

MARRIAGE SUCCESSES IN DISGUISE

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Do you ever feel like you're failing in various aspects of marriage? If so, you're not alone. Marriage is hard. Sure, there are "*best practices*," but there's no step-by-step instruction manual. So, it can feel like you're floundering – making it up as you go and unsure if you're getting anywhere.

Here's some good news. Sometimes things that feel like struggles or failures are actually successes in disguise. How about some examples?

Constantly disagreeing with each other

You say beach, they say mountains. You say go out; they say stay in. It sounds like you and your spouse, that's okay! Being able to respectfully disagree with each other on issues, big & small, without escalating to a big fight is a good sign. It means you both feel emotionally safe and secure enough to voice your thoughts and opinions without disrespect, judgment, or hurt feelings. When it comes to working through issues, this is an invaluable skill. Just make sure you're really listening to each other, too.

Calling each other out

When you're getting called out on something, it can feel like you're failing. If you're the one doing the calling out, it might feel like you're nagging. However, if you call each other out in a kind way focusing on behavior (*instead of attacking each other personally*) and you're able to respond to this feedback with minimal defensiveness, then you're doing something right. It means you're not sweeping things under the rug that grow into a bigger conflict that pops up later. Instead, you deal with them right away, nipping resentment and complacency in the bud.

Doing things differently from everyone else

Maybe you're not following the "normal" timeline for marriage, or you don't share about your relationship on social media like everyone else is. Perhaps you handle your finances or split your responsibilities in a quirky way. That's great! It means you're doing what feels right for you, your spouse, and your marriage. Don't get discouraged. No two marriages are alike, there's not a one-size-fits-all way it should be done.

Going to marriage counseling

Unfortunately, there is often a stigma attached to marriage counseling, and that means we don't seek help until it's too late. Going to counseling does not mean you failed. In fact, if you've taken the proactive step to see a counselor early in your marriage, that deserves some major props. It shows you're both committed and invested in your relationship and that you're looking for ways to resolve issues. These lead to marital success.

No one wants to feel like they're constantly struggling and making no progress. That's why it can be helpful to remember that even when it feels like you're doing things wrong or failing in some way, the opposite might be true. Dealing with issues head-on, embracing your own path, and not being afraid to seek outside help might make things feel a little bumpy, but you can take heart that you're doing good things for your marriage.