BY JOEY GARCIA 🈏 @AskJoeyGarcia



Marriages are also friendships

My wife has been having episodes where she screams, cries and cannot control herself. Usually it's because of something I did or did not do or say. I'm looking for insights that will help shorten these episodes and bring her out as quickly as possible. Telling her to stop makes it worse because she cannot. Back in August, she was in a car accident that caused a concussion and whiplash. She is recovering, though there are lingering effects. She has always been a strong person so this is new for her. Advice, please.

ASK JOEY

I trust that your wife's primary care doctor is fully informed about her episodes and has ruled out serious issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, clinical depression or seizures. If her doc isn't clued in yet, put this newspaper down and make the call now. Yes, I'll wait.

To gain a wider perspective, let's airlift this crisis out of marriage and drop it into friendship. Imagine walking with a pal who begins wailing about his crappy life. When that happens, don't sink into the mud alongside him. He's having an emotion, not an emergency. Maintain an even keel as your friend voices his fears. Listen and observe. Don't be a sponge. It's not your job to absorb his drama. Don't interrupt by handing him a tissue or reaching out for a hug. Give him room to let everything out. Otherwise, he may (unconsciously) feel the need to repeat the meltdown to release the pain that didn't get expressed. During his emotional collapse, stay present with your interior world, the world around you and your friend-that's compassion. Codependency is losing yourself by sharing in his panic. It quickly becomes addictive, requiring more crises or increasingly dramatic ones.

Let's shift to you. Your wife's struggle is your invitation to grow. A key benefit of practices including meditation, Hatha yoga and Tai Chi is the ability to weather emotional storms with greater ease. Here's the interior view: You acknowledge your

difficult emotion, identify what it's attached to within yourself, challenge the attached belief, allow the experience to pass through and redirect its energy into something positive for yourself or the world. So if a friend canceled plans to hang out, you might feel disappointed. That feeling could be attached to a fear that you're not a priority in the lives of others. You can confront that belief by choosing to be a priority in your own life. From that perspective, the cancellation is open space for something new, such as tackling a project you've procrastinated on, or to take a hike somewhere

beautiful. By taking charge of your emotions, you avoid **Maintain an** being enslaved by them. It takes commitment, but even keel as your vou're worth it and so is friend voices his your wife. fears. Listen and One last thing: observe.

Please don't try to teach your wife to harness her emotions in the way I've laid out here. That's your job.

You must learn to apply this process to yourself. Your wife may change as a result of your transformation, or not. What matters is your growth. Eventually, you'll come out of her episodes more quickly and that's the secret you've been seeking that will shorten them.



"You can have a fresh start any moment you choose because this thing that we call failure is the not falling down, but the staying down," said actress Mary Pickford. Can you see how successful you've been all along?



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