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80/80

MARRIAGE

A NEW MODEL FOR A HAPPIER,  
STRONGER RELATIONSHIP

Coming  
February  
2020

The Stay (Eat, Sleep, Work,  
Hang Out, Parent,  
& Everything Else)  
At Home Marriage  
Survival Guide



## Why This? Why Now?

Marriage has always been hard. But now it's even harder. In pre-pandemic times, you needed to have 20 or so agreements with your partner. Now, it's more like 200.

In pre-pandemic times, you probably had built in space from your partner. Time at work. Weekends with your friends. Or business trips. Now, if you're like most couples, you spend all day, every day, eating, sleeping, working, and doing just about everything else together.

These extreme times call for extreme measures. And that's why we created this guide. It's designed to help you not only survive but even thrive in your marriage during these challenging tools. The 80/80 Marriage survival guide consists of 5 powerful practices:

- **Radical Generosity** – The mindset shift from 50/50 to 80/80
- **Space** – Creating rituals that give you more physical and mental space
- **Revealing** – Sharing your frustrations and disappointments cleanly
- **Redefining Roles** – Creating a new structure of roles to match this new reality
- **Date 'Something'** – Building time alone together as a couple into each week.

Call us crazy, but we think that it's possible to use this time of crisis, where we're stuck at home together as an opportunity to experience greater connection, kindness, and intimacy.

# The Marriage Survival Guide Checklist



Radical Generosity



Space



Revealing



Redefining Roles



Date 'Something'

# 1

## Radical Generosity

### Ditch fairness, get radical with your generosity

We interviewed over 100 people for our book, *The 80/80 Marriage*. What we found is that almost every couple gets stuck in a similar mindset, a mindset that has come to define modern marriage: the mindset of 50/50 fairness.

It's the idea that everything in marriage – from what we do to how much we care to how hard we're working – should be totally fair. This idea is a huge improvement over the marriage mindset of our ancestors. It's better to work toward fairness than a model where one partner, generally the woman, does 80 percent and the other partner, generally the man, gets away with 20 percent.

And yet, even in normal times, striving for fairness is a recipe for conflict and resentment. And now, when we're stuck at home, it's even worse. The more we try to make everything exactly fair, the more we find ourselves living in a state of resentment, anger, and irritation, the less we get of those things that we really want out of marriage: connection, love, and outrageously good sex.

So what's the alternative? We call it the 80/80 mindset. It's the idea of shifting from fairness to radical generosity, from doing your 50 percent to doing more like 80 percent (more than your fair share).

# The Practice of Radical Generosity

## Step 1: Catch yourself seeking fairness

Notice those times when you think to yourself, “I did the dishes three nights in a row – that’s not fair” or “Why am I the only one picking up crusted Cheerios off the floor?” Becoming aware of when you’re striving for fairness is the first step.

## Step 2: Do something radically generous

You don’t have to buy your spouse a trip to Mexico (not that you could right now). Your generous act can be simple and mundane. Do the dishes, fill up your partner’s car with gas, write them a love letter, or plan your next date.

## Step 3: Let it be a gift

Resist the urge to get ‘credit’ for your amazing act of generosity. Let your kind actions be a gift with no strings attached. Then, see what happens.

## Tips

- **Do it from love** – As you do this radically generous act, don’t think about what a slob your partner is. See if you can go back to a spirit of love. Think about how much you care about them.
- **Don’t get discouraged** – Creating a culture of radical generosity takes time. Don’t get discouraged if your partner doesn’t even notice. Over time, you alone have the power to change the culture of your marriage through these radically generous acts.



## How to create more physical and mental space

If we had to distill the experience of couples trying to navigate work, parenting, and life during the pandemic, it would be:

# No Space

Physical space is gone. We used to have work, business trips, the gym, and all sorts of other events and activities in life that provided this kind of physical space and separation from each other.

But that's only part of the problem. We are also experiencing the disappearance of mental space. This form of space is less tangible but perhaps even more significant. It's space from screaming children, your partner's virtual meetings, and other distractions. It's the space that allows your mind to rest and open up to new and creative possibilities in work and life.

The loss of physical and mental space is a problem for all sorts of reasons. And yet it's particularly problematic in marriage because space is essential for love and intimacy. Space and separation leads to longing, missing your partner, and, ultimately, craving to be with them. It's like rocket fuel for desire and love.

So how can we create space in marriage when we're stuck at home together?

# The Practice of Creating Space

## Step 1: Create Physical Space

Make an intentional effort to go for a walk each day alone or by reading your favorite book outside with headphones on. Even if it's only for 30 minutes or an hour, taking space away from your family and your partner leaves you refreshed, excited to come back, and more open for connection when you return.

## Step 2: Create Headspace

You can do this in formal ways using practices like meditation and yoga. Or you can do it more informally. Lie down in the grass for 10 minutes and gaze at the sky. Wander around your neighborhood while paying close attention to the sound of the birds. The more you do this, the more you may notice that the space you crave most in these challenging times isn't physical. It's this subtle space in the mind.

## Tips

- **Create rituals** – It's easy to do this once but much more difficult to turn creating space into a habit. So see if you can build daily rituals around taking this time.
- **Don't take it personally** – When you or your partner slips away to read a book or sit outside alone, it's important for both of you to remember that you're not doing this because you can't stand being together. You're doing it because you want to be your best selves with each other.

# 3 Revealing

## The power of revealing your resentment

Even in normal times, there's one emotion that keeps coming up again and again in marriage: resentment.

It's that bitter sting that lands when your partner makes plans to head out with friends on a Saturday without ever even asking you. It's the irritation you feel when you're doing more, caring more, or trying harder (at least from your point of view).

Our current, stay-at-home, situation is the perfect petri dish for resentment. Being stuck at home together 24/7 creates all sorts of new conflicts, fights, and reasons to feel resentment. The reason? There's now so much more to feel resentful about: distance learning management, planning Covid-proof social gatherings, how much risk to take in daily life, and figuring out how, if ever, to see parents and extended family.

What's the source of all this resentment? The feeling that things aren't fair. Resentment springs the moment you sense your partner is benefiting from some special break or marital double-standard. It's the chain reaction that follows in the wake of feeling like you're no longer an equal.

Radical generosity (practice 1) is a great first step to unwinding resentment. But resentment is so strong, so corrosive to marriage, that overcoming it requires taking one additional step: the practice of revealing.

# The Practice of Revealing

## Step 1: Reveal your resentment like a marriage pro.

When it comes to resentment, most couples employ one of three strategies. The first is to stuff it down like a late-night pint of Ben & Jerry's -- to never reveal it and pretend it never happened (not recommended). The second is to let it explode like a hydrogen bomb in the form of passive aggressiveness or an extended verbal tirade (also not recommended). Marriage pros, however, get grounded first in a feeling of love and generosity. Then, they reveal to their partner what's really going on. It's as simple as saying, "When you didn't include me in the planning for the Mother's Day lunch, I felt upset."

## Step 2: Make a clear request.

Revealing helps your partner understand your inner experience. It brings you back into connection. Making a clear request gives your partner essential feedback on how to make it right, either now or next time. It's as simple as saying, "Next time, I would appreciate it if you include me in the planning."

## Tips

- **Speak from love** – There's what you say and then there's how you say it. Your inner state is contagious. So even if you reveal with kind words, if your tone is angry, your partner is likely to mirror your anger. So see if you can reveal from a spirit of radical generosity.
- **Listen and affirm** – When your partner reveals to you, do your best to listen carefully and affirm them instead of fighting back. Say, "Wow, I totally get why that upset you" not "Are kidding me? You should be apologizing to me right now!"

# 4

## Redefining Roles

### Now is the time to figure out who does what

A couple months into the Covid-19 pandemic, the New York Times [reported](#) a stunning statistic: 45 percent of men said they were spending *more* time than their partner helping their children with distance-learning during this crisis. 80 percent of women said they were spending *more* time than their partner helping their children. And when they asked women whether their spouse was doing more, just 3 percent agreed.

Why this disconnect? Why are men and women living in different worlds of perception? Part of this problem can be explained by research showing that both women and men overestimate their contributions and underestimate their partner's.

Psychologists call this “availability bias.” Put simply, the problem is that you have a complete understanding of every plate you loaded into the dishwasher and every online math lesson you did with your child. But, when it comes to your partner's contributions, things get fuzzy. To make things worse, the research also shows that we consistently overestimate our own contributions.

The other part of the problem is that all of this is happening against a backdrop of a long history of gender inequality in marriage. The gap between the domestic contributions of women and men is closing. But, statistically speaking, women still do more.

So what are we to do?

# The Practice of Redefining Roles

## Step 1: Get clear on your roles.

This is a pro tip during normal life, when everything is going just great. It's even more important during the most fundamental disruption of habits that we've experienced in our lifetime. There are, after all, way more roles to divide. How can you begin redefining roles? The full instructions can be found in our book, *The 80/80 Marriage*. But here's a great way to get started. Get out a piece of paper, write down what each of you currently do and then consider the question: What adjustments, role switches, or changes might bring greater harmony to the system? Then, create a new structure of roles.

## Step 2: Radical Generosity.

Remember: in this crazy situation, we are all overwhelmed, stressed, and doing our best to make it through the day. Your partner is no exception. And the marriage research is clear: chances are, your partner is doing quite a bit more than you think.

## Tips

- **Establish accountability** – What do you do when it's your partner's turn to take out the trash and they just forget? That's the perfect time to go back to the revealing practice. Create accountability by revealing your frustration and make a clear ask (out of love, of course).
- **Outsource (if you can)** – Even if you have the money, it's now more difficult to outsource through baby-sitters, house cleaners, or take-out. If you can outsource some domestic tasks, however, it can help ease the burden placed on the two of you.

# 5

## Date 'Something'

### Create regular rituals of connection

“Date ‘something’?” you might be wondering. “What does that mean?” Well, it doesn’t mean go out and date ‘something’ else. It’s our way of saying that the classic trope of ‘date night’ may not work for you anymore, so see if you can figure out something else that allows you to spend time, alone, together.

This idea of taking the ‘night’ out of ‘date night’ isn’t just a strategy for surviving Covid life. When we interviewed couples, we found that they had all sorts of amazing ideas for how to connect. The most frequently discussed option was ‘date night’: going out to dinner once a week. But we heard about all sorts of other imaginative ways to be together.

Some couples told us about ditch days, where they both ended work several hours early and watched a movie together. Others told us about taking a full day or weekend away. And, our personal favorite is the ‘date hike.’ We spend almost every Saturday and Sunday morning hiking together for an hour or two.

The point is to find something you both enjoy and then turn it into a regular habit. That way, you don’t have to think about it. Your ‘date something’ happens every week, almost automatically.

So how can you spend more time connecting with each other?

# The Practice of Date 'Something'

## Step 1: Get creative and maybe even a little crazy.

What are you going to do with this precious time together?  
Here are some ideas to spark your imagination:

### Classics



- Dinner at a restaurant
- Dinner and a movie
- Concert with a favorite band
- Dinner and a stroll downtown
- Sunday brunch

### Budget



- Order take out
- Cook a meal together from scratch
- Stroll and do a food truck tour
- The \$20 date – leave home with nothing but your IDs and a \$20 bill.
- High school-style – do what you would have done when you were 17.

### Erotic



- Live out a sexual fantasy
- Meet at a hotel (pretending you're having an affair)
- Role play meeting for the first time
- Recreate your first date with an erotic twist
- Go to an online sex shop together

### Outdoors



- Do a date hike (just the two of you on a secluded trail)
- Go camping for a night
- Get out on the water together
- Ski together for a day
- Explore your city on foot together
- Try out a sport you're both learning

### Splurge



- Go out to a fancy restaurant
- Do a dinner progressive with a different restaurant or bar for drinks, apps, dinner, and dessert.
- Do a farm-to-table dining experience
- Stay in a hotel for the night and use all the services: spa, room service, etc.

### In COVID-19 Quarantine



- Cook a meal together from scratch
- Have a dance party in your living room
- Learn something new together
- Workout together (yoga, weights, running, hiking, or an online class)
- Play a board game together
- Learn how to make some new cocktails

# Tips

- **Get present** – Smart phones, Facebook, Instagram, texts, and emails are the ultimate date buzz kill. So, if you can, leave your phones behind. And, if that's too edgy, turn off your ringer or put your phone on "Do Not Disturb."
- **Talk about the things that matter** – Have you ever found yourselves sitting across from each other, wondering why you don't have much to talk about? We certainly have. So we've come up with a list of questions to spice up your conversation together:

**What are you most excited about at work?**

**What do you feel happy, sad, scared, or angry about?**

**What principles are guiding your choices right now?**

**What change have you made that you aren't sure I noticed?**

**What do you wish I appreciated you for more?**

**What are we not talking about?**

**Does it feel like we're spending the right balance of time on work, kids, and time together?**

**What do you hope our life will look like in 5, 10, or 20 years?**

**\*Talk me through your favorite, most unforgettable, memory of us having sex?**

**\*Imagine you could create the most amazing, mind blowing, night of sex. Tell me what it looks like?**

\* Denotes "erotic" questions (best to save these for the end of the night)



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# Thank You!

From all of us at the 80/80 Marriage, we want to thank you for taking the time to build greater connection, love, and support for each other. We hope to see you again sometime soon!

## Want More?

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