

## OUR PERSONAL JOURNEY AS A COUPLE

Let us explain more specifically how we got to where we are at and creating our company...

We met in the summer of 2002, and we both felt an immediate connection like we had never experienced before. It was a whirlwind, 'swept off our feet' kind of connection! And because we had experienced life at this point and had been in other significant relationships, we knew this was something very special. Five months later, we moved in and were engaged to be married... it was that fast!

Fast forward 3 years and life started to get really stressful for us. And like most couples, problems in the marriage started with the accumulation of life stressors that got too overwhelming and lead to difficulty in coping day-to-day. It's also when we started to experience more fighting and disconnection.

Looking back now, it makes so much sense that we struggled during that time... In only a few years' time, we had to deal with huge life changing events, back to back... with no time to process and heal. We just had to deal as best we could with the sudden death of a parent, our first baby being 2 months premature and having to stay 5 weeks in the hospital, being first time parents of a baby who had on-going surgeries and health scares, a miscarriage from a second pregnancy, change of jobs, feeling overwhelmed in our jobs, and a third pregnancy where Tina was 2 months on bed rest IN the hospital with a 2 year old at home. We were both extremely exhausted and we had to deal with all of this with mostly just each other as support.

Of course this had a huge impact on our relationship... We were both struggling and although we tried to support each other as best as possible, we had a lot more tense moments, short fuses, disappointments, hurts from the fights, and less capacity to go back and reconnect in the same way. Without even realizing it, we were letting go of the "necessities" to make our marriage strong through all of this, and we were starting to drift apart - withdrawing into our emotions and feeling more alone.

At that time, Tina was the only one doing couples therapy. She would sometimes say how much a fraud she felt like because she was helping couples, but was feeling stuck in her own relationship. She knew from experience how much more a relationship could be... And then it was like an epiphany: "What are we doing? We can't let this happen to us"! This propelled us to take the first step of talking more about how scared we both were of losing each other... and acknowledging this immense fear was how we started to find our way back... **It's all about risking being vulnerable and coming together to face our fears.**

From Tina's experience with Emotionally Focused Therapy for couples (EFT), we also knew we were stuck in a negative communication pattern and we needed to come together to step out of it and 'let each other in' again. Michael decided to also take some EFT training so we could speak the same language and come together to save our marriage.

With both of us now having this amazing knowledge of EFT- which is the most highly effective therapy approach to help couples - we started helping ourselves be more accessible to each

other, and responsive to each other's needs. We started to learn the skills needed to come together to break free from our negative communication loop. And if at times we did fight, we would make sure to come back once we were calm to process it and get some resolution. We figured out the tools to do this properly and to keep tuning into each other's needs more effectively. We prioritized this "maintenance of our connection" in spite of everything else requiring our attention. We stopped taking each other for granted and started to really show appreciation for one another.

We now can see that going through those challenging years was a blessing in disguise. It made us truly see what is needed to re-create and maintain that deeper connection with each other and the feeling of being a true team! We never imagined that our journey would eventually develop into a bigger mission to help other couples achieve this... It was only in 2020 that we felt called upon to take our journey further. It was time we helped other couples find their connection again...

Our first task was to take a step-back and truly understand our journey, and put it into tangible processes and skills we had to develop. The 10 Habits of Happy Couples was created out of this reflection on our journey. We want couples to know that there IS A WAY to find each other in spite of the stressors... in spite of the busyness. We wanted couples to also see that what is needed are simply a set of skills that CAN BE LEARNED BY EVERYONE. And when both partners set those skills intentionally, you can create healthy habits together and be a happy couple for life.

The process that we took is what we teach other couples, so they can have their own journey to transformation. This involves learning how to be accessible and emotionally responsive to one another, in a respectful and engaging way. And nobody is perfect at this all of the time... every person misses their partner's needs at times. We certainly aren't perfect, but then we repair and reconnect. Knowing how to properly repair in order to enhance your connection is the foundation of our programs. And if you're not open to Better Yourself, then you'll be struggling to regain closeness in your relationship because you won't be able to properly repair.

The reason why we called our business "Better Yourself 365" IS the foundation of our approach to the process. You have to first take a look at yourself and how you impact your partner. You then need to be brave and be open to changing and coming together with your partner to take care of your relationship as a team. The more couples are busy, the harder it is to do this... which is why we dedicate our approach to building the right foundation to sustain the life stressors WHILE attending in big and small ways to your relationship. It's not about carving a huge amount of time for your relationship, it's about making the time you have really count.

We want to work with couples who are ready... ready to Better themselves for the sake of the relationship. And if you decide to work with us, be ready to feel a connection with your partner that you never could have imagined! And you won't need years to figure out how to get there... That's our promise to you. 😊