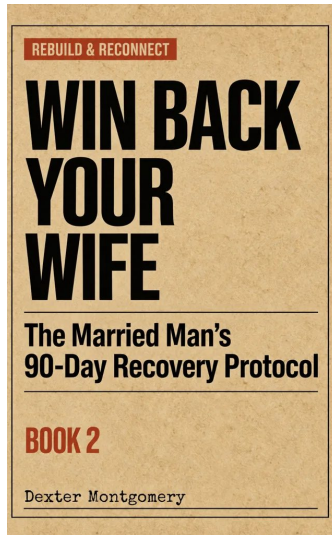


THE 90-DAY PROTOCOL · TRACK 2

Win Back Your Wife

Free sample chapter · Dexter Montgomery



Chapter 1: The Day Everything Changed

An opening chapter from the original manuscript. The text is preserved with punctuation adjusted for this sample. Composite characters are illustrations, not testimonials.

Educational material, not therapy or legal advice. Consult qualified professionals for your circumstances. Safety, court orders, and professional advice take precedence over any general protocol. No book can promise reconciliation.

Chapter 1: The Day Everything Changed

The day your wife tells you she wants a separation, time stops. Your brain's temporal processing shuts down. The coffee cup in your hand weighs a thousand pounds. Her words echo from somewhere far away, even though she is standing right there in your kitchen. The kitchen you renovated together. The kitchen where your kids eat breakfast. The kitchen that, in about thirty seconds, will never feel the same again.

"I need space." "I'm not happy." "We need to separate." "I've been thinking about this for a long time."

The words vary. The hit does not. A truck parks on your chest. Vision tunnels. You may want to vomit. Most men start bargaining on the spot. Some beg. And I want you to hear something before your body decides for you: I know exactly what that kitchen feels like, and every word of this chapter was written for the man standing in it.

Your first move in the next 24 hours will be wrong. Not might be. Will be. The scream in your head will torch reconciliation. The clean, logical speech will push her farther. The emotional flood will stamp her decision paid. Every instinct you own was built for a different emergency, and this chapter exists to stand between you and all of them.

But she is leaving a part out, and you need it now, because it explains the coldness that is about to torment you. This decision is months old. Maybe years. She has been emotionally divorced from you for so long that what feels like sudden death to you feels like long-overdue relief to her. Check it against your own gut. Have you known that things were off for quite some time? Be honest. Most men in this spot knew, and were hoping it would get better on its own. A leaking roof does not seal itself between storms. The marriage will not either, not until you face what opened the hole.

The Seven Statements That Signal the End

Women leave on a pattern so predictable you could set your watch to it, and the pattern has a vocabulary. When she says these words, she is not opening a negotiation. She is informing you of a decision that is already made. Learn the translations now, because your hope will mistranslate every one of them.

"I love you, but I'm not in love with you." This is female code for: "I have zero attraction to you, but I don't want to seem cruel." She is trying to soften the blow by maintaining that she cares about you as a person. Translation: you have become her brother, not her lover. The sexual polarity is dead. She feels about as much passion for you as she does for her favorite uncle.

“I need space to figure things out.” She has already figured everything out. The space is for running the exit without you in the room. She needs you gone so she can process the relationship’s end with her support network, possibly explore other options, and solidify her decision without your desperate attempts to change her mind.

“We’re just roommates.” You have been roommates for at least a year, probably two. She is just now telling you. The romance died long ago. She waited for it to come back. It didn’t. Now she is done waiting. You went from lovers to logistics, and she is tired of pretending.

“I’m not happy anymore.” She has not been happy for at least 18 months. By the time she says it, she has already tried what she knows, talked to friends and family, possibly seen a therapist, and made peace with leaving. Most men find out last how ready she is to move on.

“We want different things.” It sounds mutual and blameless. What she means is: “You want me, and I want someone else. Someone who isn’t you.” She wants desire back. She does not expect to feel it with you.

“The spark is gone.” The spark did not mysteriously disappear. You killed it through a thousand small behaviors that transformed you from the man she desired into the man she tolerates. You chose comfort when the moment asked for a spine. You chose a predictable night when the marriage needed a pulse. Water on the spark, one cup at a time.

“I’ve been thinking about this for a while.” “A while” means 6 to 24 months minimum. She is revealing a conclusion she reached long ago. During this “while,” she has been emotionally detaching, building her support network, possibly consulting attorneys, saving money, and preparing for this moment.

“She Says She Doesn’t Love Me”

So she said it. Maybe the full version: “I don’t love you anymore.” Maybe the coward’s edition: “I love you, but I’m not in love with you.” Either way, the words landed like a mortar round in your kitchen, and right now you are looking for someone to tell you it isn’t true.

I am going to give you a different response. It comes from Jocko Willink, the Navy SEAL commander who built an entire philosophy around one word. Mission got canceled? Good. Didn’t get promoted? Good. Got beat? Good. Because buried inside every piece of bad news is an opportunity, if you are man enough to dig for it.

Your wife says she doesn’t love you?

Good.

Now you finally know the truth. No more guessing. No more pretending the dead bedroom is a phase. No more telling yourself the eye rolls don’t mean anything. The fog is gone and the terrain is visible. Time to reevaluate what does not work and who you have been in this

relationship. Time to look at the man who produced this outcome, thank him for his service, and fire his ass. Good. Now the real work can start.

Before you start that work, understand why the next instinct fails, because it is already forming in your chest. You are about to argue your case. She is not running a courtroom.

Men process the world through objective facts and evidence. It is how we are built. So when she says she doesn't love you, your brain immediately starts assembling exhibits for the defense. I provide for this family. I don't drink. I don't cheat. I coach the kids' teams. I fixed the deck. Look at the record, Your Honor. The facts clearly show I am a good husband.

Save it. There is no judge. There is no jury. There is no court reporter writing down your years of faithful service. There are no facts in this arena, and the sooner that lands, the sooner you stop losing.

A relationship is a feeling in her body, not a ledger of provisions. Attraction and desire do not come from exhibits. She registers how you make her feel, and for years now the honest answer has been nothing. Or worse: irritation. Obligation. Contempt. Stack the evidence to the ceiling. She is not evaluating your case. She is reporting what she feels.

So ask yourself the only question that matters: are you spiking her emotions for good? Not "am I meeting my obligations." Not "am I checking the boxes." Does your presence create anything in her? A pulse. A laugh. The slight fear of not knowing what you will do next? Or does your presence create the same emotional response as the refrigerator? Reliable. Humming in the corner. Invisible.

Here is the proof that you are thinking about this wrong, and it costs one honest look at the world. No woman we know ever stayed in an unhappy marriage for the health insurance. Men absolutely think that way. A man will grind out a dead marriage for a decade because the numbers make sense: the mortgage, the benefits, the college funds, the cost of splitting it all. He will suffer on a spreadsheet. Women will not. When the feeling dies, the math becomes irrelevant. She will walk away from the house, the security, the lifestyle, and the insurance card in her purse, because staying feels like dying and no benefits package compensates for that. If you are counting on logistics to hold her, you are guarding a door she has already walked through.

So stop building your case. The verdict came in on feelings, and the appeal will be won or lost on feelings. The rest of this book teaches you how to become a man who generates them again. Facts do not create attraction. She feels your presence, or she does not. She feels a spine, or she does not. Mystery belongs to the man she cannot fully predict.

Good. Let's get to it.

The Timeline She Won't Tell You

Women leave in their heads long before they leave the house. That is why she can look this cold while you are still bleeding. Walk the timeline backward and watch your own marriage appear in it.

24 Months Before: She starts feeling dissatisfied but cannot articulate why. Sex decreases. She makes subtle comments about needing more romance, excitement, or connection. You interpret these as nagging and dismiss them.

18 Months Before: She tries to fix things indirectly. She suggests date nights that you are too busy for. She buys lingerie that stays in the drawer. She plans trips that you approach like obligations. She is trying to resurrect the man she married, but he is nowhere to be found.

12 Months Before: She stops trying and starts grieving. The relationship is dying, and she is mourning it while still in it. She might have an emotional affair, not planning to, but someone at work or the gym makes her feel alive again. She remembers what attraction feels like and realizes she has not felt it with you in years.

6 Months Before: She makes the decision to leave. The heat is gone. Now it is logistics. She starts practical preparations. She opens her own bank account. She researches apartments. She talks to divorced friends about their experiences. She might consult an attorney. She is building her exit infrastructure.

3 Months Before: She emotionally divorces you. You become roommates in her mind. She is physically present but emotionally gone. She stops fighting about things that used to matter. You think things are improving because she is not “nagging” anymore. Actually, she has stopped caring.

1 Month Before: She finalizes her exit strategy. She knows where she is going, how she is leaving, and what she is taking. She is just waiting for the right moment. Maybe that time is after the holidays, after your birthday, or after the kids' school year ends. She is managing logistics, not emotions. It is no surprise that January, right after the holidays, consistently ranks as the most popular time for divorces to be filed.

Today: She tells you. For her, this is the last page of a long exit. For you, it is day one. Hold both of those facts at once, because the gap between them explains everything that is about to confuse you.

Understanding Female Psychology

Men usually walk out, then go numb. She went numb, then she walked. By the time she announces it, she is already gone. Get that sequence into your bones, because every mistake in the next chapter comes from a man who has it backwards.

When she says she needs space, you hear time to think about us. She means: get out so I can move on. Miss that translation, and you will make a fatal error trying to serve a request she never made.

Women also rewrite the relationship when they leave. Not as a plot. As cover. She has to justify the pain she is causing you and herself, so the whole marriage goes under a black light. The vacation you thought was perfect was “actually miserable.” The wedding day becomes “when she should have known.” A happy memory becomes another reason she is right to go.

The rewrite also buys her a support network. Friends and family need a reason. Lost attraction sounds shallow. Years of subtle misery makes her the brave one choosing happiness. Think about the call to her family. She is not opening with wonderful husband, great father, provider, sensitive lover. She has to enlarge every chip in the armor. Work weekends to provide? Absentee. Stay home and the overtime dies? You are not providing. Once it is here, her story about you is set, and you will not edit it with facts. You already know why.

The First 24 Hours: Critical Response Protocol

When she drops the bomb, the next 24 hours determine everything. Most men destroy any chance of reconciliation in this window. They beg, plead, promise to change, suggest counseling, write love letters, buy flowers, involve family members, threaten suicide, or rage in anger. If that thought is real, call or text 988. All the things you resisted before the bomb dropped. Every one of these responses confirms her decision to leave.

Do this instead, exactly this, in this order.

The Moment of Impact: She just said the words. Your body is in shock. You want to grab her. Don't. Take one deep breath. Look her in the eyes. Say only this:

“I understand. It's not what I want (if true). But I understand.”

When you leave the conversation, leave clean. Walk out of the house. Do not come back for at least six hours.

Hour 1-6: Immediate Actions:

Drive directly to the gym. Not tomorrow. Now. Even if you do not have workout clothes. You need the state change so you do not do something stupid.

During the workout, stay off social media.

Call your two strongest male friends. You are pulling in men who will hold you accountable. A chorus for your collapse will make you weaker.

Schedule a therapy session ASAP. You need a professional in the room for what is coming.

Find temporary accommodation if you are the one leaving the shared home. Hotel or a friend's spare room is enough. You need physical space so you do not beg.

Hour 7-12: Protection Mode:

Do not empty the joint account on a theory. Talk to your lawyer before you move marital money. Protect access to cash you can live on. She may already have made a move of her own.

Change all passwords. Email, social, bank. Do it now.

Document everything. Screenshot bank balances. Back up important files. You are entering potential legal warfare.

Contact a divorce attorney. You need to understand your position. You are walking in blind.

Hour 13-24: Foundation Setting:

Remove all her photos from your phone and social media. You cannot rebuild while her face is still the wallpaper.

Delete your social media apps. Prevent yourself from pain shopping and her from monitoring your breakdown.

Write in a journal for one hour. Get every thought, fear, and feeling onto paper. This prevents you from vomiting emotions onto her via text.

Plan the next 7 days completely. You need structure to prevent collapse. Every day should be scheduled from wake to sleep.

Go to bed by 10 PM. Take melatonin if needed. You need sleep because tomorrow the work starts.

Case Studies

Four men, four first responses, four endings. Read them all, because one of them is currently forming in your chest, and you should meet him before you become him.

Jake: The Beggar's Path to Destruction

Jake's wife Melanie announced she wanted a divorce after 12 years of marriage. Jake immediately dropped to his knees. He sobbed, begged, promised to change, swore he would be different. He sent 47 text messages in the first three hours. He showed up at her work with flowers. He wrote a 10-page letter detailing their entire history together. He involved both sets of parents, trying to create pressure for reconciliation.

Result: Melanie filed a restraining order. The divorce was contentious and expensive. Jake lost custody rights due to his “unstable behavior.” Two years later, he is still alone, bitter, and paying alimony. Melanie remarried within eight months to a man from her gym, someone she had been talking to for the last six months of the marriage.

Jim: The Disappearing Man’s Victory

When Jen told Jim she needed space after 8 years together, Jim responded with: “I understand. Take as much time as you need.” He packed a bag and left within an hour. He did not contact her for 90 days. During that time, he lost 30 pounds, started a side business, traveled to Costa Rica with friends, and dated three other women.

Jen initially felt relief. Then curiosity. Then concern. Then panic. By day 60, she was creating reasons to contact him about “urgent” matters. By day 90, she was begging to meet. They are now remarried with stronger boundaries and genuine attraction. Jim maintains his independent life within the marriage.

David: The Fighter’s Defeat

David could not accept his wife Lisa’s decision. He lawyered up immediately and went to war. He fought about everything, including custody, assets, support, even who got the coffee maker. He made the divorce his full-time job, spending \$75,000 on legal fees to “win.” He posted about her on social media. He turned their friends into weapons.

Result: The divorce took two years and destroyed both of them financially. Their kids needed therapy. Lisa’s initial sadness transformed into genuine hatred. David “won” several legal battles but lost everything that mattered. Lisa now sees him as the villain in her story, a view she shares with their children.

Robert: He Did Not Chase

When Michelle said she wanted a divorce, Robert saw it as an opportunity. He had been miserable too but was too comfortable to change. He responded with: “You’re probably right. We both deserve better.” He moved out that day, started therapy that week, and began the transformation he had been postponing for years.

Robert did not try to win Michelle back. He focused on becoming the man he wanted to be. He built a successful business and traveled the world. Michelle watched from afar through social media and mutual friends. Two years later, she reached out “just to talk.” Robert was dating a yoga instructor 10 years younger. He met Michelle for coffee, thanked her for the push to change, and wished her well. He is now engaged to a woman who wants the man he built.

The premise underneath all four stories is a line from David DeAngelo, one of the men whose work mentored me from a distance: “Attraction is not a choice.” If your wife is asking for a separation or divorce, she is not attracted to you. Begging will not change that. It confirms

what she already knows. You do not get it. The comments you called nagging were her asking you to change. She is telling you how she feels. Argue her out of it and you invalidate her. Keep it up and she will call it gaslighting. Look her in the eye and say “I understand.” Those two words do the job. No begging. No pleading. No negotiation. Then stop talking.

The Biological Reality of Abandonment

When your wife leaves, your body responds as if you are dying, because evolutionarily, you are. For millions of years, abandonment meant death. Losing your mate and getting cast out of the tribe used to be a death sentence. Your DNA does not understand divorce law or modern society. It understands survival, and it is screaming that you are in mortal danger.

Brain-imaging work on people still in love after being dumped found that looking at the rejecter lit up reward and craving regions, including the ventral tegmental area and the nucleus accumbens, neighborhoods other studies had already tied to cocaine craving. Helen Fisher and colleagues published that in 2010. They did not put cocaine addicts in the magnet next to the heartbroken. They found overlapping circuitry with the addiction literature, which is why the craving can feel like a fix you are being forced to quit. This explains the physical symptoms: chest pain, inability to eat as your body shuts down non-essential functions, insomnia as hypervigilance for danger, obsessive thoughts as your brain tries to solve the survival threat, panic attacks as fight-or-flight fires, and depression as learned helplessness sets in.

This biology does not make you weak. It makes you old hardware. Override it. Your ancestors could not rebuild themselves. You can, and the rest of this book is the manual for doing it.

The Calm Wife Paradox

One asymmetry will torment you in these first weeks: she seems composed, almost serene, while you can barely breathe. Your brain will read her calm as coldness, or as proof she never loved you. Read it correctly instead. It is a timing gap. She started grieving this marriage two or three years ago, quietly, in installments, while you thought things were fine. She has already cycled through the shock, the bargaining, the anger, and most of the sadness you are just now entering. She has a multi-year head start on the funeral. Which also means her composure tells you nothing about the future. Grief that is finished cannot be reopened by begging, and grief that is ahead of yours cannot be caught by sprinting. You process on your own clock, and the protocol gives you 90 days to do it.

Why Your Instincts Are All Wrong

Every natural male instinct in this situation will cost you. Every single one. Run the list and watch your own plans appear on it.

Instinct: Pursue harder. Reality: Pursuit signals lower value. The prize does not chase. It is chased.

Instinct: Explain your feelings. Reality: Logic does not create attraction. Emotional vomiting repulses her.

Instinct: Show how much you care. Reality: She knows you care. That is the problem. Now you care too much.

Instinct: Remind her of good times. Reality: She has already rewritten those memories negatively. You are confirming her revision.

Instinct: Promise to change. Reality: This admits you have been inadequate and promises more of the same desperation.

Instinct: Involve others for support. Reality: This makes you look weak and creates social pressure that builds resentment.

Instinct: Fight the decision. Reality: Fighting confirms that she has power and you are trying to take it away.

Do not flip your instincts like a switch. You cannot. Outgrow them instead. Become a man who has already chosen himself, so her choice is not the air he breathes. That man is the destination of every page that follows, and the road to him starts with understanding what actually happened to your marriage. Not the story you have been telling yourself. The mechanism.

Formed Twice

A man is formed twice. Once by his father, and once by his suffering.

The first formation happened without your consent. Your father, present or absent, strong or weak, handed you your first blueprint of manhood. Maybe he taught you discipline and you are grateful. Maybe he taught you avoidance, rage, or silence, and you have spent your adult life running his software without ever reading the code. Maybe he was not there at all, and the void did the teaching. Either way, that formation is finished. You do not get a vote on it, and you do not get a refund.

The second formation is happening right now, in the worst season of your life, and this one you control completely.

Suffering is the only forge hot enough to melt down a grown man and pour him into a new shape. Comfort never transformed anyone. No man ever rebuilt himself because things were going fine. The men you admire, the ones with gravity and presence and quiet strength, were all formed in some fire they did not choose. What they chose was what to do inside it.

So here is your charge: do not let this suffering go to waste.

The pain you are feeling right now is the most expensive thing you will ever own. It cost you your marriage as you knew it, your daily life with your kids, your identity, your pride. Most men take that pain and convert it into nothing. They numb it with alcohol, bury it in work, or nurse it into bitterness that poisons the next decade. They pay the full price of the fire and walk away with ashes.

You are going to do something different. Every hour of this hurt gets converted into fuel. Fuel for the 5 AM workouts when your body begs for the pillow. Fuel for the silence when every cell screams to text her. Fuel for the discipline, the growth, the rebuild. The future you, the man standing on the other side of these 90 days, is built entirely out of what you do with this pain. Waste it, and you suffered for nothing. Burn it as fuel, and this becomes the most valuable thing that ever happened to you.

Your father formed you the first time. This suffering forms you the second time. And the second formation is the one that counts, because it is the only one you author yourself.

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