

Can Celebrities Actually Have Enduring, Healthy Relationships?



By Amy Osmond Cook, Ph.D.

Cheating. Scandal. Divorce. Too often, celebrity relationships end as a result of one of these unfortunate scenarios. Just this summer, George Clooney and Elisabetta Canalis, J.Lo and Marc Anthony, Derek Jeeter and Minka Kelly, and Cameron Diaz and Alex Rodriguez called it quits. Even Buzz Aldrin and his wife of 23 years couldn't make it last.

As celebrity breakups continue to provide headlines for the supermarket tabloids, we are sometimes left wondering, "Does anyone stay together, anymore?"

Fortunately, the answer is “yes.” Celebrities who take “for better or worse” seriously may not make the headlines, but they are out there. Two of those people are my aunt and uncle, Donny and Debbie Osmond.

Donny and Debbie were married in 1978 and have survived the highs and lows of show business together for 33 years. I asked Debbie how she and Donny have made their relationship last when so many have failed. In characteristic humility, she credits God and her family for helping to keep their relationship strong. But she also has a few practical tips:

Keep the Pressure Low.

Donny is a perfectionist and rues over a single note gone awry. While he was performing in *Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat* on Broadway, he was struggling with considerable anxiety. Debbie eased his stress by keeping the pressure low.

Every afternoon as he left for work, she would say, “Go have an average night, tonight.” She made him feel valued as a person apart from his performance on stage; and as a result, their relationship and his vocals were both stellar.

Keep Your Personal Life Private.

Sometimes celebrities (like everyone else) allow work to consume them. As Debbie said, “The business can really take over your life if you allow it to. I enjoy having my family away from Hollywood so Donny can come home to a bit of reality, like enjoying the kids’ school activities, hiking, and just being a father. It helps everyone feel like show business is not our life, but just a job.”

Love the High-Tech Communication.

When Donny is away, he and Debbie constantly talk via phone or webcam. As Debbie says, “I love Skype! We laugh because we have a virtual dad!” It helps Donny, Debbie, and the kids and

grandkids to feel connected when they can see and hear each other every day.

Unfortunately, there is no magical recipe for making a relationship 100-percent breakup-proof. But there are many celebrities who continue to keep their relationships strong—it's just that we may not hear about them very often.

Regardless of whether we are actors or actuaries, keeping the pressure low, guarding our personal lives, and utilizing technology to communicate are great practical tips that we can all use to make our relationships strong.

Amy Osmond Cook, Ph.D. is a faculty associate at Arizona State University, where she teaches Communication and English classes. She is the publisher of Sourced Media Books and co-author of Hope After Divorce and Full Bloom: Cultivating Success. Amy and her husband, Jeff, have five children and look forward to welcoming baby #6 in April 2012. For more information about Amy, please visit amyosmondcook.com.