

Married Life



I promised my husband when I started this blog that I wouldn't make it too personal. I think he was worried that if he made me mad by leaving clothes on the floor or clipped his toenails in bed it would end up as a blog post the next day. I told him not to worry, that I wasn't going to put all our business out there for everyone to read. However, I think I

can safely say...and I think many of you would agree with me...marriage is hard. You would think that after 25 years of being a wife, having two husbands and surviving one difficult divorce I'd have this marriage thing nailed. I am in no way an expert but I have learned a thing or two along the way. I am smart enough to be able stand outside my relationships and see that I do a lot of things wrong. So why isn't it all smooth sailing if I know so much? Why is it so hard to put those lessons in to practice? Oh don't worry; Joel and I are fine. This entry doesn't indicate trouble in paradise. I'm just making observations based on my experiences and those of people around me. A therapist once told me "It isn't that couple's fight that is the issue, it's how they fight that matters." She was right of course. How low you go during a fight says a lot about a couple and experts say it indicates if you've got staying power. My favorite newlywed advice to give is "Don't forget to respect each other during disagreements. Fights are not a license to say anything you want. No matter how much you apologize, words can't be unsaid." When I was a kid and was having a disagreement with a sibling my mother would make us go in the bathroom together and not come out until we were hugging. Sometimes she wanted us to sing hymns together until family harmony was restored. Could you imagine how my husband would react if the next time we bicker about something I say "Let's go in the bathroom and sing Onward Christian Soldiers until we work this out."

We have certainly had our share of struggles, some of them pretty serious, but we are in a really good place right now. When we got together I had two teenagers and a pre-teen living under my roof. At times it was not easy on him. He often did not get as much of my time and attention as he wanted or

needed. I would tell him "Just be patient. One day they'll all be gone and you'll have me all to yourself." That day is pretty much here. (I do have one still in the basement but he is for the most part an adult.) There is sweet freedom in being able to run away for the day with your spouse and not have to worry about kid stuff. No lunches to pack, no PTA cookies to bake. Sometimes when we're in the car driving off on some little adventure I'll look over at him and say "This is what we have been waiting for honey! Isn't it great?"

Having the children out of the house however does not automatically guarantee marital bliss. The give and take of everyday life can sometimes be challenging. We come from very different backgrounds so we each look at the world from a completely different point of view . For example, he likes high thread count fancy schmancy sheets. I consider a bed sheet still usable if you can't see through it yet. Nothing we can't overcome. The trick is learning to meet somewhere in the middle. I'm a terribly messy cook. When I'm done making dinner the food will be delicious but the kitchen looks like a tornado went through it. He is much neater in the kitchen than I am. He just jumps in and starts washing dishes and cleaning up my mess. God bless him. We are definitely two individuals both with strong personalities. We have just enough in common to keep us together but our differences is what makes life fun and interesting.

Back in the day I read some marriage advice from Dear Abby that really stuck with me. This particular column someone wrote her a typical letter "Abby, My husband is a big slob, forgets our anniversary and drinks too much beer but I love him and can't think about leaving him. What should I do?" Abby's response was simple. She said "Look at your life and ask yourself this question "is my life better with or without this person in it?" I know this oversimplifies things but it really is good advice. I've had to ask myself this question twice in my life.

The first time the answer was "without", definitely without but unfortunately it was years between this realization and the time I got up the courage to do anything about it. The second time I asked myself this question was in the middle of a crisis. Putting everything else aside I realized that I would be



completely heartbroken and miserable without him. We decided to do whatever we had to do to make it work.

The movie "Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?" is one of my husband's favorites. If you have ever seen the movie you know that every time they get in to a jam George Clooney's character would say "Damn, we're in a tight spot." Marriage is kind of like that. You get in a lot of tight spots but the trick is being clever enough to get out of them. And like the pals in the movie...sticking it out together. A friend recently asked me to help her set up a dating profile. As I rattled off things like "You should say you want someone who calls just to hear your voice, someone who surprises you with heartfelt gifts and romantic dinners, someone who can be your best friend" my husband said "Geez, I sure hope I check some of those boxes for you." I looked at him and said "Of course silly, how do you think I knew what to ask for in an ideal mate! Now get in the bathroom and start singing. Someone forgot to take the trash out last night."