

that the unfaithful parent will someday betray or abandon them in the same way.

In addition to the emotional toll on the family, extramarital affairs also present health risks such as AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases that can cause infertility or death to an unsuspecting spouse.

Not all couples split up after infidelity. Some may be able, after a great deal of time and effort, to repair the broken bonds. If staying together is an option, a marriage counselor will be of enormous help in making the transition.

Improvement Strategies

- Treat your spouse like your best friend or most important colleague
- Don't expect to get more from your spouse than you give of yourself
- Don't lose your sense of humor; have fun with your spouse
- Don't demean your spouse
- Listen to your spouse
- Argue respectfully
- Assess your own mistakes and acknowledge them
- Be willing to change your opinions and attitudes
- Don't try to change your spouse



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Making Marriage Last

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Benefits of a Happy Marriage

Spouses in a happy marriage are usually:

- More productive on the job
- Physically healthier
- Experience less emotional anxiety
- Raise happier, healthier, more confident children

Symptoms of Lacking Commitment

- Spending so much time at work or volunteering that you miss important family functions
- Rationalizing excessive time spent at work
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Concerned with having control over everything that you lash out to keep your spouse in line
- Spending hours meeting strangers on the Internet
- Complaining about your spouse in anonymous chat rooms

Changes in Priorities

The most common change in priorities comes during a “mid-life crisis.”

Reasons for changed priorities:

- Children going to college
- Deteriorating sex life
- Major health problem
- Completion of a longtime goal
- Death of a parent or child

Any of these things can make a person feel the need to break away from their “routine” as a way to get back what they feel they have lost.

Communication

- Direct communication is always best
- If you want or need something, tell your spouse
- If your spouse is doing something that bothers you, tell him or her why it bothers you and what you would like to do about it
- Never be accusatory or disrespectful
- If your spouse reacts badly to something you’ve said, it’s possible that they did not understand you; take time to find out what your spouse thinks you meant
- Personal attacks against your spouse are disrespectful
- Focus on solving the problem instead of winning the argument
- Explain yourself if you feel misunderstood
- Respect each other’s opinion
- Spend time discussing problems and issues
- Be sincere
- Don’t go to sleep before resolving conflict
- Don’t talk to your spouse in a rude, disparaging way
- Don’t criticize your spouse in front of others
- Don’t let anger cloud your judgment about the proper way to speak to and treat your spouse
- Don’t start arguments based on things that happened long ago

Financial Problems

No matter how rich or how poor a couple is, one of the constant subjects of marital disagreement is money. Whether it’s over how money is earned, spent or saved, money fights are common because money is a part of daily life, from paying the electric bill to saving for retirement.

Attitudes toward money are learned in childhood. When spouses are raised with widely differing attitudes toward money, conflict is inevitable. The key is for couples to discuss their views on money and to decide themselves how they will make decisions about how the family money will be controlled.

It is probably not a good idea to have one spouse in complete control of all family assets. That’s not to say that a spouse with a particular skill in managing money should not use that skill, but that spouse should always discuss with the other spouse what he or she is doing.

There are several ways you may decide to divide the responsibility:

- Some couples keep their earnings separate, but agree in advance who will pay what bills
- Some couples put every penny of their financial lives into a joint account

Infidelity

The sad fact is that some people will risk their entire marriage for the sake of an extramarital affair, but infidelity is rarely the only reason a couple breaks up. Usually, a couple has a host of other problems.

The spouse who is betrayed may feel humiliated. Children sense these feelings and may worry