

Successful Parenting

According to marriage experts, the first major crisis in many marriage relationships is the birth of their first child. Raising a child can bring parents to the height of joy and the depths of despair. Parenting a child provokes emotional extremes in parents because they love their children and only want the best for them. Parenting is not only momentous and all consuming, so to suggest that a child does not come first in a married couple's life, the marriage does seem counter intuitive and almost un-natural.

A child's needs take up a lot of time and those needs are often urgent and immediate, especially when children are young. Parents have to sacrifice sleep, comfort, and plans sometimes to tend to the needs of their children. However, the most important consideration for parents is if the marriage is not working, parenting is not working, and this has a profound impact on children. Children will reap the benefits of a successful marriage in which both parents stay attentive to the relationship. Statistics show that children in homes with parents in strong marriages are more successful, mentally stable, and have more self-esteem on average than children raised in homes with parents in weak relationships.

So what happens when children become a source of difficulty in a marriage? It could be a sick child, worries over a child's path in life, disagreements about ways to discipline a child, or many other things that require extra care borrowed from a couple's time and energy. Following are some rules of thumb for the most common issues parents face in raising children while keeping the marriage a priority:

- Daily affirmations (words, hugs, kisses)
- A weekly date/ arranging to have some alone time
- An annual get-away (without the children)
- Determining rules and discipline together

In addition to making the relationship a priority, being united in parenting and co-parenting effectively is also important. Both parents being committed to being just as focused on each other as they are on being parents will also keep the marriage out of crisis. Here are some ways to co-parent effectively:

- **Frequent Discussions:** Open communication is imperative to success. Discussing schooling, house rules, discipline techniques, and other parenting issues.
- **Work Together:** Teamwork is crucial. Make sure each parent has equal parenting duties and input. Work together to make parenting goals happen. This will have a positive impact on your child, and it can strengthen the relationship with your partner.
- **Support Each Other:** Show a united front, if you have a disagreement about a decision, talk about it privately.
- **Always Re-Evaluate:** An effective marriage or co-parenting relationship arrangement requires constant re-evaluation. Added experiences will change your opinions, perceptions, and viewpoints. Your parental goals and ways of discipline will change over time. Re-evaluating opens the avenues of communication that much more.

Bottom line is that staying married and reasonably happily married after children turn your lives upside down is not easy. It is important to let go every so often, and at other times, recognizing that a little hand holding can go a long way for now.

