

Marriage Can Still Mean “Forever”



A different kind of campaign is happening this week. It's not for an elected position, but rather one that is purely voluntary... to become a husband or a wife. The week of February 7th through 14th has been declared “Marriage Week USA.” Its intent is to bring positive attention to the subject of marriage, in an age of divorce and cohabitation.



If you follow the divorce statistics in our country, it's clear that America remains very much the land of the free. Over half of both first and second marriages end in divorce. Today, there are more forces pulling couples apart than encouraging them to be together. Many couples are concerned that they have more friends who are unhappy or getting divorced than friends who enjoy being together.



There seems to be a growing hunger in our culture to witness couples who are “growing together” instead of “growing apart.” More than ever, we need to see examples of other happily married, committed couples. We need living reminders that two individuals can continue to enjoy each other, while effectively meeting the steady stream of challenges that test their decision to be together.



In the spirit of preventing your marriage from becoming another statistic, here are a few things to watch for:



Growing Together...

- Display friendship building behaviors (listening, acts of kindness, empathy)
- Develop a common intimate language that only the “two of you” share
- Continue to take sensible risks together (having children, making major sacrifices)
- Create marital rituals (have your favorite things to do that are repeated and meaningful)

Growing Apart...

- Attend functions together, but spend most of that time apart
- Minimal time that involves confiding (deep revealing) with each other
- Maintain the “status quo” by resisting any change in the marriage
- Failure to talk about your relationship or your spouse in a positive manner with others

If you see your marriage represented in the “growing apart” column, don't panic! You can do things to turn it around. Start by deciding to look for progress, not perfection. It only takes one of you to begin to get both of you back “on track.” Shift your own behavior first, rather than trying to change your partner.

Create movement by taking some form of action. Start with the “little things” that communicate caring, tenderness or respect for your partner... things you know your partner would appreciate receiving. The only condition is that your giving must be genuine and it must fit into your daily life. For example, if

TWOgether, Inc.

(847) 581-9444

www.TWOgether.org



you know your partner would enjoy getting a phone call that was without any complaints or problems... make the call! Take the opportunity to focus on all that is “right” or that you appreciate about your partner, your relationship or your lives together.

Become friends with others couples who are either newly married or in a “young” relationship. Adopt these couples by spending some of your social time with them. We all benefit from positive influences, including the energy of hope and enthusiasm of couples that are beginning their lives together.

Remember that marriage is for grown-ups! Growing up sometimes means becoming more self-less and considerate of others, in a way that keeps you deliberate, disciplined and conscious.

Dan Haycraft, M.D. and Meg Haycraft, L.C.S.W. of Wilmette are the founders of TWOgether, Inc, a premier educational and counseling resource for couples. To contact them call 847-581-9444 or visit www.twogether.org

