you know, I forgot this about you." And, you know, I teach people to re-create what they did when they were dating, if the marriage has gotten stale and boring. Recreate what you did when you were dating, because you'll remember how you dealt with each other, and what's going on. The other thing that's really important, is to not let resentment hang around you. If you're feeling resentment, you've got to speak up and say something because resentment—

**David Shen:** —get it out of your system.

**Tina Tessina:** Right. I call resentment "The Great Destroyer" I think resentment is the only thing that can really destroy love. You can be angry, and still love each other. You can be sad, and still love each other. You know, you can have your feelings hurt and still love each other—but if you start letting that grinding resentment? That's kind of like the rust in the relationship, you know. It just eats away at things.

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**David Shen:** Absolutely.

**Tina Tessina:** So when that's—You need to learn to pay attention to when you have that, when you're feeling resentment—Everybody gets resentful from time to time, it's not a surprising thing to get there, but if you don't do anything about it, it's going to create damage.

**David Shen:** Yes. And it—As you said, it eats away at everything. And it builds this negative association, and it builds up a wall between you and your partner.

**Tina Tessina:** Right. Right. So, at my website at TinaTessina.Com, there are over a hundred free articles that people can read, that talk about all these things, and give you lots of relationship help, and I encourage people to take a look at them. How to forgive each other, how to work together, what to do about anger, what to do about—How to apologize, how to ask for what you want... There's all kinds of really good articles there.

**David Shen:** Absolutely. I actually just had a look before, and as you said there are heaps and quite a lot of articles right there. Just, you know, free information to give you tips and advice on various issues that may come up for couples, especially, you know, couples who are married, where there's violence—and etcetera, etcetera.

**Tina Tessina:** Yeah. There's a lot about violence, because domestic violence is such a big problem, all over the world, still. We're making a dent—but, only a dent. And so, you know... There's even an article there, called "Friends In Need" how to help someone you love, when you find out they're in a domestic violence situation. How to help them, without making things worse for them, because, very often, well-meaning friends can make it worse rather than be helpful. If you go and tell the violent person, "Shame on you, and you shouldn't be doing that—!"

**David Shen:** They're not going to stop.

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**Tina Tessina:** That person's just going to take it out on their partner.

**David Shen:** Yes. Yes.

**Tina Tessina:** So, it's that there's better ways to do it. You have to know what you're doing, to help. But you can help! You can help somebody who's out of control with drugs or alcohol, or who's violent, or who's stuck in a violent situation. You can help people, but you have to do it in the right way. You can't just go storming in there, and fix it.

**David Shen:** Yes, and push your opinions on to other people.

**Tina Tessina:** There're instructions about all of that, on the website.

**David Shen:** Fantastic. Now, I know you deal with a lot of this in your practice, and that's infidelity. Now, should you stay or should you go? Can you shed some light on that?

**Tina Tessina:** Well, you should know that I have guidelines about that. Infidelity, should you stay or should you go? Yeah, you know, it depends. There's a couple of kinds of infidelity. It's not all the same thing. Sometimes, somebody just gets caught up in something, and—if that resentment thing is going on? I mean, women tend to cheat because they feel unloved. Men tend to cheat because they're not getting enough sex. And, so, those things are fixable, if the person's willing to fix them. Now, if you've got a person who just isn't interested in being monogamous no matter what, that's one of those deals where you're in a relationship with the wrong person, and you're going to have to fix that. But, if—Very often, people who cheat really care about their partners, and they don't even understand what they're doing or why it's happening, and, um, that can be fixed—very often. If the partner who got cheated on, you know, can stay calm and talk about what they need to be reassured that their partner is going to be reliable and trustworthy—You have to rebuild trust, and that's a tough thing to do—

**David Shen:** It is, it is.

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**Tina Tessina:** —but it can be done. And, you have to figure out what you're dealing with here. Do I have somebody who's really—wants out anyway, and just chose this really hurtful way to do it? Or, do I have somebody who just was miserable and looking for comfort in the wrong place, and not realizing that, "I'm the person they're supposed to get comfort from." You know.

**David Shen:** So I guess, there're the signs that you would have to look for, to make that decision, "Should I go or should I stay?" You look for whether they're actually really wanting to leave, or if they're actually just looking for an outlet, and they actually care about the relationship and actually want to stay.

**Tina Tessina:** Or, you know, if they're just the kind of person that is never going to be faithful in a relationship, we've got those too. So, sometimes that's it.

**David Shen:** Ah, right. How would you tell, by the way?

**Tina Tessina:** Well, you know, if you really start working on rebuilding trust? They're not going to be able to do it.

**David Shen:** Oh, I see.

**Tina Tessina:** You know, I give my clients in this situation trust building tasks. You know, to learn how to make promises that you can actually keep, instead of saying yes to stuff and not really intending to ever, ever follow through. So, learn how to make promises that you can actually keep and then keep your promises, and understand that if something prevents you from keeping the promise, you have to negotiate that in advance. You can't say, "Oh, I would have done it, but, you know, this other thing happened." *(laughs)* That doesn't build trust.

**David Shen:** Yes. I guess that's also making a commitment. Making a commitment to your word.

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**Tina Tessina:** Yeah. Right. And, some people don't have a word, you know? Some people don't have any integrity. And they can't do it, and they really don't want to do it, once push comes to shove. And, you know, sometimes there's other things in the mix. I've had people, when they were really pushed, come out as not being heterosexual. So— how can they be in this marriage? You know, how can they be faithful in the marriage if they're not organized that way, you know? But they were afraid to... to be honest about it, so, they got stuck.

**David Shen:** Right. Wow.

**Tina Tessina:** You know, sometimes they just like being “a player,” whatever that is. And, they like that more than having a reliable partner and all that sort of thing. So, you have to figure out who you're dealing with here. It's the same with addictions, you know. You have to find out if somebody just drank too much because they were feeling bad—

**David Shen:** —lost their job, or something like that?

**Tina Tessina:** Right. Yeah. And if they can get over that, or if they're really out of control and have an addiction and they have to do some heavy-duty stuff, or are they just—just saying, “I'm okay, I don't drink too much, and everything's fine—” and, you know, if they're doing that, then there isn't much you can do with them. You can't keep it going.

**David Shen:** Yes. Yes, and you really have to make that decision, and look for those signs that if they're not the right fit—you know, it's very unlikely that people actually make huge changes in life. So, you either have to facilitate that, or, you know, “You know what? There's not going to be much of a future.”

**Tina Tessina:** That's right. Exactly. And, you really need to care about yourself enough that you're not going to waste too much time in an impossible situation. But, you also

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need to not throw away a good situation. So, you have to take the time to tell the difference.

**David Shen:** Yes. Yes, and that takes a bit of learning, as well.

**Tina Tessina:** (*hums in agreement*) Mm-hmm.

**David Shen:** So, what about moving on emotionally, after a divorce or a breakup? How would women out there—What could they do, to actually get over that? Because I know a lot of women, you know, they feel a massive sense of loss once they are broken up, or after a divorce. What can they do?

**Tina Tessina:** Well, first of all, you need to do your grieving. Don't try to keep the relationship going, in order to not have to grieve. You have to do some feeling bad. If it's really over, you gave it your best shot, then you need to do the grieving. You need to let it go. Have some grieving ceremonies. Talk to some friends. Do some stuff, so that you can actually get the grief out. If you face your grief, it's not going to be as hard to move on. A lot of people do a lot of really destructive things, trying not to feel their feelings. And, while I know feeling your feelings isn't the most pleasant thing in the world, it's a lot easier than what happens if you destroy your life, instead. So, you have to do that first, and then you have to focus on yourself, and, um—you know, do whatever you need to do to make yourself happy. This is a great time to do that thing you were always wishing you could do, but never—

**David Shen:** —had the chance?

**Tina Tessina:** Never had the chance before, whatever. It's a great time to reinvent yourself. You'll feel better, you know? And then, after you've got some distance, then you have to take a look back and see what actually went wrong in this relationship, and how did I contribute to it? Because you've always contributed to it, even if your contribution was to pick somebody who was just a terrible partner. That was your contribution! Once you did that, there wasn't much else you could do! So, you have to

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look at your contribution, and how did I contribute to this not working out? So that you can do better next time, and so that you'll have some confidence that you can do better next time.

**David Shen:** And learn.

**Tina Tessina:** I think— Yeah. In my experience, people who learn and grow from whatever happened in their relationships, never get left. It's always—The next one's always better, if you've learned and grown from what happened in the last one. And that's even true, while your relationship is going on. If you're learning and growing in this relationship, and being open to change when change comes up, and that sort of thing, your relationship is going to keep getting better. It keeps getting better for your whole life, which is a really wonderful thing. I mean, when you're looking forward to what's the next day going to bring, because I know it's going to be better than the last day? That's a terrific thing.

**David Shen:** Yeah, and there's so much more energy and excitement and that's magnetic. That's attractive.

**Tina Tessina:** Yeah. You know, we're in a cultural mode, these days, it's kind of cynical, and "down" on relationships... It's hard to find, like, in TV shows or movies or anything? It's hard to find a good relationship. It's all about what goes wrong and all that stuff. But, truly, romance may be exciting, and, you know, in that lust that happens—passion, in the beginning of the relationship, that may all be exciting, but there's nothing that's as satisfying as a really wonderful relationship. To have that person there, that you can count on, that's been there for you in the past, and you've been there for them, and you know... My husband and I have reached the phase of our lives now when we're traveling a lot. Well, it is so great to have somebody that I know I'm going to have a good time with! That, wherever we are in the world and whatever weird thing is happening, because a lot of weird stuff happens when you're traveling, that, he and I are going to get through it together. He's going to have my back, I'm going to have his back, we're focused on having a good time and not making the time bad for each other in any way?

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Making it better, instead of worse. You know, there's nothing better than that. That is truly priceless. That is what everybody longs for, and it's available if you learn and grow in the process of being in the relationship, you can have it.

**David Shen:** I totally agree, I totally agree. There's nothing—you know—that makes you feel more alive, and makes you feel more loved and connected than an intimate relationship that's actually close.

**Tina Tessina:** Absolutely. I completely agree.

**David Shen:** And I definitely agree that—

**Tina Tessina:** It's hard to convince people that haven't been in it.

**David Shen:** Yeah. Absolutely. And it's definitely worth all the pain you have to go through to learn— because most people don't want to learn. They just want it to show up right in front of them. But it never really happens.

**Tina Tessina:** Oh, yeah, well. That's the thing. The magic thing that happens in the fairy tales, and the TV shows, and the whatever, you know? People— People see each other on a subway, and they— their eyes lock and the music swells, and—*boom!*—that's it.

*(Shen laughs)*

**Tina Tessina:** And then nothing happens after that in the movies, you know? You never see them going through—

**David Shen:** *(in agreement)* No, you don't.

**Tina Tessina:** —what they have to go through, to actually build a relationship, because that—the relationship's just begun, at that point. It hasn't really started being a relationship yet.

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**David Shen:** No, that's right. You don't see, you know, six months or a year down the track, where they spent so much time together that they're sick of each other, kind of thing. Absolutely agree. So, thanks again for your time today. I'm just going to wrap this interview up, now. And I really do appreciate your thoughts!

**Tina Tessina:** Well, I've had such a great time talking to you, David.

**David Shen:** Yes! Me, too. I've loved some of the stuff that you've said, you know. I've even wrote it down. *"How can I miss you if you don't go away?"* It's such a classic quote. I'm definitely going to add that to my book!

**Tina Tessina:** *(laughs)* Don't forget the Toilet Paper Fairy, that's a good one, too!

**David Shen:** Absolutely. Absolutely, I think you've got some real golden nuggets there that people should really take away. Now, what can we expect more from you in the future? Are you going to do more private counseling, or, perhaps even more videos online?

**Tina Tessina:** Well, I am doing more videos online. One is going up, actually, on Monday. And, um, I'm develop more videos and I have a few irons in the fire that I can't talk about yet—

**David Shen:** *(laughs)* Sure.

**Tina Tessina:** One is an online relationship site, that I'm getting involved with, and, um, and I've got some e-books coming out, so, there's a lot of things happening. If people keep in touch with my website or my blog or get my newsletter—if you send me your e-mail, I can send you my newsletter, which comes out once a month. Then you'll see what's going on with me. My Facebook page, too. I have a Doctor Romance Facebook page.

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**David Shen:** Ah! Fantastic, fantastic.

**Tina Tessina:** And, you'll see all the new stuff that's coming up.

**David Shen:** Fantastic. And, that's TinaTessina.Com, right?

**Tina Tessina:** That's right.

**David Shen:** Fantastic. So, thank you again for sharing your thoughts and experience today. I really, you know, wish you the best of luck with everything that's happening with you in the coming weeks and months.

**Tina Tessina:** Thank you! Same to you, David.

**David Shen:** Thanks, Tina. Take care, now.

**Tina Tessina:** Thank you. Bye-bye.

**David Shen:** Bye-bye.