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How to Survive 25 (OR MORE) Years of *Marriage*

My husband Kevin and I will be celebrating our 28th anniversary this year. No small feat, for sure.

What's our secret to a thriving midlife marriage, besides not killing each other in our sleep? Being married for a quarter century or more takes a lot of work, but I've boiled it down to a few key "staying strategies."

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT. Every couple argues, but if you want to fight and stay married, you need to abide by a few rules so you don't end up in divorce court, as Vikki Claflin points out on her Laugh Lines blog. I'm especially prone to pulling a "kitchen sink" as Vikki calls it, where I lose focus on the disagreement at hand and argue (for the 147th time) about something that happened 16 years ago. Echoing the words of Elsa in *Frozen*, I just need to "let it go."

CELEBRATE WHAT WORKS. You've both got a great sense of humor? Fantastic! Binge-watch

Seinfeld together. You're a morning person and he's a night owl? Great---enjoy some "alone" time at the beginning and end of each day. You're a planner and he's a free spirit? Terrific! Combine forces to stay on track in life with some built-in flexibility. Do whatever works for your relationship to keep it going strong another 25 years.

RECOGNIZE THE GOOD STUFF. When he does the dishes, verbally pat him on the back. (Ignore the fact that you've done the dishes the past 7,500 nights in a row without so much as an acknowledging nod from your spouse.) When she cooks an amazing, made-from-scratch meal instead of popping open a box of Hamburger Helper, point out how much you appreciate her cooking prowess. Everyone likes to feel like

they've done a good job or made a difference. It wouldn't kill you to say, "Thanks, hon! I appreciate your effort." And sometimes, as Kim Bongiorno points out on her blog *Let Me Start By Saying*, recognizing the good stuff is simply being able to tolerate each other after all these years.

KEEP THINGS REAL. Do you really expect him to complete a household project with only one trip to Home Depot when every "honey-do" project since 1988 has required at least seven trips? Do you really expect her to remember to buy "Moose Tracks" ice cream if you don't write it down on the perpetual shopping list she's kept posted by the fridge for 25 years? Take a cue from Lois Alter Mark at her *Midlife at the Oasis* blog and keep expectations real if you want to stay married forever. Face the fact that, no, you're not going to change him/her after a few decades. It is what it is.

COMPROMISE. You need a *Fixer-Upper* fix with Chip and Joanna Gaines, but he's craving *Shark Tank* for a dose of Mark Cuban? Record your show and watch his now. She wants to order a pizza and you want a home-cooked meal? Order the pizza or offer to cook. Really, it's that simple. Like my kids learned in kindergarten, "you get what you get and you don't throw a fit." Just take one for the team and move on already. It's not worth losing a Friday night---or a marriage---over.

LAUGH. At everything. Seriously, other than catastrophic illnesses, bankruptcy and infidelity, most things can be assuaged with a good, hearty laugh. Find the funny in a bounced check, a ruined vacation, a disastrous plumbing project, a forgotten anniversary. Sometimes you might need to put a little distance (in some cases, a lot of distance) between you and "the incident" before you find it funny. But after the sting of a bad situation wears off, laugh about it. Some of the best memories evolve from some of life's biggest hiccups. Embrace the screw-ups with a chuckle.

BE BEST FRIENDS. There's a definite need for girl/guy friends in your life, but your spouse should be the one you run to with your best/worst news. Like Marcia Kester Doyle says on her *Menopausal Mother* blog, "He doesn't have a problem with hitting the drugstore in his pajamas at 2:00 a.m. for a tube of Monostat and a bottle of Pepto Bismol. He'll grab a six pack of beer while he's there and tell the checkout lady that he's hosting a helluva party." Stuff like that will carry you for 25 years. •••

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