

**I'M FINE**

no you aren't

**I'VE GOT THIS**

no you don't

**I'LL FIGURE  
IT OUT**

and, no you can't

A Guys Guide of what it's really like  
to talk to a relationship coach.

# **BULLSHIT**

Stop lying to yourself. It's exhausting.

Everything is not fine and you know it.  
You know what fine means?

**Fine** means:

- Its not how I want it to be
- I don't know what to do about it
- I don't want to talk to about it

**Fine** is what people say to themselves when they're stuck, but too scared to admit it.

**Fine** is what people tell themselves when they're avoiding the feelings of failure.

**Fine** is what people say when they're trying to convince themselves (and everyone around them) that they're not going to crack...

But you are, aren't you?

Worried you're going to crack?

That the pressure you're feeling to keep it all together and be the man everyone thinks or expects you to be is getting to be too much, and you're not sure how much longer you can keep this BS alive.

Admit it. You don't have a fucking clue how to deal with this, do you?

I bet you also feel like you need to know how to 'figure it out' (whatever the fuck that means) all by yourself, don't you?

None of that is true, but you can't know that yet.

You've been too stubborn and hard headed, trying to muscle through

and handle this on your own...hoping if you can just stick it out long enough it will get better.

But my friend, how much more time do you want to waste, waiting for that one-day, someday (when everything will finally be fine) to get here?

You can't do this by yourself.

You know why?

Because you don't know how.

You know why? Because no one ever taught you.

*What?*

That's right.

Your world taught you that if you put your head down and focused on being

smart enough, strong enough, fast enough (whatever enough) that you'd end up successful and therefore happy.

But success and happiness do not always go hand in hand.

(Which is often another thing that stops people like you from looking at this stuff... like: my life is pretty good, I don't really have a lot to complain about, so why am I not happy?)

There's obviously something wrong, so I'll just bury my head a little further and hope this passes...)

But it won't.

You see you haven't been given permission to actually feel the things that go along with feeling 'happy'.

Truth be told, you've actually been conditioned not to feel a lot of things...

You've been conditioned to:

- Identify the problem
- Identify the solution
- Apply the solution
- Move on.

Which works to a certain extent.  
I mean, it got you to here didn't it?

But it's not going to keep working...

Your life and your relationships are hard because you're making them that way.

I'm sorry, but it's true.

You don't have a communication problem. You have a YOU problem.

And until you deal with that YOU problem, you're just going to keep getting up everyday dreading what lies ahead.

Until you start dealing with yourself, you will continue to bob-and-weave around your life, gritting your teeth, hoping to skate through without any major bruises.

But come on dude, can't you feel the bruises?

They're already there!

- You already feel alone.
- You already feel misunderstood.
- You already feel like deep-down there's something wrong with you.

And you're terrified that if you open the lid to this whatever-it-is you'll never get it shut again.

And that actually makes logical sense. It would seem overwhelming to imagine opening the lid to a part of your life you've been conditioned to avoid...

## FEELINGS.

Society taught you that you're not allowed to have them. Beyond happy (which we've already determined can be elusive) or mad, you're not really supposed to have a lot of range.

But you do.

And the reason you feel so shitty is because you've been sitting on those feelings, ignoring them, until they're manifesting in other ways:

- Exhaustion
- Burn-out
- Isolation
- Depression



- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Angry outbursts
- Self-doubt.

Maybe sometimes, even brushing up against, the thought of (dare I name it?) suicide?

Did you know that currently men commit suicide 3x more frequently than women?

Did you know that suicide rates among men are skyrocketing towards their highest levels since WWII? Yeah.

This is serious shit.

Maybe it's time to make some changes? Maybe you want to but you're not sure where to start?

That's pretty normal actually.

For lots of men, the idea of talking to someone can feel really confronting and definitely like you're risking your man card.

We're already clear that nothing is going to get any better until you do something different.

Would it be helpful if you knew what a conversation would be like, before you jump in?

The following is a version of what my initial calls are like with just about every man I speak with.

In fact, what you're dealing with is so normal, that I can almost write a script of what will get discussed, brought up, and revealed on the first call.

I sincerely hope you will find the following pages helpful.

**A GUYS GUIDE  
OF WHAT IT'S  
REALLY LIKE  
TO TALK TO A  
RELATIONSHIP  
COACH**

**“When you avoid conflict  
to keep the peace,  
you start a war  
within yourself.”**

Cheryl Richardson

“Why don’t you tell me a little about what’s going on that had you reach out?”

Overall life is pretty good. I've had a lot of success at work and done well in my professional life. I've worked really hard to get where I am and it didn't always come easy; I've definitely made my share of sacrifices along the way.

I started working right out of school and have put in a lot of blood, sweat, and tears over the years.

In retrospect, I've accomplished a lot. To go from a nobody, to being ranked as a leader in my profession last year, and also to have been in the Top 5 nationally for the last five years, is a pretty big deal.

It hasn't come without struggle and I've certainly made a few enemies

along the way.

When I became partner I know it ruffled some feathers. Coming in without a fancy education and then getting to where I am has certainly pissed people off.

“You’ve clearly worked very hard to get where you are. You must be very proud of yourself.”

I just have a solid work ethic. I just put in the time and effort; I was determined to be successful for my family.

Luckily my wife supported me in putting my focus on work, it certainly hasn't been easy for her. It's been a lot of long hours and weekends that got me where I am and it's been a sacrifice for everyone.

“That sounds like it’s had some not-always-awesome impact...”

Yes, it definitely has. In the beginning I had to put in the hours and I missed a lot of the things that were happening at home.

Now I’m in a place where I don’t have to put in as much time and effort but shifting gears isn’t easy.

It’s still really easy to just stay at the office later than I intended or said I would, and I want to stop doing that.

I want to spend more time with my family.

“I can tell that’s really important to you, what do you think typically gets in the way or stops you from doing that?”

I'm not totally sure...it all just seems like a lot of work...

“How do you mean? What seems like a lot of work?”

I guess I'm frustrated.

I work really hard to fix everything, but I never seem to get anywhere.

I'm annoyed at work. My partner is pissing me off. We don't see eye-to-eye and no matter what we talk about, nothing ever happens.

He says he'll do things and never follows through – he's a big talker but there's never any action.

I want to grow the business but he's afraid to make any real changes. I feel stuck with him as majority partner.



I've worked hard for this, sacrificed 20 years of my life for this, and now it's more like a regular job. It's taking over everything and no matter what I do or say, I can't fix it.

Sometimes I just want to quit or fire everyone.

“That does sound really frustrating.”

It is. I've tried talking to my wife about it but she doesn't really understand.

When I'm upset like this, she gets kinda weird – jumpy or something – and talking to her seems to just make me more stressed.

I don't want my family to be affected by my work so I just try to leave it all at the office and be myself when I get home. It's hard though.

“How does that work? Is it helping?”

I think maybe it did in the beginning, but lately it seems like I can't do anything right.

With my wife I say the things I think I should, that will make her laugh or lighten the mood, but it just seems like I always say the wrong thing and make everything worse.

With my kids... they don't really talk to me that much. They're usually with friends, on devices, or at things like dance or hockey so I don't see them that much by the time I get home.

They talk to my wife but they're pretty quiet around me. I want to be a good dad but I'm not sure what else to do. I try to give them advice but they mostly roll their eyes or ignore me.

It's like everything rests on my shoulders. After spending a day dealing with everyone at work, to go home and deal with the same thing there, sucks. I can't seem to make a right move anywhere."

"That must be really tough, you're trying everything you can to make things better for yourself and those around you but you're not having any luck.

That would be really frustrating, even exhausting! Not to mention all the added stress of that responsibility falling on your shoulders."

Yes! It's a lot!

And it seems like it's all on my back, alone. I'm the one that has to have the answers and know what to do

for everyone else but there's no one there to help me, like no one really has my back.

“That sounds pretty hard and lonely, and like you might even be feeling a little taken for granted.

Have you always been the one with the answers?”

Yes!

For some reason people have always come to me for advice.

For a while it was okay, now it feels like people can't do anything for themselves. I end up making all the decisions for everyone.

For example, we're supposed to go camping this long weekend and

I asked my wife if she could take care of everything.

She said yes, but she hasn't made one decision on her own yet!

She's already called me 3 times today to help her decide what time we should arrange to pick up the RV.

COME ON!!! Just figure it out already!!

“It’s actually a pretty common experience. How long has it been going on would you say?”

Probably longer than I'd like to admit. I've been trying to fix it but I'm basically just running my head into the same wall over and over.

I'm starting to get really annoyed.

“What’s changed that made you reach out now?”

My industry has a really high divorce rate and I’m pretty sure if I don’t do something, I’ll end up as a statistic.

Last week I found out that a colleague of mine is getting a divorce.

Out of all the guys I know, it seemed like things were really good with him and his wife. We’ve golfed together a bunch of times and I always thought they were happy but I guess not.

“Gotcha. That’s some pretty serious motivation.”

Yah, and I guess it’s also that I’m turning 40 this year. I always thought that by 40 I’d be living the dream – killin’ it at work, happy, and me and my family would be really good.

I wanted to give my family a better or easier life than when I was growing up.

Although we don't have to worry about things as much financially now, we aren't where I want us to be.

“I see.”

Last week I had coffee with a buddy and he told me he was working with you. He said you helped him a lot.

I thought maybe you could help me too.

“Gotcha. What did he tell you about the work we did together?”

Not a lot really, just that he talked to you regularly and you've given some good advice and suggestions.

We worked with executive coaches, but that was about growing our businesses. He said this was different and that it was better for this kind of stuff.

“Ok got it. Then why don’t I tell you about my background and my process?”

Sure.

“Let me start by saying that what you’re dealing with is normal. I see it all the time.

For a lot of us, we’ve lived life with this unconscious belief that if we did all the right things, and checked all the boxes, we’d end up happy and in the right place.”

Yes!



“ And for most people they come to a point in life, usually about this age, where they start looking at everything and thinking:

I’ve checked all the boxes:

- Finished school
- Met someone
- Got a good job
- Started climbing the corporate ladder
- Got married
- Bought a house
- Had kids
- Kept succeeding professionally but...

I’m not happy! There’s gotta be more to it than this!

I did all the things!

Why am I not feeling the way  
I thought I would?”

Yes! That's totally how I feel!

“I hear you.

We all kind of adopted this notion  
of how life should go, but the model  
is very different than reality.

When you get into reality, you start  
dealing with stuff like you're talking  
about here:

- Frustration and lack of fulfillment at work
- Growing (concerning) disconnection with your wife
- Distance & detachment from your kids lives, and them from you
- Likely not having as much free or leisure time as you want? At least not free from the stresses of life?”

Yes! Even when I'm on the ice, playing hockey, I'm still thinking about work or whatever.

“And somewhere in there, you're probably contemplating about what's next for you?

As in, are you going to keep doing this for the rest of your life? Or should you (can you even) change to something else that would make you happy?

What would that even be?

In essence you might be thinking about: What's my legacy going to be?

Does that sound right or resonate for you at all?”

Yes! All of that!

I've spent so much of my life working hard and sacrificing and that can't be all there is to it.

That's not why I put in so much work at the beginning! To stay stuck in an office feeling stressed-out and miserable!

“If I just jump to the bottom line, it sounds like a lot of the stress you have comes from the impact a number of key relationships have on your life. Including the one with yourself.”

Hmmm... I hadn't thought about that before, but that's probably true.

“I hear there's a lot of taking responsibility for things that don't feel like they should be your weight to carry. That you're exhausted from always doing that.

Is that true?"

Yes.

“One of the reasons that happens, is that we’re too uncomfortable to say and do things that risk hurting people – in our important relationships and the people we care about:

You don’t want to hurt your wife’s feelings by telling her to, ‘JUST DEAL WITH THE RV!!’

Or piss off your business partner by telling him what you really think and risk permanently damaging your relationship.

Does that sound right?"

Yes!

“What would it be like if you felt comfortable talking to your wife.

Able to tell her what’s really going on for you and what you need, without the fear of blowing things up or making them worse than it is.”

That would be amazing.

“What about if you knew how to navigate this tricky conversation with your partner, knowing that you’d be able to create a positive outcome that would be better for everyone?”

That almost sounds impossible.

“It’s normal to feel that way too.

It’s funny how, truth be told, we don’t actually think about the ‘how’ part of having relationships.

Instead we just get into them,  
go along with them until things  
go wrong, and then spend so much  
of our time figuring out how to  
fix them.

Generally, we unconsciously believe  
we should just naturally be good at  
relationships.

I mean, we're literally born into  
them, we have them our whole lives,  
we're people too, so we should just  
know how to do them, right?

I don't know about you, but I was  
never taught how to 'do' relation-  
ships well.

As a matter of fact, if I think back  
to what I've been taught, I've spent  
a lot more time learning trig and bio  
than I ever did learning about what  
makes relationships work.

Even though relationships are fundamental to our lives, we never really spend time learning about how to have good ones.

Sure we learn things like having to share with others and not saying hurtful things...

But beyond that, relationships are something we unconsciously learn about from our parents or primary caregivers.

I don't know what it was like for you, but I didn't learn a lot about good relationships as a kid. My role models really didn't know what they were doing."

Yeah, mine either. My parents divorced when I was a kid and it wasn't pretty.



“Truth is, most of us had pretty crappy role models, so we don’t know how to have satisfying and healthy relationships.

Even in our intimate relationships (where we should feel the most comfortable) people experience them as a minefield of potential problems.”

(Nods)

“One of my favourite experts on the topic of relationships, Esther Perel, says: **“The quality of your relationships determines the quality of your life”**

...and I really believe that.

Consider all of the time you spend thinking, worrying, or strategizing about the important relationships in your life.

If you really think about it, can you see that it's taking up a lot of mental energy? It's kind of with you all the time, even if you're not talking to one of the people directly."

(Nods)

"Relationships are what we lose sleep over, stress about, ruminate over, and try really hard to navigate with finesse. But most of us aren't actually that great at it.

Most of us are afraid of stepping on toes, hurting feelings, or blowing things up, so we hesitate and don't really say what or how we feel.

For some of us, we've become so frustrated that we lash out or blow up, hoping that it will finally fix things or get our point across.

But – as I’m sure you’ve seen – it never works that way.”

Yeah...

“If you think about it, relationships – unlike business or sports – don’t really have a clear set of ‘rules’.

Everyone is kind of bumping around in the dark, hoping they can figure it out with as little conflict as possible, but...

- You’re not saying what you need to
- You’re not getting your needs met
- You feel powerless or stuck when it comes to affecting any change
- You suck it up, working around the other person or situation

In the end it leaves everyone dissatisfied and disconnected.

(Nods)

“The truth is, relationships are hard.

Despite what we think, having happy healthy and connected relationships isn't intuitive.

Our culture hasn't made it any easier by promoting the “if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all” mentality.

As a society, have taken that mentality to the extreme and lost our ability – especially in our personal relationships – to talk to each other.

Does any of this sound familiar?”

Yes. That's exactly what's happening with my wife.

“That's not surprising at all. In fact it's more the norm than you might think.

Ok, so what if I told you there are some guidelines or rules – a basic framework – for relationships that have been researched and proven over time?”

That would make things easier for sure...

**“The truth is,  
relationships  
are hard.”**

Heather Spurrell

Reaching out to a trained professional (who can help you waaaaay more than continuing to pretend you're fine) is confronting.

It can feel like you've failed, and the idea of telling a stranger about what's going on can be really uncomfortable.

Well, it is those things.

But you know what else it is? It's hella courageous to admit that you can't get to the answers on your own.

Visit [heatherspurrell.com](http://heatherspurrell.com)

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