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# 6 Marriage Milestones That Will Make Or Break A Couple

## Plus, tips that will help cement your bond.

by JILLIAN KRAMER JUNE 8, 2015



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Remember that whole line in wedding vows about for better or for worse? Well, they weren't kidding about the worse. Every couple goes through their fair share of trying times, but the interesting thing is that the difficult stuff brings certain duos even closer than they were before—while it pulls others apart. What makes the difference in each critical situation? We turned to experts to find out.

### 1. Having A Child

It's all too easy to lose sight of your marriage when your life revolves around 3 a.m. feedings and whose turn it is to empty the dirty diaper bin. Oh, and you can forget about sex for the first few months. "It's important to talk about the changes happening in your relationship, from lack of sleep to lack of sex," says psychologist [Lauren Napolitano](http://laurennapolitanopsyd.com/) (<http://laurennapolitanopsyd.com/>), Psy.D.

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Getting on the same parenting page can also help prevent arguments down the road. "Try to stay flexible about the best ways to parent," says Napolitano, so that you can find what works for you as a couple. "There is no one way to parent—some families use daycare, some use a nanny, some stay home.



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## 2. Infertility

If you'd kill for those sleepless and sexless nights but can't conceive, you might find yourself starting to resent your S.O. for not being as invested in getting knocked up as you are. Or the opposite could be true if your partner is dying to have a kid but you're not as gung-ho about putting in the effort necessary to get there. "The best thing to do is explore all your options rather than blame each other for infertility issues," says Napolitano. "Keep hope because there are so many more options available now than previously, such as surrogacy and adoption. Try to stay allied in your goal: wanting to be parents."

## 3. Cheating

"Betrayal never happens in a vacuum," says relationship expert [April Masini](http://www.aprilmasini.com/) (<http://www.aprilmasini.com/>). "Once you get over feeling like a victim or a perpetrator, you can try to understand, together, how this happened. When you get to the point where you see how you both contributed to the situation, you can grow and become stronger together."

After all, there's a reason the phrase, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger" exists. "There's some truth to it," says Masini. "When you and a spouse get through an indiscretion, you can have a better-than-ever marriage if you're both willing to keep open hearts and minds."

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To get through the experience, avoid the urge to act rashly when the truth about the affair comes out. "Temper your own behavior when you learn about an indiscretion, and if you need a time out—even if it's for a week or more—take it," says Masini. "Time doesn't heal all wounds, but it does heal a lot. And better yet, it gives you the opportunity to

calm down and process what's happened so you don't do things you may regret later."

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#### **4. A Serious Illness**

"A serious illness can allow you to see that a spouse really has your back in ways that you may not realize in a healthy, day-to-day existence," says Masini. "Whether it's a hospitalization after a car accident or a bout with cancer, you and your spouse can show each other what you don't usually get to—that you're there through thick and thin."

#### **5. Caring For A Sick Parent**

"A sick parent is, in many ways, like introducing a new baby into the family," says Napolitano. "Caring for this ill parent takes time, energy, and money away from the couple." Tackle this new family dynamic as a team: "Maybe one person cooks food for the ailing parent while the other visits," says Napolitano. "Depending on the acuity of the illness, it's important to make sure that you also schedule 'couple time' in addition to supporting the sick parent."

#### **6. Losing A Job Or Other Financial Stress**

You might be tempted to start pointing fingers if your partner loses his job or makes a bad investment with your shared funds.

"But again, the key here is to not blame each other," says Napolitano. "As a couple, the best thing you can do is seek out professional financial help. There are likely decisions you can make to ease your financial burden"—which will help you get back to focusing on each other.

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"The reality is that most people will face most, if not all, of these issues in their marriage," says Napolitano. "It's important to take the long view and know that even though there will be times of stress, marriages can survive and thrive."

*This article was originally published on [Women's Health](http://www.womenshealthmag.com/sex-and-relationships/making-or-breaking-a-marriage?cid=isynd_ROL_0615) ([http://www.womenshealthmag.com/sex-and-relationships/making-or-breaking-a-marriage?cid=isynd\\_ROL\\_0615](http://www.womenshealthmag.com/sex-and-relationships/making-or-breaking-a-marriage?cid=isynd_ROL_0615)).*

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