

Relationship Rescue: 7 Steps to Take Before Divorcing



By Tristan

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Picture this: You are at the altar, on the brink of saying “I do” to your hunky fiancé. Your designer dress is stunning. The weather is perfect. You’ve never had a better hair day. It all seems so dreamy until the officiant tweaks the vows a bit instead saying, “til death do you part or you aren’t willing to work on your marriage anymore.” Naturally, you’d be awestruck. After all, such words certainly don’t channel those fairytale wedding fantasies. The fact though is that most marriages don’t end with one spouse six feet under; they dissolve because couples often try to rescue their relationship after the chance of survival window has closed.

Take Jennie Garth (our beloved Kelly from the original *90210*) and Peter Facinelli (the grown up *Twilight* hunk) for example. Together nearly TWO decades, this couple recently called it

quits, reportedly after trying to work on their marriage. But as any marriage counselor will tell you, working on it may not be enough, especially if that work begins too late. So what's a couple in marriage distress to do? Before you say, "I don't anymore," follow these steps for a promising road to relationship rescue:

1. Accept that you've got issues... big ones. Just like in recovery programs, denial is not option if you want to see a brighter day. Challenges must be faced head on, recognizing that they won't just magically evaporate one day, but rather they must be worked through and seen as opportunities to grow.

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2. Communicate. Chances are if you are strutting down divorce road, you've likely ceased communication, or at least communication of the healthy kind. Decide now, today that you will work diligently to express yourself clearly and respectfully, and that you will listen with a loving heart and open mind.

3. Nurture your relationship. Great marriages take a lot of deliberate TLC. Love fades when spouses don't routinely invest in each other. Daily tune-ups can point a broken relationship towards the path of healing. Try simple gestures like compliments, words of appreciation and intimate touch.

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4. Get help. Marriage counseling can work wonders, if you strike while the marriage iron is hot. Seek a counselor who you have chemistry with and who's philosophies and methods align with you. According to Pepperdine University Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy's Mario DiSalvo, "Marriage counseling is usually unsuccessful due to couples seeking help six years too late," so don't wait!

5. Set goals. Without meaningful goals, any partnership will struggle and eventually fizzle. When it comes to a marriage, goals help couples get on the same page about the present and provide a roadmap for the future. Such goals can be co-created by a marriage therapist. They should be measurable and hold both parties accountable for their success. Be sure when developing goals that you acknowledge stepping stone successes along the way, and celebrate them!

6. Build a support circle. Turn towards trusted friends and better yet, couples who's marriages you admire, for support. When the going gets rough, enlist such sources to help you stay strong, focused and positive.

7. Take a trip down memory lane. Re-reading your vows, visiting the scene of your first date, or reenacting your proposal, all offer rich reminders as to why you got married in the first place. Oftentimes life can get in the way of love but a simple reminder of how and why you ended up together in the first place can do a relationship wonders.

Tristan Coopersmith works one-on-one, in groups, through e-courses, in workshops and taking listener calls on-air to uncover people's blocks to guide them towards healthy, fulfilling, sustainable, relationships through designing personal plans for success.