

5 Common Pitfalls That Can Drain the Joy Out of Your Marriage

One of the biggest failures in my marriage was the season when Stephana and I didn't date as a married couple.

We understood the importance of dating, but our actions or lack thereof didn't show it. It was probably a two- or three-year span when we were lucky to have a few dates per year, and those were only for special occasions.

This almost devastated our marriage. Our marriage became like a roommate relationship. We were missing the connection that is developed when you consistently date, do new things together and have a quality conversation. Our conversation centered on schedules (ours and our daughter). Our conversation centered on bills and money. It became old and stale quickly. Marriage wasn't very fun. The effect of my failure to making dating a priority has made me vigilant in that area.

I've failed many times in my marriage. Fortunately, I've learned some great lessons as a result. Here are my top five failures as a husband:

1. I didn't make my wife a priority. As I mentioned, I messed up on date nights for a while, then after I got it right, I messed up again. Once we got the date night thing right, I had the bright idea of scheduling "daddy-kid days" on the same day as our date nights. So, I'd spend the afternoon hanging with my kids, then rushed home to make date night in time. My wife and our time together became second priority. She was pretty much getting my leftovers. I finally learned this and changed our daddy-kid days to a different day.

2. Neglecting the power of prayer in our marriage. Much like date nights, praying together is crucial to the well-being of our relationship. And much like date nights, I neglected to take action and make this the integral part it needed to be. Once I did, our marriage changed. Prayer enabled us to become more transparent; we openly shared before God and one another.

Praying together is such an intimate act, which spills over into other areas of your relationship. And we both gained a better understanding of one another, what we struggle with, and what we need most. I've learned to fight for our prayer time and make it very important.

3. Thinking premarital behavior wouldn't affect our marriage. When Stephana and I were dating before getting married, I was unfaithful to her. I thought that once I committed to her in marriage, I would have a clean slate. I was wrong. The first few years of our marriage were marred by a lack of trust because of what I had done. She was still hurt. While I did change, my wife still had concerns when I wasn't with her. Over the years, I had to regain her trust. It was challenging, but she was eventually able to trust me again.

4. Not having a plan for our money. We've experienced major debt, major financial devastation, and even homelessness as a family (including our kids). All because of my failures in the area of our finances. While joblessness was the spark that started the fire, not having a plan and following a plan for our finances enabled that spark to grow into something we couldn't tame. I've learned a lot, and made some changes, but we're still climbing out of the financial holes that were dug. It's one of the biggest lessons I've learned from one of the biggest failures I've had as a husband.

5. Not communicating in my wife's love language. One of my wife's top love languages is receiving gifts. One of the things I'm the worst at is giving gifts and celebrating special occasions like birthdays and holidays. It took me

years before I even realized how important receiving gifts and making a big deal out of special occasions was to her. And even after I realized it, it was tough to break the habit of treating the occasions like just another day. This led to years of hurt, disappointment, and frustration for us. I'm still a work in progress, but doing better than I have in the past and now these special occasions are much better than they have been.

You are going to have some major failures as a husband. I'm sure you've already had some. Just be sure you learn and grow from them and eventually become a better husband. {eoa}

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