

What to Do When Life-Storms Attack Your Marriage

It's no secret that marriage is hard. Sharing a life with someone every day can be a challenge, especially when disagreements arise; however, it also comes with many benefits. I've been lucky enough to be married to my wife, Paula, for almost 60 years! Those years have come with many ups and downs but perhaps the time we were challenged the most was the 18 months that followed me quitting my job.

I walked away because a senior leader at my company offered me a large sum of money which he then informed me I had to keep quiet about. I knew it was wrong as soon as he added that addendum. Right then and there, I walked out. Up until that point, I had had a long and very successful career, which included senior roles at two Fortune 500 companies. With my experience and the knowledge that I had done the right thing, I was confident I would find a new job in no time. However, that didn't happen, instead, my wife and I lost everything—our homes, cars and financial security.

We moved into a pink bungalow in the middle of an orange grove. Talk about testing your marriage! Through it all Paula stuck by my side, it would've been much easier for either of us to walk away.

I know some of you out there may be going through something similar right now and it's putting a lot of strain on your marriage. I want to provide you with some tips that can help you work through the struggles and come out closer to your spouse.

1. **Patience:** Paula and I have learned that getting upset doesn't do any good. We must wait for God to put things in place before the troubles end and we move on in our

journey.

2. Hope: We both always had and have *hope*. Even when we had to sell our home and move into the pink house, when we could hardly afford groceries, we put our faith in God. We deeply believe in Him and always expect good things to come.
3. Thankfulness: There might be days where this is more challenging but Paula and I truly appreciate each other. Your spouse is your partner, best friend. I try to express my thankfulness for Paula every day, both to God and to her, so she knows I appreciate her. Even when we had nothing, we had each other, and that was more than enough to be thankful to God for.
4. Encouragement: Paula always encouraged me to pursue my dreams. For many years we moved across the country for me to achieve my goals of running successful companies. She has always been my biggest supporter.
5. Caring: Have I mentioned life can get difficult? When the tough times hit we need to be there for one another, lifting each other up and helping each other through it. When discouraged or encountering life's challenges, Paula and I each take a moment to just simply hug. It's a small gesture but it's a way for us to let each other know we are there and lifts us into a moment of sunshine.
6. Communication: I think we've all heard the saying, "communication is key" at least once in our lives. Communication, or lack thereof, lays the groundwork for a relationship's success. A relationship will not survive when there is poor communication, especially when facing a difficult time. It was not easy telling my wife I had walked away from my job, I didn't enjoy our conversations about selling our homes and dwindling savings, but as my wife, she needed to know what was

going on so we could walk through the storm together. It is critical for us even today to openly express our thoughts, dreams and the trials of each day.

7. Forgiveness: We all say and do things we regret or wish we had done differently. Part of being a human is making mistakes. The important thing is that we move past it. Like our Lord said, we forgive 7 times 7 times 70. It would have been so easy for Paula to get angry and walk out on me after losing everything. Instead, we moved through it as a couple. It doesn't mean we don't have our disagreements, but we are always determined to work through them. When Paula and I argue, we do not go to sleep until we forgive each other, give a hug, say I am sorry and I love you! I recall times when we stayed up all night debating, but we always followed this rule, and I recall going off to work feeling tired but happy.
8. Trust: In addition to communication, trust is a critical component of a strong relationship, especially when facing a life storm. When you communicate, you are open and vulnerable, sharing the good and the bad; it builds that trust. Paula trusted me without any hesitation when I walked away from the unethical business decision.

There is no book on how to have a successful, perfect marriage. That is because the perfect marriage doesn't exist. There will always be challenges. Sometimes they will be small hurdles, mere blimps on the radar, but other times, the obstacles will be steep mountains that test you well beyond what you believe you can handle. It will require all of your patience and strength, but when you—as a couple—come together and surrender to God, fully relying on Him, together you will overcome any storm.

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