

When Your World Turns Upside Down...



In the traditional wedding vows each partner states their willingness to endure the challenges of their future lives together. While declaring the couples' love for one another, the vows are also committing us to sustain our relationship "... for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health." In the context of our wedding, surrounded by family and friends, "... until death do we part..." is an important, but untested, promise.



At a time when over half of first marriages end in divorce, we must question whether or not it is reasonable to promise to love someone forever. Is it possible to sustain our relationship through the kinds of stresses that can turn your world upside down? Are we truly prepared to embrace life-altering changes like being fired or suddenly laid off? The death of a loved one? Major illness or injury? Having children? Infertility? Relocation? Changes in financial situations? Career change?



Certain kinds of stress can turn your world upside down; leaving you overwhelmed and confused, even in complete despair. If you are not both prepared to deal effectively with these major upheavals, you can be robbed of your motivation, enthusiasm and ultimately your sense of connection and enjoyment of each other. While some couples never completely recover from these overwhelming events, others somehow manage to turn similar events into opportunities for growth, both personally and in their marriage.



During the most stressful times of our lives together, it is important to recommit to actively sustaining your connection with each other:



- ***Keep the lines of communication open:*** Talk about what is happening for you... not just the facts of the situation or how to solve the problem, but also how you are feeling... about yourself, your partner, the situation. Take the time to listen to how your partner is being affected, without trying to "fix it".
- ***Maintain perspective:*** Remember that no matter how stressful your circumstances may seem, they are nonetheless temporary; things will not always be as dark and overwhelming as they seem in the midst of the crisis. Continue to encourage each other with your "wishes, hopes and dreams" for your future together, beyond these events.
- ***Hold onto rituals:*** Continue to have the shared experiences with your partner that sustain your connection with each other. Weekly date nights may change (i.e. tighter budget) but must be continued! Little "caring behaviors" like kissing when parting and coming back together, phone calls, cards, etc. are daily reminders that we are in this together.
- ***Plan for the worst... expect the best!*** Anticipate the significant threats you may face and form a plan for dealing with them. That way, if something happens you aren't taken by surprise, you just enact the plan. You get to remain in charge of your

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life! Expect to find the “seed of opportunity—the possible gains” in your circumstances and know that change and growth are good!

It’s been said that “love is a feeling, marriage is a contract, and relationships are work!” Feelings of love and your shared history won’t be enough to keep the two of you together through life’s challenges. Couples now need to be open to learning, building their resilience, and deepening their commitment as insurance against any future rough weather.

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