

# 3 Things a Couple Can Do to Combat the Top Risk Factors and Save a Marriage

POSTED IN: **EXCLUSIVES, GUEST POSTS**

August 20, 2013 **0 Comments**



By Mark Baer

Marriage is a wonderful institution that affords couples significant psychological, emotional and financial benefits, in addition to being a [commitment](#) of their love to each other. Almost certainly, nobody enters into a [marriage](#), expecting that it will end in [divorce](#). However, over the years, certain risk factors that contribute to the likelihood of divorce have become increasingly clear. The following is a list of 5 of the top risk factors for divorce:

## **Quality of interaction**

Researchers have been able to predict with 90 percent accuracy whether or not a [couple](#) will divorce within 5 years, based upon the quality of their interaction. Negative interaction is highly predictive of marital distress.

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## **Having divorced parents**

Children of divorce have a higher rate of divorce, particularly when their parents' divorce was a complete surprise to them. Such surprises cause children to lose trust in their [relationships](#).

## **Marrying at a very young age**

Marrying before age of 26 increases the likelihood of divorce, particularly earlier on in the marriage. As might be expected, this has to do with maturity. In fact, our brains do not reach full maturity until around age 25. Is it realistic that a lifetime commitment entered into before reaching maturity will last a lifetime?

### **Lack of a college education**

There happens to be a correlation between income and education level. Since poverty causes a tremendous strain on marital relationships, the lack of a college education is a top risk factor.

### **Manner in which a person reacts to problems and disappointments**

People who have strong or defensive reactions to problems and disappointments have a higher risk of divorce than those whose reactions are more reasonable and who have learned the art of non-defensive communication.

As with most things in life, some things are easier to address than others. The following is a list of the top 3 things couples can do to combat those risk factors:

### **Marital education programs**

Studies published in the Journal of Family Psychology and in other highly respected organizations indicate that participation in marital education programs leads to more satisfying marriages and more than doubles the likelihood that couples will stay together. Those programs teach couples [communication](#) and problem solving skills, and how to maintain and intensify fun, affection and sexuality. Please note that “counseling” and “marital education programs” are not one and the same.

### **Therapy**

If one or both [spouses](#) suffer from trust issues with regard to relationships or have a personality tendency to have strong or defensive reactions to problems and disappointment, it might behoove them to seek therapy in an effort to resolve those issues.

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### **Return to school**

It's never too late to return to school and complete high school or its equivalent and enroll in college. This may require making certain sacrifices, especially when people are already experiencing financial difficulties. However, if income and level of education are related and you don't obtain additional education, how do you otherwise address the strain that poverty takes on a marriage?

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