

# Celebrity Couple Sarah Michelle Gellar and Freddie Prinze Jr.: How Does A Couple Cope With Illness?



By Dr. Jane Greer

It's been a tough few months for [celebrity couple](#) Sarah Michelle Gellar and Freddie Prinze Jr.! Freddie is reportedly on the mend, but it has been a long haul. The actor underwent spine surgery, and it looks like he will make a full recovery. While his celebrity wife, Sarah Michelle Gellar, has been supportive throughout the process, it can be very difficult to deal with illness in the family. It's a stressful time for everyone involved, individually and as a couple. In the end,

it can either strain a relationship, or it can ultimately strengthen it.

**There are certain steps you can take to try to better deal when you or your partner is ill, or recovering from an injury or surgery, to make sure it doesn't tear you apart.**

When you are dealing with illness and recovery, the uncertainty and anxiety you might feel can totally drain you. There can be so much going on that it is easy to lose sight of the bigger picture. The sick partner is not him or herself, and the healthy partner must become the caretaker, not sure when or if their loved one will be what he or she once was. When the ill person isn't available the way he or she usually is, the other person might feel unsupported, angry, overwhelmed, frightened, and even alone. That can get even worse if the sick person becomes demanding and takes the other for granted, or is constantly unpleasant because of the pain or discomfort they are feeling. Also, that person might be afraid and worried about the future, putting even more of a damper on the household. The healthy one might resent having to carry the lion's share of the household work. They might feel burdened and overloaded, in addition to all the other emotions they are already experiencing.

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As with so many other issues in a relationship, resentment can creep in when the communication creeps out. So often if you are the healthy one, you might feel you have no right to complain or ask anything of your sick loved one. If they feel

bad and yell, so be it. If they tell you they need you to cancel the plans you made to be out of the house for a few hours, what choice do you have? But that is not the case at all. In order to get through, there has to be a give and take.

### **Talk about it.**

The first step is talking about it, and sharing your feelings. Of course the person who is ill is going through an awful time, but you are going through it with them. There isn't just one person being affected, there are two. It is very challenging to navigate that difficult road of juggling helping and supporting with honesty and advocating for yourself and your needs. It can be hard to give yourself permission to be upset. But it is so important that you are able to share your thoughts and feelings, and work together to acknowledge what you are both experiencing and thinking.

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### **Have mutual empathy.**

The life you shared (and presumably enjoyed) before your partner got ill is no longer the life either of you is living while the recovery is taking place. Without mutual empathy, that reality and all the stress you are both feeling can take a toll because most people eventually run out of emotional stamina. Talk about how you are each feeling, what is working and what isn't. Discuss what you have lost, and what you hope to get back. Come together as a team and be aware of a recovery plan. What is a realistic timeline to expect to get back to normal? That will give your partner time to rest without feeling pressure from you, and it will give you something to look forward to.

Freddie and Sarah are now closer to the other, healthier side of this. They are facing this challenge head-on, and hopefully will find it makes them stronger as they go forward.