

# 4 Ways I Coach Separated Men Differently Than I Did 10 Years Ago

A Reference Guide from Husband Help Haven | Episode 36: 4 Ways I Coach Separated Men Differently Than I Did 10 Years Ago

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## THE KEY INSIGHT

After 10 years of coaching men through separation, four specific things I used to recommend, I now recommend differently — or not at all. The mission has not changed. The way I implement it has. And underneath all four shifts is one sharper question for evaluating any separation move.

### 1. NO CONTACT — ACCEPT IT, DON'T IMPLEMENT IT

I used to frame no contact as a tool you might reach for. Today I treat it as emergency-use only — and the situations that actually qualify are rarer than the industry suggests.

- **When it actually applies:** Court-ordered no contact, extreme spousal mischief, genuine safety concerns. In those cases you don't need me to recommend it — it's obvious.
- **Why I pulled back:** Positive experiences together are the prerequisite for reconciliation. Her having hard moments alone is not going to get you there.
- **The posture trap:** Most men reach for no contact partly as punishment — “she can't have her cake and eat it too.” That is not the road back.
- **If you're already in it (her choice):** Accept it. Work with what you have. Don't lean further out than she is asking you to.

### 2. ULTIMATUMS — ALMOST NEVER THE RIGHT TOOL

I used to think there had to be a place for ultimatums. Now I think the place is almost never.

- **The 90% rule:** Roughly 9 out of 10 men who come to me thinking they need an ultimatum don't actually need one.
- **What an ultimatum is:** Do this thing, or else. Stop doing this thing, or else. If you can't carry out the “or else,” you're not ready — and you probably don't need one.
- **The follow-through problem:** Most men deliver an ultimatum and let go of it within a week. That just trains your wife that your “or else” is not real.
- **What you usually need instead:** An internal boundary, an honest expression, a self-care move — not an external demand directed at her.

### 3. MOVING OUT — STAY IN THE HOME ALMOST ALWAYS

I used to be roughly 70/30 stay-vs-go. Now I'm 90/10. Stay in the home until it's legally necessary to leave.

- **Disclaimer first:** I'm not an attorney. Your attorney's advice overrides anything you hear on a podcast, including this one.
- **Why staying matters:** You have more opportunities to reconnect when you live together. Quantity of contact gives quality a chance.
- **When going makes sense:** A trial separation she's clearly asking for, a genuinely toxic dynamic, or your attorney's direction. Consider nesting before a full move-out.
- **The bar to clear:** “Things have been awkward in the home” is not a reason to move out.

### 4. MARRIAGE COUNSELING — CAUTIOUSLY OPEN

This is the one where I've changed the most, in a way, and the least, in another. I'm still skeptical of mixed-agenda couples counseling. But I've grown a real respect for individual counseling and for the tools and models good counselors use.

- **Mixed-agenda couples counseling rarely works:** When one spouse is out of the marriage and the other is trying, couples counseling almost never moves the needle.
- **A good counselor is doing heavy lifting:** A counselor who fits you and is aligned with your goals can do real, meaningful work. Finding one is not easy.
- **Individual counseling — much higher:** Across almost all situations, I encourage it. Even a lower-bar counselor gives you a safe place to vent. A great one can be life-changing.

- **If you want her in the room with you:** Consider a purpose for counseling other than working on the marriage — family counseling, discernment counseling, even couples counseling for the stated purpose of improved communication. The through line is meeting her where she is.

## THE UNIFYING THREAD

The question I run separation moves through has gotten sharper over the years. I keep coming back to: **does this demonstrate that real change is possible?** That single filter explains every shift above.

- No contact doesn't demonstrate change — she just sees absence.
- Ultimatums don't demonstrate change — they seize power.
- Moving out doesn't demonstrate change — it creates distance.
- Counseling, when it works, **is** demonstrating change — real work, visible to her.

*“The question isn't ‘How do I get her back?’ It's ‘How do I show her — through how I live — that real change is happening?’”*

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The mission has never changed: become the kind of husband, father, and man you're proud to be, regardless of outcome. After 10 years, I'm just better at telling you which moves actually serve that mission — and which ones get in its way.

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## RESOURCES

**Husband Help Group** — Most of these decisions don't have a single right answer. They have a fitted answer. HHG is where men work through these decisions in real time with other men who've been where they are. If you're in the middle of any of the four above, this is the group to be in.

Join at: [husbandhelphaven.com/group](https://husbandhelphaven.com/group)

Full episode: [husbandhelphaven.com/episode-36](https://husbandhelphaven.com/episode-36)