

# Millennial Musings: Millennial Marriage

My husband José and I have been married for eight years. From a modern millennial perspective, we are an anomaly. We married when we were still kids – 22 and 23 years old. With the statistics going the way they go these days, I don't think anyone expected us to last more than a year. Yet here we are, in our thirties with three children and more in love now than ever.

## Respect Marriage

To make this story even more unbelievable, José and I were an arranged marriage. It was arranged by our daughter Mia. We didn't know each other at all on the day we wed. On January 14, 2011, we were just two strangers with a baby saying "I do."

The first years of our marriage were rough, sometimes impossible, but two stubborn people are hard to break apart. **I think part of our secret is that we both are quite serious about the institution of marriage.** ☐ Even though we made our what-the-hell promise in a courthouse nine days after our first daughter was born, even though we don't wear wedding rings, we are deeply invested in the commitment we made on that day, a day we now celebrate with reverence every year.

José and I have lived through countless hells and heartbreaks, moves and misunderstandings. We've spent many months of deployment separated, and I've even spent months living with our daughters at my parents' house in summertimes, when the bickering got too intense. But it wasn't ever going to be an end. Our worst breaks were often the precursors of our best beginnings.

## It Doesn't Get Easier

Part of our secret might simply be our stubborn commitment, but **the real secret to marriage, I am now convinced, is that it is frustratingly, mind-numbingly, unbelievably hard.** And I just don't think that people understand that it's supposed to be hard. It's supposed to drive you mad. It's supposed to make you want to tear your hair out and run away from the house you mortgaged together screaming your head off. That's what marriage is sometimes. She's ugly. But she is also beautiful. Like so many classic goddesses of antiquity, She is both goddess of Love and goddess of War.

Marriage is hard and it doesn't get easier. Well, eventually it does. But I think it can take a decade or longer. It takes time and patience and fortitude to get there, for every couple. None of us are exempt.

It took me years to learn how to focus on my marriage, that it was worth my time, that **it wasn't supposed to just magically "work out,"** that I was going to have to work hard at it. But as soon as I struck that understanding, it was like striking gold. José and I have come from a place of battling over the rights to crumbs, to vacuuming them up together. I would be lying if I said neither of us ever threatened "the d word," but afterwards I would always cry too much and I just couldn't follow through. It's not always rainbows and cupcakes, but through half a dozen marriage books and hundreds of tedious discussions, we have found a place to coexist in mutual understanding on all our old trigger points, and it has created a space of serenity in our lives I deeply treasure.

## Why are our marriages failing?

I have been inspired to share our story because I see a phenomenon happening amongst my fellow millennial Mrs. that stirs up a deep sorrow in my heart. At least once per month, sometimes more, I hear that another of my mommy friends has

suddenly left her husband, divorced, or is having a baby with another man. I'm over being shocked by this. It is now so commonplace in my newsfeed I almost expect it. **But I never stop feeling like something in the world has gone horribly wrong.**

I keep reading articles about how [millennials are causing the divorce rate to plummet](#) because [we are marrying later](#) and considering marriage more of a status symbol once we can actually afford a wedding, inevitably later in life, but I am not seeing this reflected in my reality. And I don't wholeheartedly agree with the new trends either! I am happy to have married young, and by the way very happy to have started having children young, but that's a whole other article.

Presently, I am not seeing this so-called millennial marriage success. I don't want to come across as judgemental, because I do not know these women's stories. And even if I did know them, it wouldn't be my place to judge. But I won't keep quiet about how I feel either.

I know I am supposed to feel happy for them, but I can't help but shudder when I think of what my life would be like if I were in their shoes. The custody battles. The flights halfway across the country every month. The long drives. The ongoing disagreements over children, that one shared responsibility we can't sell and disburse like the house and the car and all the stupid stuff he bought and all the ugly decorations she insisted on hanging up that he never could stand. No. Children connect us beyond our lifetimes. **Children and grandchildren transcend us in our petty squabbles over money and accidents and stupid mistakes.**

Almost all of the women I know who have been divorced had children, and their lives are so much more complicated now. I am so grateful that I have been blessed with this mind-numbingly hard, yet beautifully simple life with my one husband and our children we have had together. We got through

some really, really hard years, but we stayed. And staying has been so worth it.

I would be a terrible consolation to a friend contemplating a divorce, because pending extreme cases of abuse I find it too difficult to fathom. I know people grow apart, but I also believe that people can grow back together, with faith and time and patient nurturing of a relationship that was once a beautiful thing.

## Just Stay

I am an advocate for marriage, and for staying in marriages, even when they seem like they would be better off left to fall apart. Because even when mine did, over and over again, José and I found a way to pick up the pieces.

As Brendan Clarey writes in [\[Dear Fellow Millennials, marrying at 22 was the best decision I ever made\]](#),

**“[There is] a common perception that 50 percent of marriages end in divorce. But that dismal statistic [is inaccurate.] The New York Times reported in 2014 that 89 percent of college-educated couples who married in the early 2000s were [still married seven years later]. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that college-educated women have a 78 percent chance of a marriage lasting [20 years] while their male counterparts have a 65 percent chance.**

**Your mentality matters. Millennials like to challenge the culture, so challenge the divorce rate. Approach marriage without accounting for the possibility of divorce. Statistics don't determine whether marriages succeed or fail – you do.”**

I think these stats make a pretty clear case for the fact that education does make a difference in the success of our marriage, and education can be directly correlated with effort. In the depths of my marital despairs, I often found solace in marriage books, readily available at the local library.

Clarey also points out that millennials are marrying at a median age of 28, and considering that I am currently 30, and only a quarter of my generation is married, that means that most millennials who are even married yet have only been married for a year or two. How do we know that their marriages are going to last? How do we know that millennials are lowering the divorce rate? We don't. The articles that say so are all hype. It is too early to know.

As for José and I, our love has grown, intensified, and deepened. And I am amazed. Through years of refusing to give up, and working hard on our marriage, my husband and I have made each other into a better man and a better woman, and a better team. I am not ashamed to say that I am proud of us. I have faith that other couples can break through and find this harmony too.

This Valentine's day, as so many millennial marriages fall apart around us, I just want to say that **Love deserves another chance. And another and another and another! Until you can't stand it anymore and then some. That's what it takes.** Marriage is a test of fire. But like gold tested in fire, again and again and again, in the end, it comes out as something pure and truly worthy of our heart's devotion.

Marriages often feel impossible, but they are worth it. Too many millennial marriages are failing today, but I know that we can do better. We beat the odds, and I know that you can too. <3