

Finding Reconciliation Through Separation



By Tammy Greene

for [Hope After Divorce](#)

Marriage is full of extreme ups and downs. Every marriage goes through hard times, but some certainly more than others. As recent news of the separation between the Oscar-winning duo Catherine Zeta-Jones and Michael Douglas came to light, we can see the toll that these hard times can take. These past few years, they have experienced a series of insurmountable challenges. Douglas was diagnosed with throat cancer in 2010, and he had to endure chemotherapy and radiation, which took a tremendous toll on his body. As if that wasn't enough to put stress on a relationship, his wife of 13 years surprised fans in 2011 when she voluntarily admitted herself to a facility for bipolar disorder treatment. She underwent treatment again earlier this year.

Related Link: [Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones Separate](#)

This type of stress and worry is enough to put any relationship on the brink of divorce, and this power couple is no exception. According to *People* magazine, a representative of the couple stated that the couple is separated and “taking some time apart to evaluate and work on their marriage.” A separation is exactly that. It’s a time to step back from the daily arguing and frustration to re-evaluate your partnership. It’s a time to figure out if you want to get your relationship back on track.

Here are some ideas to help you turn a separation into reconciliation:

Seek Professional Help

If both you and your spouse are committed to working things out, your first step is to find a third party that can help you. Talk to friends, relatives, and strangers, and search the Internet for referrals. Putting your trust and your relationship in the hands of someone you don’t know can be terrifying, so look for recommendations from people who have had good experiences. Don’t be afraid to tell people you are working on your marriage. Many people see counselors on a regular basis and just don’t talk about it. There is no shame in admitting that you need help and are looking to others for guidance. Rebuilding your marriage is worth the work required.

No Dating

If you are separated but committed to trying again, dating has to be off-limits. You cannot have an attitude of “the grass is greener on the other side” if you are trying to rebuild your marriage with your spouse. The point is to remember how green the grass can be in your *own* backyard – with the word “can” being the key.

Immerse Yourself

A couple who recently resolved their separation said the best advice they ever got was to *not* fill the empty space the separation left behind. In other words, immerse yourself in the separation. Don't try to fill the quiet space with shopping, friends, alcohol, online video games, or any other possible distraction or addiction. Take the newfound alone time to think. Sit on the beach, take a drive without music, or write in your journal.

This is a time to find your way back to yourself and your partner with clarity and thoughtfulness. It's a time to remember what you loved about them in the first place and focus on what took you off track. There is no way you can devote the time necessary to rebuilding your marriage if you fill the space with distractions. It may be uncomfortable, but you need to start getting used to the silence in order to hear the quiet voices within, which will lead you towards healing.

Related Link: [Lessons From Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck](#)

Do the Work

If you are at the point of separation there are only two directions to go: the path of divorce or the path of reconciliation. The choice is yours. If the path of reconciliation is the one you choose, then you must commit to giving everything you have to put your marriage back together. Do what your therapist tells you. Strip down the layers and lose the pride. Let go of your ego. Partial effort won't be enough. This may be the hardest thing you've ever done. If it's ever going to work out, you must give 100 percent.

There was a time, not too long ago, when you stood at the altar and you believed beyond all odds that you would make your marriage work. Well, here you are: facing those odds that now seem too big to bear. A separation can be a blessing in disguise. If the right steps are taken, it can lead you to

renewed hope and new beginnings with the person who you committed to for better or worse.

Tammy Greene is a graduate of the University of La Verne. She has worked as a Child Life Specialist and social worker assisting families who have children with illness or mental disabilities. Tammy is a producer of the national PBS children's television show, Curiosity Quest. She has a blog, Married and Naked, where she shares personal lessons learned from her own life, offering helpful ways to navigate through the challenges of marriage. Tammy is a contributing expert at HopeAfterDivorce.org, FamilyShare.com, LAFamily.com and CupidsPulse.com. She is happily married to her high school sweetheart and is the mother of two. See Tammy's Curiosity Quest website and follow her blog, MarriedandNaked.