

5 Ways Your Marriage Might Change After Children

By Jenn Sinrich (Wedding Wire Journalist) 23 October 2019

Having a child is an incredible experience, but your marriage after children may become strained. Here's how to ensure your marriage stays strong, even amid the stress of raising kids.



As any parent will tell you, having a child changes absolutely everything—in some of the most magical ways. And one area of your life that’s likely to take a direct hit is your marriage, after having children. You and your spouse are not only tied together in the sanctity of marriage, but now your union far surpasses that as it becomes one of parenting—something even stronger.

When most parents-to-be imagine their new life as a family, they think about all the joy a child will bring and how it will only enhance their relationship with their spouse. While having a child with your partner is absolutely beautiful in many ways, co-parenting is often one of the biggest challenges in a marriage. “Children shake the very foundation of the relationship and, if unaware, many times can tear couples apart,” warns Rudi Rahbar, Psy.D, a clinical psychologist

who specializes in couples and families. “Constant sleep deprivation can test any sane person’s patience, but it’s also the sheer weight of total responsibility that couples now have to care for another human being.”

Elizabeth Sloan, LPC, Clinical Fellow of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, in McLean, Virginia and Glenn Dale, Maryland, agrees the changes in a marriage can be quite drastic after a couple has children. “You can’t know what it will feel like to be ‘on-call’ 24/7 until you bring your baby home—it’s mentally and physically exhausting,” she says. “Your normal responsibilities haven’t gone away and your time and energy are no longer your own.”

The best way to handle the changes that may happen in your marriage after children is to be prepared for them. Here, experts share the most common shifts in a marriage post-kids.

You will feel closer than ever at times.

Of course, having a baby is a joyous experience—and it will feel incredible to think that you and the love of your life made a human together! “There is nothing more intimate than having a child together,” says Sloan. “You will most likely be amazed on a daily basis as you see your little one grow and learn and you will share these experiences in a deeper way because this is yours.”

You will have more "dumb arguments" .

Remember the silly fights you had early on in your relationship that you’ve sort of “grown out of?” You might have more trivial arguments now that you’re sleep-deprived and caring for an infant. “Being ‘all work and no play’ month after month will make you both grumpy, and your partner’s quirks, which used to be slightly annoying, will now seem monumental,” says Sloan. “It’s hard to remember all the wonderful things your partner does for you on a daily basis, but it’s important to remember that even if your partner didn’t help clean baby bottles, he or she is still a loving person who has only good intentions for you.”

You might be less intimate.

Considering one of you just gave birth and may be breastfeeding, hormones are sure to be all over the place. “The mother may simply have no desire for sex, and when you two go to bed, she’ll likely be asleep in seconds,” says Sloan. “This can be hard on a partner who has put their needs on hold during the pregnancy and for the mother, it can feel like an additional demand on her energy.”

It is important however, to make the time for intimacy in your marriage after children. It just might take some planning. “Some couples say they don’t want to have to plan—they want it to be spontaneous, but the reality is, if you don’t plan it, it may not happen!” says Wendi L. Dumbroff, a licensed professional counselor. “Communicate with your partner around your needs for intimacy, and work together to create time for sexual connection.”

You may feel jealous of each other in ways you don't expect.

If one of you is back to work while the other stays home with the baby, you may start to be envious of each other's day. Being the one to commute and spend a whole day at work (while sleep-deprived) isn't too much fun, but neither is being the sole caregiver of a crying, demanding infant. "During this time, self-care is more important than ever and if couples cover for each other so that each person can get a little 'me time,' things will go much smoother," says Sloan.

You may feel more financial stress.

"People know children cost money, but what many don't realize is the rising cost of childcare is pushing women who are used to working to staying home with the baby, which can bring about resentment (on behalf of the mom) as well as burn out," notes Dr. Rahbar. "When couples go from a dual income to a single income household, many things need to change in order to make that work." This is likely to pile on stress in the marriage after children, however it can be worked out with a little careful planning and a healthy dose of communication.

For all of the above changes, it's so important to trust and talk to your partner. "If you feel that you're doing more than your partner, sit him or her down and talk—and if he or she is not the talking type, go to a therapist," suggests Dr. Rahbar. "Come up with a chore list that both of you can tackle, whether it's certain days or nights they can take a shift so you can get some rest or hiring some help." And, at the end of the day, remember that the baby stage doesn't last forever, but hopefully your marriage will!