

Relationship Advice: Making Marriage Work Like Beyoncé



By Dr. Jane Greer

During the premiere of her new visual album *Lemonade* this past weekend, Beyoncé shared very personal moments between her and her husband, [Jay-Z](#). The [celebrity couple](#) have had their share of marital rough patches. The challenge of a successful marriage is making it work with all of the elements of difficulty that arise, whether that be finances, children, in-laws, infidelity, or whatever else might bring a bump in the road to a relationship.

Beyoncé is addressing this important aspect of how much work goes into a marriage in this new album, and she is carrying on with the effort to make her bond with Jay-Z better and stronger than ever.

Beyoncé and Jay-Z share a celebrated personal and professional [celebrity relationship](#), but you don't have to build an empire with your partner to make it worthwhile to preserve what you have together. Even so, this idea of having to work and put effort into a marriage or relationship is often frowned upon, and gets a bad reputation because it takes on this connotation of being a burden, a chore, or a responsibility. It's as though people think if it isn't easy, then it's better to just call it quits and get out.

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When [Ben Affleck](#) so famously said that marriage takes work, it was like he said something awful, instead of something positive. It reminds me of a couple that came to see me a few years back. Things were difficult between them, and the husband didn't really want to be there. He asked, "Why should I have to work at it? If it's so much work, then we must be in a really bad state. So, why not just end it?" I said, "Okay, you can make that choice, but keep in mind then you are going to have to put the work into dismantling your marriage." I went on to highlight all the effort that would take – dealing with the divorce, splitting up their assets, finding a new place to live, starting to date again. And then, if he was

lucky enough to find someone he liked and wanted to spend time with, he would have to hope that he got it exactly right that time so he wouldn't find himself having to work on that relationship one day. He looked at me and said, "Okay, let's work on the marriage." He could finally see that there was no guaranteed easy route, and as I pointed out, nobody gets a pass, so it was worth it to him to try to take his marriage to a higher ground.

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So, how do you begin to work on your marriage or relationship? The most important piece of [relationship advice](#) I can offer you is communication. So often there are misunderstandings and one person can become defensive or take something personally, which is not meant to be that way at all. Without talking about it, on both ends, people can begin to feel disappointed and alone. I have one patient who was dating a woman he really liked. Their first few dates were great, but on the fourth date he avoided kissing her goodnight and anything else that would go along with that. She was clearly upset, withdrew and didn't take his calls for several days. He was clueless about why this was happening, and didn't understand what had prompted her cold shoulder. He started to think he had been wrong about her; who needed to date a woman who changed her mind so suddenly? So, I encouraged him to talk to her, rather than just respond to what seemed like a negative situation. I told him that since he saw this as a promising relationship, he might as well ask her what was going on. When he did, she told him the truth, that she felt bad and unattractive when he didn't kiss her the other night. And then it all became clear to him. The truth was, he had eaten a whole clove of raw garlic at dinner, he didn't realize it until it was too late, and he was self-conscious about his breath. She had no idea about the garlic, so she thought he was rejecting her. Once he told her why he hadn't kissed her, she completely understood and even laughed about it. What they went through is a prime

example of a couple doing the work. Without being open with each other, their relationship could have skidded off the track. Instead, I am happy to report they are very much in love and planning to move in together.

It is so basic really, but so important. The crux of any relationship is being able to speak to your needs and real feelings in a way that doesn't carry blame. The hope is that you will each understand what the other person is experiencing. Once you are able to do that, you can put your heads together to find common ground and compromise, eventually realizing that the whole of your connection rises above each of your individual needs. Working on it means being willing to challenge yourself, to push yourself past your comfort zone, to be willing to be open, sometimes trying something new and different, which is not always easy. It means not reacting to the other person, but checking things out with them first. It means being willing to struggle with uncertainty and tolerate the frustration that goes along with waiting for changes to happen, and not knowing if they will. It is about balancing your hope for the future against your disappointments of the past, so you can continue to persevere together.

In the end it is that world and life you have built together that will fuel the effort it takes to do the work that makes it work. The art of problem-solving with your partner takes creativity and brainstorming, and makes you closer because you each feel cared about and supported, which is worth its weight in gold. It can be as valuable as anything else Beyonce and Jay Z create together.

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