

## Magazine

# 100 Women 2016: I am a 'surrendered wife'

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KATHY MURRAY

**Californian Kathy Murray says she saved her marriage by giving up trying to control her husband. Despite considering herself a feminist, she follows - and now teaches others - the approach of a controversial book called *The Surrendered Wife*, which tells women to stop nagging their partners and start treating them with more respect.**

The first time I married I was divorced by 26. I married for the second time at 32 but soon found myself sleeping in the guest room. My husband and I fought all the time.

Much of our fighting stemmed from the fact I thought my husband was clueless when it came to raising the children (we had four children between us aged from four to nine years old). We also quarrelled about how to manage our finances, and how often we made love.

I was working full-time as chief finance officer for a private school and also volunteered at my kids' school and in my community. My husband was a sales rep for a construction company but I was the breadwinner and acted like I was in charge.

I didn't tell anyone I was in constant conflict with my husband. I was embarrassed, angry and resentful.

## The six principles of being a 'Surrendered Wife'

- Relinquishes inappropriate control of her husband
- Respects her husband's thinking
- Receives his gifts graciously and expresses gratitude for him
- Expresses what she wants without trying to control him
- Relies on him to handle household finances
- Focuses on her own self-care and fulfilment

*Source: Laura Doyle, author of The Surrendered Wife*

My husband often resorted to watching TV and snuggling with our pets as I'd rage at him over ignoring my needs. I mean all men want sex right? Not my husband. He wanted nothing to do with me. It was awful.

The more I told my husband how he should be, the less he'd try. I couldn't figure it out so I dragged him to marriage counselling. But that only made things worse, so we sent our children to counselling since they too bore the brunt of so much of our conflict. That didn't work either.

So I went to counselling by myself and complained about my husband for more than a year. Spending thousands of dollars, only to find myself nearer divorce than when I started.

I'd cry, fight, yell and pout, thinking he would eventually come around, but he didn't. I lost weight, went to the gym and started getting attention from men which was tempting to act on, but I knew I couldn't do that, so I'd play the victim card and sulk. That didn't work either.

KATHY MURRAY

I was about to end my marriage when I picked up a book called *The Surrendered Wife* by Laura Doyle. I mean, they don't teach us how to be successful in marriage in school and the women in my life didn't share the secrets either.

It was incredibly humbling to recognise that I had something to do with why my marriage was failing and perhaps even why my first marriage failed. But it was also empowering.

I didn't know I'd been disrespectful to my husband or even that I'd been controlling and critical.

I thought I was being helpful and logical. I just didn't know that respect for men is like oxygen, so no wonder my husband was no longer interested in me sexually.

I'll never forget the day I first apologised to my husband for being rude for correcting him in front of the children, or the day I said "whatever you think" when I'd previously been extremely opinionated about what he should do.

## What is 100 women?

**BBC 100 Women** names 100 influential and inspirational women around the world every year. We create documentaries, features and interviews about their lives, giving more space for stories that put women at the centre.

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I had trained my husband to ask my permission for everything. And then complained about it for a year in counselling that he couldn't make simple decisions!

I relinquished control of my husband's life, choices and decisions and instead I focused on my own happiness. I was no longer acting like his mother and started acting like his lover.

We were fighting less and less and my husband started reaching out to hold my hand or pull me in for a kiss.

I had no idea that I was responsible for my own happiness. I thought my husband should make me happy.

I've now found subtle ways of getting my husband in the mood for sex, which is far more effective than the days of begging, crying or yelling about wanting it. Even if I'm not in the mood and he is, I often find myself getting in the mood just by being open to receiving pleasure.

My kids began to notice the change in our relationship too, and as a result, their behaviour improved and our home became peaceful and fun again.

Women often ask me if my approach is about dumbing myself down or becoming a submissive wife. I tell them I am a feminist. Surrendering is acknowledging you can't change or control anyone but yourself. That's empowering!

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