

8 Steps to Save Your Marriage

One of the most important decisions you can make is to stop being bullied by life's "urgent demands." People will invade your life with THEIR urgent demands as long as you let them. And the important things requiring your time and attention are ignored, to your personal detriment.

By the way, if your marriage is dull, bland or boring and has become a too-comfortable environment in which you and your spouse merely coexist, your relationship needs saving, too. Just because a couple owns a marriage license doesn't mean they own a marriage.

This is YOUR life and you deserve to invest your highest and best energies into what matters most. And something that matters most is your marriage.

Question: If things stay the same, where will your marriage be in a year from now? Is that what you want? Don't give up on your marriage and let it wither because you're too busy taking care of other people's stuff. Take action today to save your marriage.

Let's cover eight steps for saving your marriage:

Step 1: Understand The Reasons Why You're Having Problems.

What's causing the trouble?

Unresolved conflict...

Poor communication...

Anger...

Arguing...

Cheating...

Parenting conflicts...

Addictions...

A co-dependent spouse...

Too little time together (especially if you've just become new parents)...

Divide a piece of paper into two columns. Above one column write "Strengths" and over the other "Challenges" and then start making your lists. Awareness is one of the first steps towards recovery. But many people don't give themselves the time they need to create awareness.

Step 2: Understand Your Spouse.

Do you realize they're not the same person you married years ago? People change and grow. How well do you know your spouse? Do you really know their wants, hopes and dreams?

Step 3: Understand Yourself.

You're not the same person your spouse married, either. In what ways have you changed/grown through the years? Does your spouse really know you anymore?

Step 4: Embrace the process with patience.

So much of life is a process, isn't it? It's important to be patient with the process AND with your spouse. In fact, if you can enjoy the process, all the better. Impatience, intolerance and disrespect in a relationship are like throwing battery acid on a rose.

As always, a marriage counselor can be of great help in dealing with emotional conflicts such as anger, resentment and bitterness. But keep in mind, too that a spirit of indifference within a relationship is also poisonous.

Some spouses are polite and courteous to each other but there's no connection - no spark or warmth; they're indifferent, lukewarm. But they stay together because the idea of ending the relationship fills them with the fear and uncertainty of being alone. They might not be happy with their marriage but at least they're *comfortable*. But here's the GREAT news: Infusing new life into a relationship and resurrecting a marriage isn't nearly as difficult as people think. Rekindling passion is much easier and happens more quickly than people imagine.

Step 5: Put Your Ego In Timeout.

It's amazing what we'll do to protect our ego. We defend it at all costs; lash out; ignore; justify; rationalize. But here's a question: What's more important, your ego or your marriage? *Just something to think about...*

The Ego can cause trouble in a marriage when it focuses on what it can get or isn't getting. It's a healthy reminder that unconditional love gives. It doesn't trade, exchange, barter or keep score. It just gives.

Step 6: Create A Safe Emotional Environment.

You and your spouse should feel safe to discuss anything. You should be able to share all of your worries, concerns, problems, fears, wants, needs and desires. And it should be done within a caring, loving and supportive environment. Does your marriage feel safe? Can you share your heart with your spouse without risk of being hurt? Creating a safe

emotional environment is essential. Our home and marriage should be a shelter from the harshness of the world.

Step 7: Schedule Blocks Of Quality & Quantity Time.

You and your spouse require and deserve time together. Every week in our work with people, Gayle and I observe husbands and wives who are not making time for themselves. Care to try something crazy? Take out your calendar and schedule five dates with your spouse over the next five weeks so you can get to know each other again. Take an interest. Stop settling for a lukewarm relationship. Live with passion.

Step 8: Focus On The Promise Not On The Pain

Here's what I know from working with countless couples: *Focusing on the pain only makes things seem more painful.* Pain can be a good thing if it gives you the needed motivation to do whatever it takes to make things better. The trick is to not focus on the pain but on the promise - on the better, brighter outcome you're working towards.

Bottom line is that your marriage is worth saving. YOU deserve to be in a happy, fulfilling relationship with your spouse. So whether your marriage is falling apart and you feel on the verge of divorce, or you're in a dull, bland and boring relationship only going through the motions, consider the eight steps we've shared. Choose to do two, three or four - or all eight! Draw a line in the sand today to keep the world out.

Promise to give yourself the time and energy you need to take care of what matters most, starting with your marriage.

Until next week, this is Mike & Gayle Tucker and we want YOU to *be mad about marriage.*