

# Resolving to Keep Your Marriage Together

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help for generation "ex"

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With the New Year almost upon us, it is a perfect time to reflect on your marriage or personal relationship with that significant other and resolve to keep that union in tack! Many of the divorces I see may possibly have been avoided if only one or the other had put forth the effort to take better care of the relationship.

Here's my top ten list of ways to kick off the New Year as you resolve to make your relationship work—or to make it better:

- 1. Yours, mine and ours:** Be aware that both of you need a life aside and apart from one another. That includes separate interests, hobbies and activities you call your own. Respect this about each other and also celebrate it. This only makes your relationship stronger and far more interesting.
- 2. Time together:** We all certainly get very busy but nothing is more important than ample time together away from the office and the kids. Take regular vacations together. Spend leisure time doing the things you mutually enjoy and make those times special. Also, take one night a week and make it "date night." Take turns surprising one another with what you'll do during that evening. Keep that time sacred. Don't let anything interfere. It's better to neglect the world than one another!
- 3. Take good care of yourself:** Not only should you keep your appearance up—I always suggest people dress and take care of themselves as if they were forced to date—but also make sure you take care of your physical well-being. That means going to the gym, or working out regularly, consuming a healthy diet, staying in shape and getting ample rest.
- 4. Always keep the lines of communication open:** A good many relationships fail because of misunderstandings. The only way to prevent them, and to allow the other person to know what you need and want, is through a steady stream of open dialogue. And stay calm and on-point when you do talk things out. Only yell if the house is on fire or one of the pets has fallen in the pool!
- 5. Handle criticism with subtlety:** Be gentle and try not to judge too harshly. Also, don't review old mistakes that your partner or spouse has made. There is no point in keeping score when it comes to complaints, criticisms and difficult moments. Doing so only serves to demoralize one another and diminish the integrity of the relationship. Allow for some margin of error. When you do criticize, do it in the way you would want it done to you: with sensitivity.
- 6. When you have problems with the children:** Don't be reluctant to seek help from a third party. An objective opinion and additional support helps to preserve the marriage by relieving a great deal of tension. Don't forget: children are bound to have problems; but these problems don't need to impact the sanctity of your marriage.
- 7. Court one another:** Gifts, compliments and random acts of kindness, no matter how small, go a long way. Resolve this year to treat your partner with the same courtesies you did when you were dating. It's easy to take advantage of one another. This year, pretend as though you're trying to "win" that person all over again!
- 8. Be romantic:** This is one of the most important resolutions you can make as you start the new year. It's so easy to take the other person for granted after the courtship is over! Resolve to do just one romantic thing every single day for your mate. This in and of itself may keep your relationship strong.
- 9. Discuss the terms and conditions of your relationship:** If these are not spelled out in your "yearly contract," make certain you clarify them. Most of the marital disputes that break up a marriage are over sex and money. And, some people's expectations become a surprise to the other party only after the marriage has fallen apart.
- 10. Re-negotiate your contract:** Marriage is just like any other contract. Its terms and conditions should be reviewed and reconsidered from time-to-time. Renew your relationship contract every year. Right before your anniversary is the perfect time, in fact. And, remember: be flexible and don't forget you have to give to get.

A frequent contributor to Divorce Magazine and a member of Divorce Magazine's Advisory Board, Ms Phillips is a seasoned family law attorney whose practice has run the gamut from high profile clients to representing the interests of women and men in the political arena both on a local and federal level. View her Divorce Magazine Profile online.