Protecting a marriage from divorce



You want a marriage that lasts. Individuals in a strained relationship can work to build a strong, safe future together with these eight concepts.

Stop thinking about divorce for a bit

Doing the hard work of investing in a relationship requires having a long-term vision. No one invests lots of time and energy into something that may not last. For the good of your relationship, each partner may need to table any thoughts of divorce for a moment and simply concentrate on getting your marriage (and maybe even yourselves) into a better place.

Adopt a team mentality

Your spouse is your teammate, not your opponent. Be good teammates. In being a team, it's about *us*, not *you* or *me*. Avoid viewing issues as just your partner's problem (or your problem), and begin thinking about them as 'our problem' that we are working to overcome. Know your teammate, know the main opponents you're both facing, and know what your team is about. Go team!

Desire the second se

Working through the negatives in your relationship may take some time. However, you can immediately start building more positives into your relationship. For one great way to start – say a genuine 'thank you' to your partner for something every day. In marriages, it's less about everything being equal and more about both partners feeling their efforts and contributions to the relationship are appreciated and acknowledged. Whether it's expressing gratitude or some other means, start to build positives back into your relationship.

4 Realize marital problems are complex

Marital problems are rarely, if ever, just about money, parenting, household chores, or poor communication. Rather, marital conflicts often touch on some of the most fundamental needs we have, including things such as respect, trust, appreciation, or acceptance. So as you start to address some of the issues in your relationship, make sure you're having conversations on the correct level.

Being in a strained marital relationship can be very painful and frustrating. These points can be easy to read but much more challenging to put into practice. But change is possible.

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Love even when you are not feeling loved

This is difficult, and an analogy may be helpful. If you are a parent, there are times when your child acts very unloving toward you. What do you? You continue to lovingly parent the child. Why? Because of an unconditional love that says 'I am going to love you regardless of how loving you are to me'. We believe in this type of unconditional love when it comes to parenting, but it's also a cornerstone of long-lasting marriages.

Get help as a couple

6

Just as our physical bodies sometimes need assistance from a physical therapist or personal trainer, our relationships may need some outside help from a trained therapist, counselor, or other professional. Doctors, friends, and clergy can be good sources of information about couple counselors who are respected in your area.

If you are not wanting something in-person, there are great online programs available to you (*see resources below*). These programs have been tested in research studies and shown to be effective at helping couples strengthen their relationship.

Take care of yourself

If life is really stressful right now and your physical and mental health are getting drained, that strain is going to spill over and affect your relationship in some way or another. Other individual issues known to affect relationships may be happening as well, be it with alcohol, depression, gambling, or pornography. If so, help is available and these issues can be overcome, benefiting yourself and your relationship.

8 Have hope You're not a

You're not alone in this, even as alone as you may feel in your relationship right now. Your relationship can make it. This does not mean everything is going to be perfect in two weeks, but change is possible. It will take work, but most truly rewarding things in life do.

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER: There is no place for physical, emotional, or sexual abuse in a relationship. If abuse is a concern in your relationship, you can learn more at **thehotline.org** or by calling **800-799-SAFE (7233)**.

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Additional Resources

<u>Strong Couples Project</u> | go.illinois.edu/StrongCouples

<u>6 Ways to Build a More Resilient</u> | go.illinois.edu/FRCcouples <u>Couple Relationship</u>

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