

Medicine & Marriage

Secrets of Successful Physician Relationships

Brent Blaisdell, Ph.D

Behavioral Medicine Coordinator

Mckay-Dee Family Medicine Residency

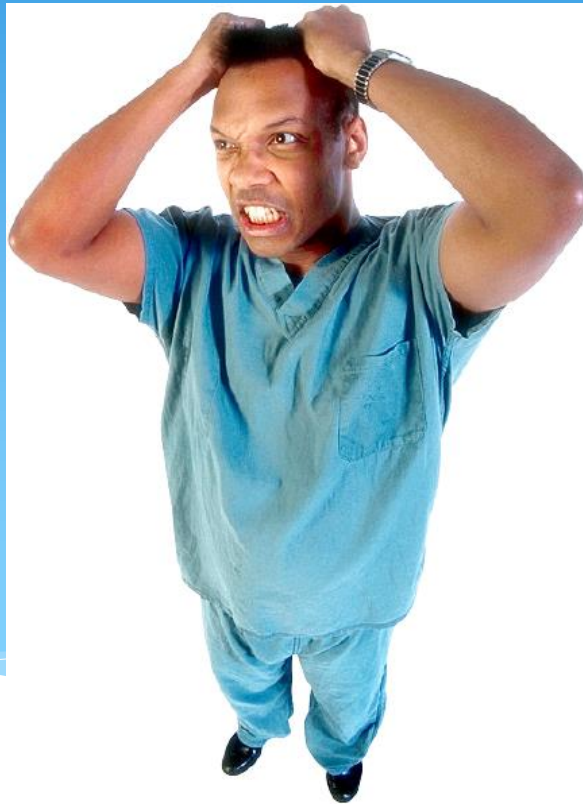


Financial Disclosure

I have no financial relationship with any product or book mentioned in this presentation.

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The Bad News... .kind of.



Two Sides of the Coin

Qualities that make for excellence in the physician (dedication to the pursuit of knowledge, commitment to patients, attention to detail, thoroughness, willingness to work hard for long periods of time) may be so demanding and absorbing that the needs of the physician's family members may be neglected.



Mixed Data

- * Past research suggested that physician marriages were **10% to 20%** more likely to fail than general population marriages.
- * Recent research suggests that physician marriages for the past 20 years are trending much more like the **general population**, if not better. That's a good thing!

Divorce Rates

- * Non-healthcare professionals 35%
- * Nurses 33%
- * Healthcare executives 31%
- * Lawyers 27%
- * Dentists 25%
- * **Physicians 24%**
- * Pharmacists 23%

NC, BMJ.com. Divorce among physicians and other healthcare professionals in the United States: analysis of census survey data. Jan 2015

Other Stats

- * **Marital satisfaction** is strongly associated **time spent awake** with physician partner and number of nights per week **on call**.
- * **Marital satisfaction** has **not** been shown to be associated with **total hours** worked, **specialty** area, or **practice** setting.
- * **Dual physician** marriages have more time challenges, but more empathy and understanding between partners.

Shanafelt TD, Boone SL, Dyrbye LN, et al. The Medical Marriage: A National Survey of the spouses/partners of US physicians. Mayo Clinic Proc. 2013 Mar; 88(3):216-225.

Woodward, CA. When a Physician Marries a Physician. Canadian Family Physician. 2005 Vol 51:850-851

Other Stats...

- * Female physicians are more likely to report being divorced than male physicians.
- * Female physicians report making greater professional adjustments than male physicians to accommodate for household responsibilities. Feel more pressure in the *work/life balance* arena.

The Good News

intensity their 50s and above.

MARRY A DOCTOR FOR LONG LASTING MARRIAGE: STUDY



Shilpa Anand and Karan Singh Grover in the medical drama, Dill Mill Gayye

An American study has showed that there are certain advantages of being married to a doctor, such as long-lasting marriage. According to the research by University of Michigan Medical School, doctors tend to marry later and their marriages last longer even as they face the challenges like others with demanding professions, of giving time and attention to their partners and families.

Researchers interviewed doctors and spouses to learn how 'medical marriages' succeed and the resulting report was rich with data and anecdotes about live-in in-laws, role definition, financial security and the advantage of children avoiding the emergency room because mom or dad knew how to stitch a bad cut.

The study also listed the strategies for success when one or both spouses are doctors including acknowledging the benefit of being a physician in a relationship.

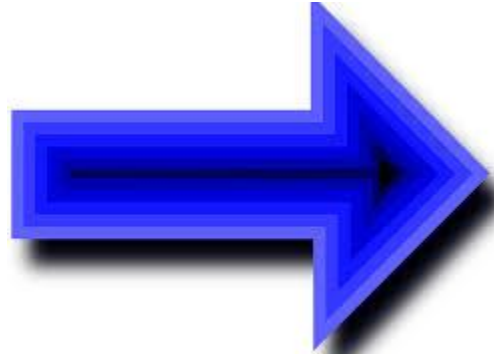
They also said that they appreciated having role definition, knowing what they needed to do

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Additional Good News

The past **40 years** of relationship research provides us with a wealth of valuable information addressing **what works** in long term romantic relationships and how to choose great partners.



Choosing Wisely

- * At least.....**all four seasons!** See them in action in different contexts.
- * If you marry before age **20** and never obtain a bachelors degree you have nearly a **51% chance of divorcing.**
- * If you marry at **25** or older and obtain a bachelors degree you have about a **19% chance of divorcing.**
- * Be mindful of major differences in socio-economic backgrounds, age, religious preferences and cultural backgrounds

Parker-Pope, T. (2011) For Better: How the surprising science of happy couples can help your marriage succeed. Penguin

Choosing Wisely – Partner Qualities

- * **Kindness/Generosity**
- * **Open Mindedness/Ability to compromise**
- * **Non-Defensive/Approachable**
- * **Integrity/Trust**
- * **Self Worth**
- * **Committed to personal/relationship growth**

Six Common Traits.....

1. **Physical attraction** between partners.
2. Is the relationship out of **clear choice** vs. obligation or fear of being alone?
3. Share **fundamental** values, beliefs, interests and goals.
4. Able to **express anger** directly and resolve differences through communication/compromise.
5. Experience laughter, **fun**, pleasure, and play with each other.
6. Able to express support for each other and **support** each other's activities, interests, and careers.

The Marriage Pill

- * **Live longer**
- * **Better physical and mental health**
- * **Happier**
- * **More sex/better sex**
- * **Increased wealth/more successful in careers**
- * **Heal from wounds and surgery quicker**
- * **Children more emotionally stable/academically successful**

Waite, L. & Gallagher, M. (2001) *The Case for Marriage. Why Married People are Happier, Healthier and Better Off Financially.* Doubleday

Five Essential Marital Skills



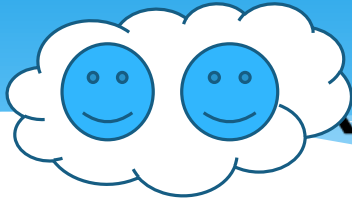
Friendship

- Showing interest, asking questions, emotional bank account.
- **5 to 1** positive to negative ratio
- Beware of the **four horsemen** – criticism, defensiveness, contempt, stonewalling
- **93%!!**
- **Small** steps make big ripple effects

Beware of the Four Horseman

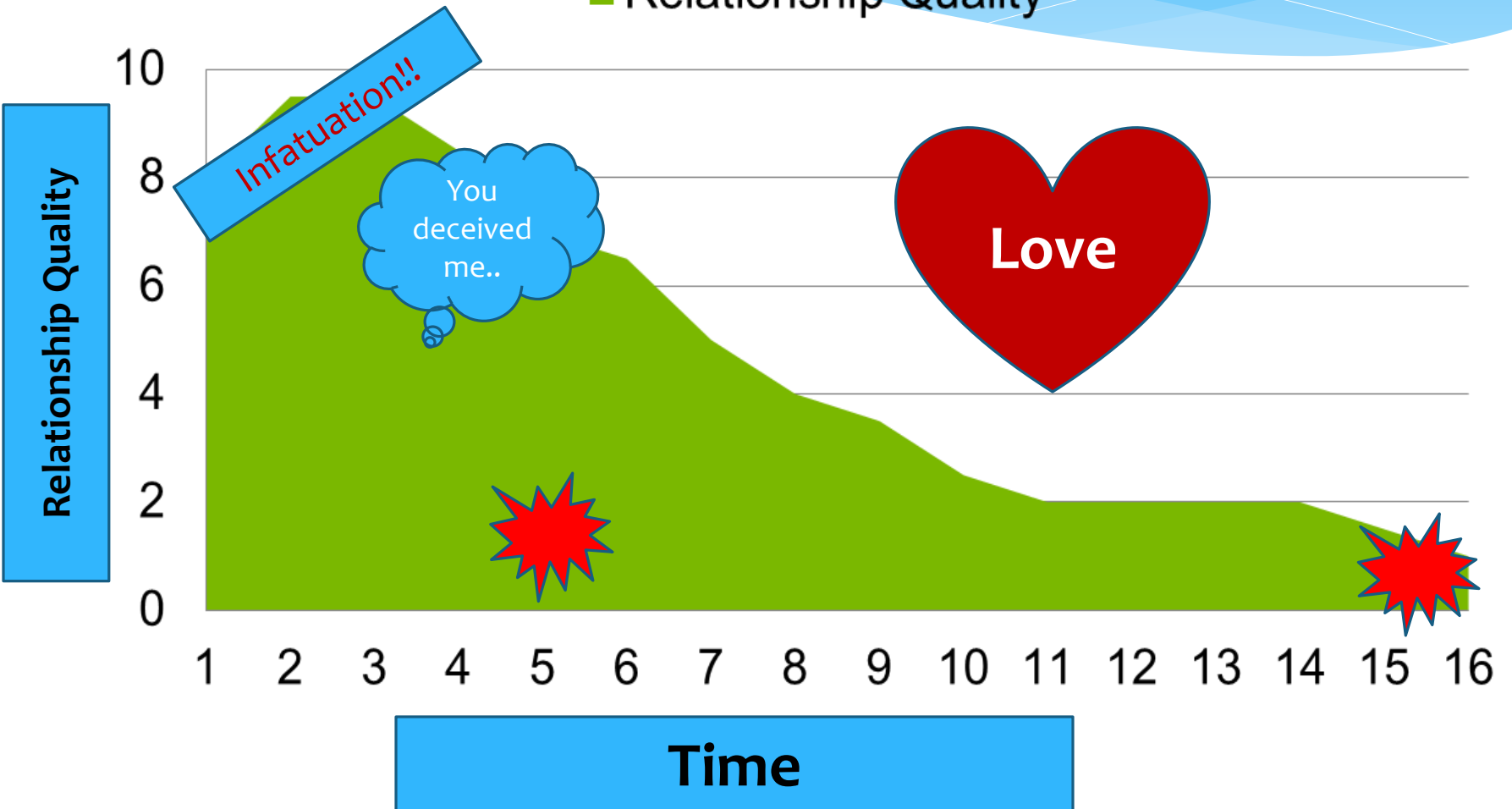
- * **Criticism:** Attacking the person, not the behavior. Different than feedback.
- * **Defensiveness:** Feeling you have to be on guard most of the time.
- * **Contempt:** Disgusted with spouse as a person. Eye rolling.
- * **Stonewalling:** Emotionally checked out.

Avoid the Divorce Land Mines



Relationship Quality

■ Relationship Quality



Beware of Marital Myths

1. I married my “**soul mate.**”
2. Marriage **should** make me happy.
3. **Conflict** in marriage is harmful and should be **avoided.**
4. Loneliness and boredom will be **cured** by marriage.
5. We must do **everything** together to stay happily married.
6. **Children** will hold a failing marriage together.
7. Loving behaviors should only be done when it feels **genuine/natural.**
8. A sure sign of true love is if my spouse **instinctively** knows that I need and want in the relationship.

Love Languages

Discover and act on your partner's language

- Quality Time
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch
- Gifts
- Words of Affirmation

“When I do _____, my partner feels loved.”

The Recipe Wars

Being Right vs. Being Together

Recipes = opinions/background

Your personal **recipes** are not the **TRUTH** for others, particularly your partner.

When one or both partners believe their recipes are the TRUTH, harmful **conflict will flourish**.

Examples – holidays, leisure time, likes, desires, religion, parenting



Summary of the Five Skills

1. **Friendship**
2. **Avoid the Divorce Land Mines**
3. **Beware of Marital Myths**
4. **Love Languages**
5. **Recipe Wars**

Self Help Books

