

5 Reasons It Is a Good Thing That Marriage Is Hard Work

One of the most demanding, challenging, and difficult tasks I ever accomplished was the two-month hike I took along the Appalachian Trail. The route covered the length of Virginia, a corner of West Virginia, a slice of Maryland, and around 60 miles into Pennsylvania.

The first week in, I got blisters on my heels. Some of the climbs left almost every muscle in my body aching. One night, we pitched our tent in what turned out to be a good-sized river—after it rained steadily for three hours. I've never been that consistently tired for so many days in succession. Hard work? You bet. But it was also nothing short of wonderful.

Everything that truly means something special turns out to require hard work, sacrifice, and a long-term commitment. Yet we live in a culture where popular mythology says the exact opposite about marriage by making statements such as: If it's real love, then you shouldn't have to work at it. Really?

I believe marriage is not only worth the effort, it requires the effort. There are a lot of reasons we would all enjoy a break from the tough challenges now and then.

But, here are five reasons it's a good thing that marriage is hard work:

1. Hard work adds value. Working hard at a relationship requires honesty, adds value, leads to deeper commitment, activates resolve, and results in increased satisfaction.

2. Adversity builds natural strength. Scientists at the Biosphere 2 project in Arizona noted that trees in the

artificial environment floundered and fell easily. Further research demonstrated plant life needs wind, drought and repeated natural stress in order to grow strong root systems. Likewise with marriage, hard work grows strong roots.

3. We tend to protect things we're invested in. The more blood, sweat, and tears we build into our marriage, the more fiercely we tend to protect that investment. When husbands love their wives with that kind of commitment, we're willing to move heaven and earth to make the relationship work.

4. Hard work in marriage harnesses hidden resources. When we find ourselves having to access resources we didn't know we needed, let alone had, we learn that we have hidden resources we didn't previously imagine. Hard times can be the catalyst that creates a quality of resourcefulness beyond our "peacetime" arsenal.

5. Struggle adds a richness we can't mine any other way. Not only do we learn from our mistakes, we construct more nuanced, rich relationships when we respond creatively to challenges, inequities, and bumps in the road. Relationship hiccups can lead to increased honesty, vulnerability, insight, connection to our inner selves, and intimacy.

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