



HOW TO STAY MARRIED WITHOUT KILLING YOURSELF

I just celebrated 11 years of being married. That too, to the same woman. And this year we both remembered the day, a day late. Which is okay because now we are even. Last year, she forgot, which was hilarious for me. Earlier, I had forgotten. But this balance did not come easily. Here's what we learned over the years.

Communicate in analogue

I am very old fashioned in one aspect: when I go out to eat, I go out to eat. I chew, poke, prod, look for unwanted hairs in my frittata. Not that I know what a frittata is because it looks suspiciously like lasagna without the macaroni. But I need to get to know it, like I got to know my wife before she became my wife, without the prodding that is. But when people go out to eat, they are too busy on their phones. I know one couple that checks group messages and texts EACH OTHER while seated across. This couple even has valid university degrees so you know they can speak. Luckily, they argue over texts as well. We have enough sound pollution as it is.

Nope, communicate in analogue. Talk like people did after the discovery of fire. Speak. While texts are great for record keeping, you do not want to look back and scroll through lines of text. Keep that for more interesting things.

Compromise

It is a big word that means a lot but has simpler undertones. Like a

frittata which is basically eggs and meat. You do not compromise to everything, obviously. Smelly feet? No. Anyone loves you enough to say they love you, should be able to wash their feet. Or at last keep it hidden somewhere outside the house. For example, I love model cars. I buy them. They come in big boxes. Without anyone knowing, I ran out of space. And one fine day the wife found out they were stashed not too well in her wardrobe, behind and in between her clothes, in her kitchen cabinets behind the 'kitcheny' things. I stored others in the car, in the garage, under the living room sofas and so on. She complained this was getting out of control. I agreed. That is compromise. In any successful marriage, you will see one person compromising by agreeing.

Eventually, my wife gave up. Partly because she likes cars but mostly because she also figured it was time to compromise after more than a decade.

Don't fight when hungry

You have to fight though. There is no such thing as a fight-free marriage just like there being nothing like an eggless frittata. But do not fight when hungry. That rumbling in the stomach complicated by the uncomfortable gurgling of digestive enzymes means you become angrier, meaner. It's an evolutionary thing. Animals are angrier when hungry. They get more vicious. Which is why guard

dogs are often trained without food. What is worse, when you are hungry AND eating, your arguments can lead to food being spat out all over the place. It is messy and can become the topic for further rage. 'Food dropped on the floor and left there' is a pretty big concern on the '50 Greatest Causes for Marital Argument', an article coming next.

When angry, or hangry, as the term has come to be known, just eat. Often, the greatest argument solving act is to sit and eat together without talking of anything other than the food. Figure out what the heck is a frittata.

Be willing to change

People change and that is okay. Peter Parker regularly becomes Spiderman and back again. Bruce Jenner became Caitlyn Jenner but never to go back, ever again. Which incidentally became a tough fact for his wife to swallow. No, I am not talking about changing yourself but changing things around you. Last year, I decided to change the way our house looked. So I took on an overly ambitious plan to remodel. Furniture was moved around, rooms were reshuffled and walls were demolished. We turned a closet space into my son's bedroom because he needs to start small. Also, he IS small. Unfortunately, all my model cars came out of storage and now we do not know where to store them. House looks great though. But it took me four months



to finally finish painting. All because I did not have a clear plan mostly to keep the wife guessing. The wife was occasionally furious, but she was also occasionally excited to see where this was heading, if anywhere at all. She was waiting to tell me she was right, once again.

Eventually, the house was ready, almost. By the time it was done, I needed to make more changes. We are already thinking of more colour changes, newer lighting and plants outside. A home needs constant change and work to be new, fresh and entertaining. Just like a marriage. And that is how you survive decade after decade. You change not each other, but the frittata and the lasagna around you.

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