

The Second Time Around...



As we approach the popular wedding months, many people will be making vows for their second marriage. Intuitively, we might think the odds for a successful second marriage would be better than for the first; after all, we have gained so much insight through the pain of separation, divorce, or living alone. Indeed, many of us come out of an ended marriage being clearer about who we are, what we want and why we want it.



Unfortunately, recent statistics show that our intuition can be mistaken. The odds are *greater* for a second marriage to end in divorce than for the first. While as many as 47 percent of first marriages fail, 62 percent of second ones are projected to end in divorce. Keep in mind, re-marriage follows a divorce, which is exactly what can make re-marriage the most difficult and challenging.



Another explanation for higher failure rates in second marriages is that couples have fewer cultural rules to guide them. Many remarried couples have more questions than they have answers about how to create a successful marriage. While they have passion and good will for their new partners, they may not have learned the fundamental skills for heartfelt communication and resolving conflicts... the skills that might also have helped in the first marriage. In the absence of information and structure, we use trial and error—and often fail.



Couples who embrace the inevitable struggles of a second marriage need to realize that difficulties are normal—even predictable. Forewarned is forearmed; anticipating potential conflicts and knowing how to work



through or avoid them can mean the difference between a second divorce and the marriage of a lifetime.

Many second marriages can succeed. The struggle of ending an important relationship often teaches us tolerance; we abandoned our search for the “perfect” marriage and substitute a hard-earned pragmatism about our own limitations. The ability to tolerate things in the second marriage, that you might not have in the first, may be an important step towards success.

Words like *limitation*, *imperfection*, *compromise*, *patience*, and *trade-off* are neither flashy nor exciting, but they are the basic words of life and commitment. Fortunately, lessons learned from a first marriage allow us to enter the second contract knowing and appreciating that *we* are responsible for making it work. The second time around brings more realistic attitudes; being less “starry-eyed” and more willing to fight for the couple, rather than against the partner.

The best suggestion for anyone entering into a second marriage is to focus on things you can do to be a better partner:

- Keep your expectations “in check” by sharing them, allowing your partner to be aware and respond to them.

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- Nourish the relationship *every day* by doing something specifically for the “two of you.”
- Learn to value complexity... marriage will have plenty.

The risk of loving and making a lifetime commitment to another human being are part of life’s potential joys. It’s important not to let fear and pain get in the way of experiencing the deep, intimate connection that is available in marital love. As Will Rogers once said: “Why not go out on the limb? That’s where the sweetest fruit is.”

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