

DIVORCE BUSTING®

MICHELE WEINER-DAVIS

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Success Stories

In her coaching, Laurie used her bright personality and insight to re-focus me on goal oriented approaches and I believe she helped position me so that there is the best possible change of success for the outcome of my marriage... **Meredith,**

Chicago, Illinois

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Time Together

By Michele Weiner-Davis

Since the publication of my book, *Divorce Busting*, I have been regularly interviewed by reporters about what makes marriages work. They ask, "Michele, why do you think so many marriages are ending in divorce? What is at the root of all of this?" Although the writers expect a complicated psychological response, to me, it's very simple.

I'm convinced that the single biggest contributor to the breakdown in relationships today is the fact that couples aren't spending enough time together. They aren't making their relationships a number one priority. The relationship gets put on the back burner. Everything else seems more important - careers, children, hobbies, community involvement, and personal pursuits. And when relationships aren't attended to as they should be, trouble sets in.

People who don't prioritize their relationships tell me that they often end up fighting during the little time they do have together. They argue about day to day issues; unpaid bills, uncleaned houses, unruly children. And it's no wonder. It's difficult to do what needs to be done to keep life moving in a productive direction, let alone try to coordinate your efforts with your partner's when you're under a time crunch. But the truth is, arguing about "who's doing what around the house," is really just a symptom of deeper problems - isolation, loneliness and resentment. You argue about the mundane issues when your emotional needs aren't being met. The coke can left in the living room becomes a symbol of a lack of caring for you.

And here's the Catch-22. If you and your spouse are arguing a lot, you don't feel like spending time together. In fact, you want to spend as little time as possible with him or her. Unfortunately, avoidance only makes matters worse. More distance, more tension, less cooperation, more conflict, and so on.

Some couples who don't prioritize their relationships don't argue when they're together. They simply have little to do with each other. They resign themselves to the distance and experience bouts of resentment from time to time. Leading parallel but separate lives, they

start to fall out of love with each other or become strangers. "I just don't love him anymore," she says. Or, "We've just grown apart," says he. Distance in relationships is love's silent killer.

But there's good news in all of this. Time together can be the great healer. Even if it's awkward at first, when two people commit to investing energy and time in their love life, only good things can come from it. When people put their relationships first, they feel appreciated and important. They feel loved. Spending time with your partner tells him or her in no uncertain terms, "You matter to me." Time together gives people opportunities to collect new memories, do activities they enjoy, to laugh at each other's jokes, to renew their love.

Plus, more good news. You don't have to spend enormous amounts of time together to breed closeness and connection. Regular, brief get-togethers work too. Sometimes people think that nothing short of a total revamping of their lives would be necessary to find time together. But it simply isn't so. Small changes in your schedule can make a huge difference. And, whatever you do, don't leave "rendezvousing" up to chance. You need to plan and schedule dates together. Write these dates in your daytimer the same way you would a business appointment. Relationships are a serious business.

Some more do's and don'ts:

- If you have kids, do leave them at home. You and your spouse need time alone. The best thing you can do for your kids is make your marriage work.
- Don't waste time trying to figure out whose fault it is that you haven't been spending time together. It really doesn't matter.
- Don't let angry feelings get in the way of making plans with your partner. Research shows that the fastest way to change how you feel is by taking action. Doing something enjoyable together will make you and your partner feel more loving. As a result, you may even be able to resolve heated topics more easily in the future.
- Don't think you have to go to a tropical island to make time together meaningful. You don't have to spend a lot of money to show your love for your partner. Go for a walk around the block. Read a novel together. Set aside ten minutes each day to talk. Ride a bike. Be creative.

Finally, always keep in mind that there's little that's more important in life than loving people and having them love you back. Give the gift of your time. It will be well worth your while.

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