



four THINGS TO DO WHEN YOUR MARRIAGE IS IN CRISIS

Whether you are seeking help for your own marriage or for someone you care about, it's important to remember that there is no quick fix to heal a hurting marriage. Nearly every marriage experiences difficult struggles—and sometimes even deep crises that are painful and devastating. Often it takes committed time, energy and effort to recover from this type of event—and, unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all formula.

For many that are experiencing marital conflict, the first impulse is to try to “fix” the issues that are at the forefront. While this is important, it may be more beneficial initially to focus on something entirely different. Before taking any other steps, it’s helpful for couples to commit to these two goals:

GOAL 1

BE CAREFUL NOT TO CAUSE
ANY ADDITIONAL DAMAGE IN
YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

GOAL 2

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT
THAT PROMOTES HEALING,
GROWTH AND RESTORATION



FOCUSTMONFAMILY
NATIONAL
INSTITUTE
of MARRIAGETM

866-875-2915
NATIONALMARRIAGE.COM
BRANSON, MO

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY[®]

SLOW DOWN

In the midst of a crisis it's all too easy to move at a frantic pace, which later may cause you to regret some of the impulsive decisions you made during that time. Try to slow down so you can thoughtfully and prayerfully consider your options, bearing in mind the long-term implications of each decision. Set a time frame (e.g., 30, 60, or 90 days) and, if at all possible, commit to not making any major decisions within that period. This will allow the dust and the emotions to settle, which will help you think more objectively about the future of your relationship.

Be careful not to ...

make rash decisions that compound the damage and exacerbate the conflict that already exists in the relationship. In doing so, you may be unwittingly creating additional barriers that will need to be overcome.

A marital crisis can be extremely stressful and painful, but it doesn't have to spell the end for your marriage. By slowing down and avoiding rash decisions, taking charge of your own actions rather than focusing on your spouse's behavior, remaining civil, and seeking appropriate help, it's entirely possible to experience healing and reconciliation.

Below, we have outlined a few practical steps to help you accomplish these two important objectives. Then, having established a safe environment, it will be much easier to understand and resolve the barriers that are keeping you from the healthy relationship you desire.

FOCUS ON YOU

It's important to remember that your own actions are all that you really have control over. For anyone facing a marital crisis, the tendency is to zero in on what your spouse is or isn't doing. However, this is a waste of time and energy because you simply don't have any control over your spouse's behavior. The only thing you can control is you and your response. It's vital to attend to yourself spiritually, emotionally, physically, and mentally. Grieve if you need to, and be especially sensitive to the Holy Spirit's conviction regarding ways that you may have negatively contributed to the crisis.

Be careful not to ...

run from the pain or judge your emotions as "right" or "wrong." The feelings you are experiencing simply provide information, and understanding them can be a critical component to your overall well-being. In fact, you may need to give yourself permission to feel the broad array of emotions that are hitting you, rather than resisting them. For instance, allow yourself to be sad, hurt, and so on.

SOFTEN

Relax your posture and commit to being civil, even if your spouse is not. Concentrate on being polite and respectful, honoring the boundaries that your spouse establishes. When conflict escalates, take a "time-out" by excusing yourself from the conversation. Use the time to identify your feelings, and then return to the conversation when you are less emotionally charged.

Be careful not to ...

try to "win" arguments. Place the importance of your personal integrity and the relationship with your spouse over the topic that is causing conflict.

GET HELP

It's important to be able to process the struggles you are facing with someone you can trust. Find one or two confidants who will tell you what you need to hear, rather than what you want to hear. This doesn't necessarily have to be a professional counselor, but in many cases that is helpful. At Focus on the Family we are committed to providing caring, biblically based guidance for couples who wish to pursue that option. You may speak to one of our staff counselors or inquire about Intensive Marriage Counseling at the National Institute of Marriage; information about both resources is available by calling 1-800-A-FAMILY (232-6459).

Be careful not to ...

broadcast the troubles about your relationship to anyone who will listen, especially if the details you're sharing will reveal indiscretions committed by your spouse. Forging allegiances with people who are in relationship with your spouse, such as family members and mutual friends, can become a hindrance when the conflict is over.

To learn more about the Intensive Marriage Counseling programs at Focus on the Family's National Institute of Marriage visit www.nationalmarriage.com or call at 866-875-2915.



866-875-2915
NATIONALMARRIAGE.COM
BRANSON, MO

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®