

WEEK 28: DREAM TOGETHER.

Every article I've ever read on keeping a marriage intact after having children emphasizes how stressful having a baby can be on a marriage. And yes, that's true.

But most of the couples I know that break up don't do it when they have infants and toddlers - it tends to be a little later, when the kids are school aged.

My theory is that both people in a partnership understand how much they need one another when their kids are really little. There's a sense of being deep in it together, of mutual survival. And who has the mental or physical energy to even think about splitting up when they're covered in spit-up?



It's only later, when everyone is sleeping again and you have quiet moments in your day to organize your thoughts, that both people in a marriage can start to realize how disconnected or disappointed they feel.

When kids get older and life is less about survival, that sense of "in it together" can also erode. It needs to be replaced with a new kind of shared purpose.

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I really believe that the number-one essential for a successful marriage is for both partners to feel like part of a team. And that goes way beyond a weekly date night. Date nights are fun, but it's what you do with the time you spend together the other 165 hours of the week that really matters.

When I talk to couples who have reached a big goal – getting out of debt, starting a business, planning an international move – together, there’s a palpable sense of shared dreams and satisfaction and partnership.

And that, I believe, is the kind of strength and shared purpose that carries a marriage through rough patches and boring patches and kids growing up and kids moving out.



Your Challenge: Start Dreaming As A Duo

If you haven’t talked much about your plans for the future – or if you have a feeling that the plans you once made no longer suit you – take this opportunity to slowly start discovering what’s on your spouse’s mind and how it fits with your own goals. Then you can start creating new dreams together.

Here are some small ways to start:

- Bring up that crazy idea you’ve been sitting on (living internationally, starting a goat farm, writing a book) and check his reaction. You might be surprised.
- Ask him where he sees himself in his career in twenty years. And share what you want to be doing in that same time period.
- Talk about the family. Who decided that children should be off-topic on date nights? One of my favorite things to do with Jon is talk about our kids - after all, he’s the one person I know loves them just as much as I do. But it’s more than that: it gives us both an opportunity to see where the other person is coming from on parenting decisions, and also allows us to firm up our shared values and convictions. As the kids get older and more independent, understanding where my husband stands on everything from sports to GPA is essential for harmonious family life.
- Use the weather to start a conversation about the place you would most want to live if money or family ties



were no object. That conversation can tell you a lot about whether the place you live right now is a good long-term fit...and get you both dreaming about your future location.

- Talk about your parents. What inspires you about the way they live now? What would you want to do differently?

These are just jumping-off points for getting a discussion going. You might be amazed at where a topic like the weather can take the discussion – sometimes, the biggest shared dreams are born from a simple question.

Challenge Checklist

- ✓ Using prompts provided (or your own ideas!) start dreaming about the future with your spouse
- ✓ Write notes & observations in workbook