



Everyday wonderful...a countdown and guide

I describe my blog as a “guide to everyday wonderful”. Rita Thomas, my mother-in-law, told me once that marriage really can be everyday wonderful. This concept changed EVERYTHING for me.



I want to share with you the abundant wisdom she shared with me concerning marriage. Her marriage is a true testament of great love, respect, and friendship. Mark & I have incorporated everything she taught us, and we believe that our marriage and love will go down in history as one of the greatest love stories ever.

Even if you are not married, you can use these as good counsel for the future.

Starting in reverse order: **#10: Never, EVER, say the “D” word**

#9: You are probably not the only one contributing...

Many couples have different personalities - the classic - "Opposites Attract". Because of this, it is very easy to become disillusioned that you are the only person contributing to your marriage.

Example: I am a very outgoing - "go-getter". I pay the bills, manage the money, take the cars to get washed, clean the house, do the laundry, etc. Mark is very laid back and not so much a "go-getter".

This frustrated me when we first got married because I was so focused on the things I was doing that I totally dismissed any contribution he was making. **UNTIL - I stopped and focused on the things Mark was contributing** (his ways are unconventional and unique):

He shows me a ton of affection, he goes crazy with excitement when I come home, he always makes me feel like the most beautiful girl in the room - I could go on and on...

These are the beautiful ways he contributes to our marriage. They may not be the types of things I do, but he is definitely contributing in his own way.

When you feel like you are the only one contributing, take a step back and focus on all of the beautiful things your mate contributes to your marriage - not just the conventional ways, but emotionally, physically and verbally.

This one seems like a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised how many people violate this. Even in your most heated fights or trying times - NEVER let the "D" word (divorce) enter your home or even your thoughts. More to come...

#8: You will not fulfill your mate's EVERY need

This was devastating for me to learn as a naive 18 year old in love. Mark and I have only been married about 5 years, so we are no experts, but we learned this one the hard way despite Rita's warnings.

You can be in love and your mate can be your best friend, but you will not be able to fulfill every need in your mate. No matter how close and in love you are, a guy still needs some time to "hang with the guys" and a girl needs some time to "be a girl" - you also each need your work friends, private devotional time and mutual friends. Allowing for this time apart seems to create a great balance in a marriage.

Even more shocking for me to learn was that my mate turned into a crazy, immature, dork as soon as he was hanging with the guys. I was so perplexed with this revelation that I thought I had married a mad-man. Fortunately, we recovered from that awful trip and we now schedule guy time/girl time. Each week I truly look forward to hanging out with Tiffany (my BFF) and recapping the week's events while watching our favorite shows and eating in bed - **AHHHHhhhhhh, pure bliss.**



We are both so much more relaxed when we have that scheduled time apart. Friends and family make a marriage so rich with love, laughter, memories, tears, and honesty - we love all of our friends and family. This rule is a keeper...

#7: Run into open arms

This is one of my favorites, but requires daily effort.

Everyday, after being apart for an extended amount of time (work, sleep, play, etc.), greet each other with an embrace and kiss - like the ones from the movies. Make it **dramatic** and express in words how much you missed the other person and how happy you are to see them. Even if you are in the middle of doing something and your mate walks through the door, abandon your project and make it your number #1 priority to run into each other's arms.



This may sound cheesy and pointless, but it is so rewarding and fulfilling after a long day's work or a "tossing & turning" night of sleep to be greeted like **you are the only person in the world that matters.**

This definitely increases your chances of having an “everyday wonderful” kind of marriage. Even if you go right back to your project or carry on with your day as normal after your embrace, those feelings of **love, closeness, and security** follow you the rest of the day.

Those of you who know Mark and I know that when we see each other after being apart all day (even on stage at Catalyst on Wed. night), we make a point to hug, kiss, and say “I love you”...**if even for a moment.**

#6: Dream big, because dreams really do come true

Mark is a beautiful musician. He lives, breathes, sleeps, and **DREAMS** music.

I find that one of the most intimate parts about being married is being able to bare your soul and every dream with your partner. Not only that, but praying and fighting for those dreams together.

Whatever your mate has in their heart, be sure to nurture, protect and encourage those passions and dreams. It will require sacrifice at times - actually, most times. But it's always worth it. Even if you have doubts in your mind about your partners dream, never squelch it because dreams really do come true.

One year ago, I never thought it would be possible for Mark and I to lead a team and touch a generation together. It seemed hopelessly unreachable.

We held that dream in our hearts and continually prayed about it - although, we never lost focus of our task at hand.

Here we are now, leading the most amazing team of young people and transforming a generation of worshippers. Not only that, but Mark is able to put all of his focus on it as his full time job. We will never stop dreaming big - never!

#5: Play It Safe

Under no circumstances - NONE - should either mate have a personal, close friend of the opposite sex. Let me explain:

1. Never share your **emotions** with someone of the opposite sex - **your emotions are on reserve for your mate only**. Emotions make you close to someone - very close...intimate in fact.
2. Never be **alone** with someone of the opposite sex - in a car, go to lunch, behind closed doors, etc, etc... Even if nothing happens or ever will happen, the appearance can be painful and can be misinterpreted.
3. Never try to **counsel** someone alone of the opposite sex on their issues or problems - refer them to another person of their same sex.
4. **Mutual** friends of the opposite sex are ok - as long as the rules above are followed.

I really don't care if this sounds harsh. We have many friends and family that have been in bad situations or hurt their mate because they didn't follow the rules above.

#4: Go To Bed Together

NO - not like that...

I'm not talking about the "physical act of intimacy".

I'm talking about **schedules**. Our jobs and hobbies can take us in different directions all day long, but be sure to **go to bed at the same time**. I believe it gives us a sense of security and togetherness. It's usually the time Mark and I end up talking the most. We talk about work, God, dreams, etc...I guess that's why they call it "***pillow talk***".



Even if one of you stays up in bed and works on the computer or watches TV, you still have the feeling that you have come together at the end of the day. I notice that when one of us is traveling and we cannot go to bed together, I feel sad and alone. Even if we are both home and one of us decides to not come to bed for whatever reason, we immediately feel more distant and our communication is usually strained. I hope I never get used to going to bed without Mark by my side.

#3: Long Live Date Night!

This is an easy one to ignore or let slip away. It's sort of like doing daily devotions...if you don't **include it in your schedule ahead of time**, it will never happen.

Making a special night for each other, every week or every other week is so important. Even if you stay in the house, this time is meant for you both to **totally focus** on each other. No blackberries, phone calls, text messages, commercials, or friends to get in the way.

Whatever you end up doing for date night, make sure you hold hands, kiss often, and snuggle up. This makes it different from any other night together.

Do things you don't normally do: go ahead - get the appetizer. Take a walk (hand-in-hand). Dance to your favorite song. Play a video game.

Feed the romance any way you can because the reality is that most days you will be too busy to focus at all on the other person. We have become (me especially) **multi-tasking addicts**. Mark and I will go entire days without having a "real" conversation - but it's those date nights where we had 3 hours of intimate conversation that linger in my mind.

#2: Fight Right

This could be a series in itself. Here it goes:

You will fight. **Yes, you will.** Life will happen and you will both have your own way of handling it - so, go ahead, get mad, fight it out, ring the bell, the show is about to begin...BUT, you need to fight fair and fight right.



Rules of the fight:

1. **Fight to resolve, not to be right.** Make sure you are fighting for the right reason. If you are fighting just to “win” or make your point, you should shut up and re-evaluate your intentions.
2. **No hitting below the belt.** This means that you should never say something in a fight that will cut the other person deep - nothing about their character, personality, virtue, talents, etc. Many couples develop deep wounds from fights because they said something stupid in the heat of the moment. Keep it clean!
3. **Stay focused.** It is very tempting to bring up the 15 other things you have fought about in the past, but like God forgives us, those past arguments should be thrown in the sea of forgetfulness - if you continually bring up stuff from the past you obviously have not let it go and it will continue to haunt your relationship until you deal with it. Once it’s resolved, it should never be brought back up. No guilt trips.
4. **Don’t walk away.** I am the worst at this and Mark is the best. I get so tired of fighting sometimes that I just want to walk away and not deal with it - I’m soooo over this fight! Mark always pulls me back in and follows me around the house until we have a resolution or understanding. He won’t get out of my face until we are laughing again. To go without saying (but I’m going to say it): Don’t go to bed angry - or anywhere else for that matter. I have heard several friends and family say, “we haven’t talked in days because we were fighting about FILL IN THE BLANK.” Don’t let this happen to you....be relentless in your efforts to come to an understanding.

1: (drum roll please) Love God Together

I hope that this is the obvious #1.

This is very easily overlooked in the business of life. Even romance cannot replace this.

Pray together, pray for each other, pray for your families, go to church together, serve in the church together, talk about the deep things of God, encourage each other in the Word, praise together, keep each other accountable, and on and on...

If you want to be more intimate and get on the same page, do these things. They will guide all other issues in your life. Mark and I still disagree on some theological issues, but our love for God is indisputable. You don't have to agree about every issue or passage in the Bible, but you do need to pursue fervently after God together.

Mark and I are still learning about how to love each other more every day. We are constantly re-evaluating and balancing our life. These principles have been the same for the past 5 years to us. They have become even more important as more time goes by.