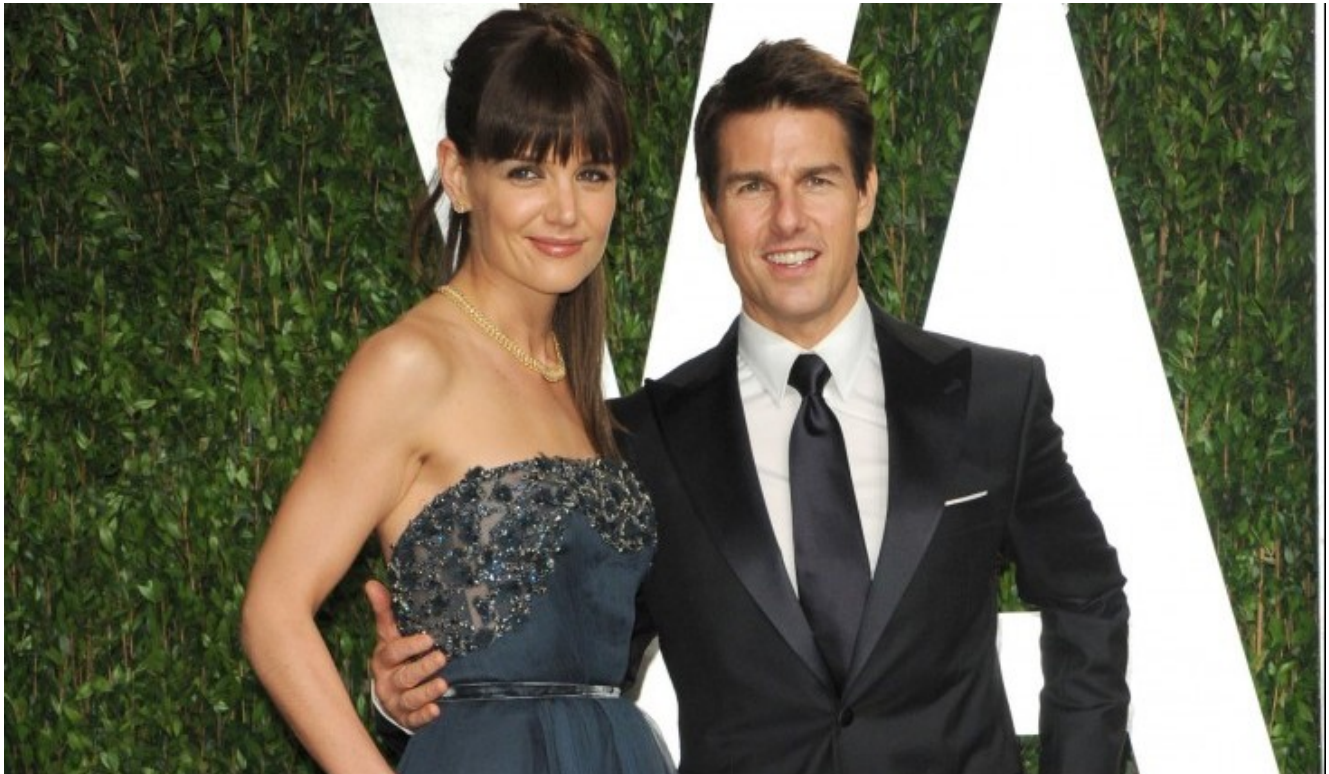


# When One Partner's Needs Are More Important



By Jane Greer, Ph.D. for GalTime

Why has it been so surprising to us that Katie Holmes filed for divorce last week in an effort to end her marriage to Tom Cruise when so many of us had a hard time taking their union seriously in the first place?

Maybe it's because despite the public's initial cynicism, people eventually embraced the couple as an example of a true Hollywood love story.

According to the papers, Tom was as blindsided as we were by the news, but, unlike the couple's fans who watched from a distance, he was close to the action. How is it possible that

he was chugging along, seemingly happy, when she was evidently so unhappy that she secretly planned her exit?

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Tom might have been looking through only one lens, which he does in his role as a director and producer, and was seeing things working according to his vision. Is it possible that he didn't consider her needs at all? Tom's previous two wives, Mimi Rogers and Nicole Kidman, have each said that during their marriage their concerns were incidental to his, especially when it came to his religion, Scientology.

It has been reported that Katie wanted out because their daughter, six-year-old Suri, has reached the age at which she would begin to be educated in the ways of Scientology, and Katie did not seem to want that for her child. In fact, in addition to the divorce she has filed for sole custody. If it really is Scientology that made her want out, then she must never have fully accepted it in the first place or this wouldn't have emerged as a problem. Her concern over Suri's education may have been simmering on the back burner for some time.

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The push and pull around Scientology might not be so different from what any couple struggles with if one person wants to raise a child one way, and the other partner has a strong commitment to a completely separate religion. As I wrote about in *What About Me? Stop Selfishness From Ruining Your Relationship*, whenever there are two people who want two different things, one person is going to feel that they've given up more than the other. But for a marriage to be successful, there has to be an attempt to hear the other person and work out a compromise. With Tom and Katie, it

appears that wasn't happening. Tom's way seems to have been the only way.

The other thing that may have been going on is that Katie stopped fighting for what she wanted. I see this over and over again with my patients. One partner gives up, realizing that all the conversation in the world is never going to make a difference. But the other partner takes that silence to mean the first partner is now okay with the situation, when in reality they have shut down. They may be waiting for the right time to sever the relationship, or become vulnerable to romantic involvement outside the marriage. This myopic vision, in other words, "my" view, on one person's part, leads them to believe that everything is just fine.

Whatever the case, Tom seems to have left no room for the necessary give and take that a healthy marriage demands. It might be just the right time for him to be making a movie called *Oblivion* since that seems to be exactly where his third marriage is headed.