

How to Stay Above the Perilous Line Between Marriage and Divorce

On very rare and special occasions, we will see a couple celebrating their 50th anniversary. So many things have to fall into place for a couple to make it that long together that it can nearly be considered a miracle only God could have bestowed.

Not only does the couple have to fight off all the sharp, poison-tipped arrows of life, but just the simple fragile nature of the human body makes it very hard for both to make it that far. It is pretty safe to say that, on their wedding day, most couples visualize being that pair that grows old so gracefully together.

Statistics say the odds are stacked against them, but it is a victory that can be won. It requires great passion from both in the marriage, and it demands a steadfast resolve to be the exception and not the rule.

Here are eight key ingredients to creating a strong, robust marriage that can go the distance:

1. Time management. Every quality recipe starts with a base and, in a strong marriage, time is the base—the solid foundation that will not crack under the pressures from outside. Time must be managed in the proper way to achieve success at whatever our prime objective is, and that is especially true in our marital relationships. We must be present and actively participating. Why is the phrase “We just drifted apart” so often heard? Time not well-spent.

2. Communication—talk to her. Communication is everything to a woman. It is the spark to all things in the relationship for

her, including the romantic part. Love without communication will not sustain. There are many ways to do this, so that does not mean if you are a man of few words, you can't still have your own unique forms of communication. However, words had better be present, because if your wife feels isolated and alone in the marriage, soon you will too.

3. Full respect. A man that respects his wife doesn't belittle or demean her. Many marriages include one partner that is a bully in the union, and it goes both ways. If happiness as well as longevity are the goal, then healthy respect for the feelings and opinions of your spouse is essential.

4. Take ownership and responsibility. A fully grown man carries the burden of responsibility for his family. No matter the financial circumstances or personality traits, in the end it is the husband that is the head of the household. Along with the title comes the great responsibility required of it. A great many men like the title but hate the actual duty. Responsibility can't be delegated. Blame can't be assigned elsewhere, and childish attempts to point fingers only lead to destruction. A man leads his family with a generous and kind spirit, and he has the heart of a warrior to protect it. The buck stops with you in all cases.

5. Compassion and sympathy. Arthur H. Stainback says, "The value of compassion cannot be overemphasized. Anyone can criticize. It takes a true believer to be compassionate. No greater burden can be borne by an individual than to know no one cares or understands." Your bride needs your deepest compassion and sympathy along your journey together. She will follow you to the ends of the earth if you give her this.

6. True romance. To be a romantic husband means far more than anything that goes on behind closed doors. Intimacy, friendship and a pure bond between you both of deep respect for the other person is what creates true romance. Physical meets mental in a perfect union of exactly the type of love

that will make it to 50 years. If you have these connections, they will sustain you through the hard times—the years when your children prohibit much physical intimacy, the days when you feel beat up by the world but know there is always one person who has your back. This is what is meant by two becoming one.

7. Self-sacrifice. Being second is not an easy thing to do. It takes humility, lack of envy in your heart and, most importantly, a desire to lead with only the bigger picture in mind. It doesn't mean you neglect your own needs to the point that you vanish, but it does mean placing the needs of your wife and family above your own—because they actually are your own. There are many examples that could be listed for this, but use your imagination to fit your own circumstances. A smile put on the face of a loved one is a million times more valuable than anything of a temporary or material nature. It is the difference between fool's gold and the real thing.

8. Healthy lifestyle. Obviously if you are going to make it to a 50th anniversary, it's going to require using these strategies. But it will also mean that you both share good health into your later years. Put away the bad habits. Cut out the senseless anger and stress. Eat well and exercise. Peer deep into the future and think about what you want to see in it. Anything you come up with will need you to be healthy.

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