

4 Signs of an Unhealthy Marriage

In the summer of 1985, an engineer named Roger Boisjoly noticed a flaw in the solid-rocket booster that was used to help launch the space shuttle. The large rubber O-rings that seal the joints between sections of the booster were experiencing erosion—particularly in cold weather when they shrank. When the joints are compromised, the booster can leak super-heated gas from its solid fuel, acting like a cutting torch that can burn through the metal skin of the adjacent external fuel tank and ignite its explosive liquid hydrogen fuel.

Foreseeing that the problem would result in catastrophic failure, he sent a warning memo to decision makers at both his company and NASA. That warning and several more that followed were ignored.

The morning of January 28, 1986 was crisp and cold. Unwavering, NASA continued with the launch of the space shuttle, Challenger. The first 60 seconds of the launch seemed to go according to plan. A nervous Boisjoly turned to a colleague and said that they had dodged a bullet. Fourteen seconds later, his worst fears were realized. The Challenger exploded taking the lives of seven people.

In a similar way, marriages can experience eroding intimacy. These problems can seem small; however, over time, they can cause a marriage to break apart. It's important to see the warning signs and act on them. Are you and your wife experiencing these four signs of an unhealthy marriage?

1. Keeping secrets. Have you erased emails, text messages, phone logs, or website history so your wife wouldn't see it? Has there been activity on your Facebook account you can only

participate in when she isn't around? When things are difficult, it is tempting to seek excitement in forbidden places. Keeping secrets creates division and deepens disconnection. If you aren't connected to your wife, you are going to connect to something or someone else. Don't deceive her. Let her in and do whatever it takes to come together.

2. Leaving things unsaid. Sometimes in marriage you have to choose your battles and let things go. Are you doing that too often or about critical issues? Have you kept your opinion on an important matter to yourself because you were afraid how your wife would react? Intimacy involves good communication and knowing one another. Leaving your honest opinion and perspective unsaid leads to her knowing you less. Gradually you will drift from her like a boat untied to a dock. Stop withdrawing and say it. If it unsettles things, then you just need to work through it.

3. Overly kid-focused. Are all of your discussions about your kids and their schedules? Kids are a huge responsibility and require a lot of discussion. They will dominate your minds, make you exhausted, and need a lot of attention. There are seasons when that's fine. However, your kids will eventually move out, and when they do it will be you and your wife again. It's easy to become strangers when all eyes are fixed on the kids. Move your eyes to her and zero in. She needs to be the first person in your life.

4. Seeking distractions or time away. Is it nice to be away on a business trip? Are you staying late at work when you don't have to or looking for other ways to delay heading home? Do you and your wife watch TV in different rooms? Do you immediately head out to the garage to work on the car after dinner? The road to separation is filled with small decisions. [Click to Tweet] You can't have intimacy in different rooms, and the problem is not going to work itself out. Go home and be with her. Remove the distractions and re-engage.

Sound off: Out of the four signs above, which do you think is the most common?

Huddle up with your wife tonight and ask, “Do you see any of these signs in our marriage?”

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