

## How to Keep Your Marriage Strong when You're Working Hard

By Samantha & Susan Schilke; January 2, 2020

As someone entering the world of marriage for the first time, I have a lot of curiosity about the differences between the dating world and the married one. Following in my mom's footsteps, I am also extremely passionate and dedicated to my work. Prioritizing between the two can be hard for me and I know that, as a spouse, it is something I will need to dedicate time and planning to.

When partners differ in their work demands, the lack of presence of one and free time of another can lead to conflict. Here are some strategies Susan and I found for prioritizing your marriage in the midst of a never-ending to-do list:

1. **Schedule your time together – and never cancel.** “Schedule your priorities, don't prioritize your schedule.” This approach can work with your spouse as well. Our calendars tend to tell the unfiltered story of our priorities. Your marriage is important so make scheduled time a goal in 2020 – not just something your partner is pressuring you to do more. Most relationships are not broken in one fatal blow, they erode over time. Each time you make a commitment and break it, you're chiseling away at your spouse's trust.
2. **Make time for communication.** Just keep talking, especially about the hard stuff. Kenny Kline from Inc dives deeper, “Give each other space to air feelings, talk about what is and isn't working, express personal needs, and brainstorm strategies to make sure you both have your needs met regardless of what's happening at work.” One caveat about tough conversations, select your timing carefully. A heated moment may not be the best option.
3. **Examine the expectations gap.** Elizabeth Grace from Fast Company explains the gap – either your partner has a higher need for quality time than you do in order to feel cared for, or there are practical issues sucking up your time together. If it's about quality time, commit to a 30-minute one-on-one conversation each evening, call during your commutes home, plan a weekend getaway or staycation, or do a weekly date night. If it's a practical matter, see what you can outsource like house cleaning, running errands and groceries.
4. **Build a foundation on consistency and reliability through shared routines.** Regular routines like sharing breakfast before leaving for the office or avoiding work on Sundays or calling for 30 minutes when one of you is traveling can help partners feel more secure in counting on one another. The exact routines you decide on aren't as important as the fact that they're deliberate, consistent and meaningful to both partners.
5. **Don't forget the little things.** Birthdays, anniversaries, quirky rituals, saying “thank you” – it's easy to take these for granted when you're feeling overwhelmed. Other little things:
  - a. **Being present when you're together.** It does not count as ‘Quality Time’ if you're checking your phone all through dinner. Focus on your partner, the texts/emails/Facebook or Instagram photos can wait.
  - b. **Try to maintain the same sleep schedule.** This can foster intimacy as physical closeness is a key part of most relationships.

From what I've learned, marriage is not a barrage of big gifts or expensive trips, it's the small, consistent habits that you share with your partner to make sure you both feel valued. I am very excited to start on my journey into marriage this year. This connection I get to share with the person I love is something I want to prioritize for the rest of my life.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3063885/what-to-do-when-your-crazy-long-hours-are-ruining-your-relationship>

<https://www.inc.com/kenny-kline/how-to-maintain-a-healthy-relationship-when-youre-swamped-with-work.html>