

Creating a happy marriage is possible and this site is dedicated to providing resources to help couples who want to stay together. By providing information about qualified marriage counseling, we hope to encourage couples to get the help they need. The site also features articles, other websites, books, and workshops which offer the tools needed to create happy, lasting marriages.



50 Years - Possible?

This is Episode number 58 of Stay Happily Married, "50 Years - Possible?"

Welcome to Stay Happily Married, your source for weekly updates on the latest tips and advice to build a happy and healthy marriage.

Today's episode of Stay Happily Married is brought to you by the Rosen Law Firm. For more information, visit us at Rosen.com.

Lee Rosen: I'm Lee Rosen. I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. I'm here by phone with Sheryl Kurland. She's a writer, corporate trainer, speaker and author of a book called *Everlasting Matrimony: Pearls of Wisdom from Couples Married 50 Years or More*. I'm sure many of you have read it or at least heard about it.

She has spread her work into the corporate world. She's done relationship workshops for employees and employers and professional organizations. She lives in Longwood, Florida and she's been married for 19 years, lives with her husband and their daughter.

Welcome to the show, Sheryl.

Sheryl Kurland: Hi, Lee. Thank you for having me today.

Lee Rosen: Well, I'm really glad that you can be here and share some of what you've learned. The book title, *Everlasting Matrimony: Pearls of Wisdom from Couples Married 50 Years or More*, I'm wondering what inspired you to do to this book? What caused that?

Sheryl Kurland: It all began about six years ago and my in-laws celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and at the same time there was a stream of high profile celebrity divorces. And I started thinking, you know, my in-laws are just ordinary people; how did they do it? And also,

April 20, 2009 - 50 Years - Possible?

my own grandparents were married 68 years and they were always inspiring role models.

So I got a brainstorm and I said, "I wonder if there's a book out there that's either been written by a couple married 50 years or more or interviews couples married 50 years or more." And I went to the library and researched and there was nothing. There was all these psychoanalytical books and Dr. Phil type books but there was nothing. So that set the seed.

Lee Rosen: Wow. And so what did you do? How did you go about approaching the topic?

Sheryl Kurland: Well, I knew I wanted to interview -- my goal was 50 couples for 50 years. There was actually 75 couples because I was so worried about getting 50 that I forgot to count; and the day I counted, I had 75.

Lee Rosen: Right.

Sheryl Kurland: Which was fine. I just added some pages to the book. And there's over 4,000 years of real life marriage advice in the book. And I simply started putting out feelers looking for couples. I advertised in newspapers, retirement communities I contacted, hospitals, synagogues, anywhere and everywhere. And then once I got a pool going, they gave me names of their friends and family members.

So the couples are spread out all over the United States and they represent -- I call it a sprinkling of America. They're from all different faiths, all different backgrounds, all different ethnicities.

Lee Rosen: Really diverse group. Now, I guess that's important if you really want to figure out the secrets. You can't just figure out one special group secret; you've got to figure it out across the board.

Now, you did something that I think is really interested and probably helps the research, I guess. You interviewed the husbands and the wives separately. It's like at the crime scene, "You over there. You over there."

Sheryl Kurland: Yes. Right.

Lee Rosen: You broke them up. What prompted you to do that?

Sheryl Kurland: Generally speaking, most people think the wife does all the talking and I didn't want that to happen with this book. I wanted them to have an equal voice and I wanted to hear both of their perspectives. The reasons they stayed married 50 years may not be in agreement.

And so that's why they were interviewed separately. And in fact, many times the men had more to say than the women, and vice versa, and often times they were very different. The point is that they found compatibility.

Lee Rosen: Right. Very interesting. Yeah. I do come with that stereotype, I think, of the women doing all the talking. It's fascinating to hear that it didn't play out that way.

Now, when I do these interviews I find myself going home at night and, at least for that evening, behaving differently. Usually it wears off by the next day. It's like, forget about it by the next day. But I'm wondering, when you were out talking to these 75 couples did it make you reflect on your own marriage?

Sheryl Kurland: I always say that writing this book saved me about five years of marriage counseling. And there were so many tips in *Everlasting Matrimony*. Even today when I look through the pages I still pick up tidbits. But there's one that stands out above all the rest.

And my husband and I used to have arguments and -- I call them -- over-blown discussions, and I would always blame him. "If you would stop doing this or you wouldn't say that, then everything would be fine." So I started looking at all the different things that the couples in *Everlasting Matrimony* said about how to solve arguments and so I tested them and they worked. And what I found is that by me making some changes -- not him -- by me making some changes, it just took a huge weight off our relationship and we hardly argue at all now. And it was all from advice given by the couples in the book.

Lee Rosen: Interesting. So you really did find some -- just for yourself. Now, I'm guessing there are lots of ideas in the book that other people will see that -- I guess not everything you find in those couples applies to every marriage. Each one of us are going to read your book and find something unique that applies to us, a particular lesson. But what are the lessons that you find people telling -- what do you people tell you, "Hey, this is what I got out of the book"? What are the biggies that they're hearing?

Sheryl Kurland: I think that what people get out of the book overall -- there's sort of an umbrella message that these couples have lived through absolutely everything. I mean, being married 50 years, you've been through every high and low and everything in between and all the curveballs that life throws their way. And they always, always were determined to get through whatever it was together.

And so when other people read this book today they say, look, if these couples could do it -- and many of them were poor. They lived through the Depression. They didn't have the medical technology, the communications technology. And you stack up all those things and you say, hey, they made it and they love each other and they're still happy 50 years later. There's got to be a way that we can get through our problems too. So it really is an eye-opener. It gives people a lot of hope.

Lee Rosen: Now, that's an interesting point and I hadn't really thought of that before. But one thing that they all have in common, because they've been married so long, is that they have to be old. I mean, that's just reality. And I think some people would say, well, people today -- younger people today, they don't have the same -- oh, I don't know -- commitment or they just look at the world differently. Do you think that the lessons of the book apply to younger people today?

Sheryl Kurland: Most definitely the lessons are applicable because the ingredients that make up a loving relationship are the same always. Fifty years ago they were the same, today they're the same, and 50 years from now they're the same. What changes is all the peripheral things around you, the exterior things. But the interior, the ingredients that make up a loving relationship never change.

Lee Rosen: Timeless. Very interesting. Now, you said the couples have been through ups and down and obviously things like the Great Depression and all that. But what about things like affairs? Did you hear many stories about marriages that have survived that kind of betrayal?

Sheryl Kurland: No, I did not because the only -- there were two qualifications to be in the book; one is that you're married 50 years and the other is that you're happily married. And I didn't have to ask the second one because after I explained to couples what I was doing, those that were unhappy -- who probably had affairs, some of them -- they didn't want to talk about it. They had just stuck through the marriage because they said they were going to.

Lee Rosen: Right.

Sheryl Kurland: So no, that's another book is talking about how to get through affairs.

Lee Rosen: The next book, yeah. Now, something that you suggest in the book that I find really fascinating is this idea of mentors. Fill us in on that.

April 20, 2009 - 50 Years - Possible?

Sheryl Kurland: I believe that finding other couples who are long married and happily married are the best mentors. There are so many couples that -- and again, this is generally speaking -- the wife wants to go to marriage counseling and the husband doesn't. It could be the shoe on the other foot, but that's kind of the majority.

So how do you get your husband involved? The best way to get him involved is just to talk to other people who have been there, done that. And that's why couples married 50 years or so more -- they're the voices of experience. They can speak from real life. They talk to you in down-to-earth language. They're not going to give you ten steps that you have to do to get to the great relationship you want. And if you just sit down and talk to people and be honest -- and they will be honest with you. They're more than happy to share the good times and the bad times and that's the great thing about having a mentor.

Lee Rosen: So you would see finding a mentor as an alternative to marriage counseling?

Sheryl Kurland: Not as an alternative. I totally believe in marriage counseling. However, I think in many cases that people involved in marriage counseling see it as a money pit. It goes on and on and on and they keep saying, "I'm not getting anywhere but I need to be doing something so I'm going to keep going to marriage counseling." This is another option and it's a down-to-earth option. It's about real life. It's not psychoanalytical.

Lee Rosen: So if I want to go out and find a mentor, a couple that have been married a long time, any suggestions? I guess you've talked to people that have done it. How have they found the right person for them?

Sheryl Kurland: The way I found these people was everywhere you look, if you open your eyes, there are long married people holding hands. You can find them in Wal-Mart. You can find them in the grocery store. And I just approached the people and I would say, "How long have you been married?" And they would tell me and I'd chat with them for a little while. And you can just see the glimmer in their eye that they still love each other. So it's really quite simple.

Another source is obviously a synagogue or a church or a community center, even old age homes. You can go and visit older people who are long married. They would love to have your company and talk to them.

April 20, 2009 - 50 Years - Possible?

Lee Rosen: Right. Wow. It almost accomplishes a lot more than just getting advice for your marriage when you're going out and asking for that kind of help from people. That's berean.

Now, something you have done is you've taken your message and all of the things you've learned about marriage and you're using it to deliver information to people in companies, to employees, to employers. What are you doing exactly?

Sheryl Kurland: The way this -- it was an evolution. I've done a lot of public speaking about *Everlasting Matrimony* and often times audience members would come up to me and say, "This is really good information. I think our employees or employers would really love hearing about it. Would you do a lunch-and-learn workshop?" And I started thinking, why not?

And once they gave me the idea I started doing some research and it turns out that poor relationships, bad marriages, and the cost of divorce are really the silent killers of corporate America. Research shows that corporate America spends about \$6 billion on lost productivity, lost quality and so forth because when people arrive at work, if they've had a bad morning with their spouse or significant other, had the door slammed in their face, they arrive to work already with this big block on their shoulders. So it really spoils a day. And not only does it spoil their work day, everyone around them is affected. It has a ripple effect throughout the whole company.

So this became a spin-off as offering workshops and they are interactive and I do a lot of exercises. I get people involved so it's not me just giving a lecture. And again, it's all real life advice from the couples in *Everlasting Matrimony*. It's not any kind of psychoanalytical program. And I've gotten really good feedback from it. I love doing them and the employers really appreciate it.

And then they will interview, often times, the employees afterwards and say, "What did you learn?" And I've heard people say, "Look. I thought I was at a dead end with thus and such of my marriage, but this gave me some new ideas that I can go home and I can start today." So corporate workshops have been very well received.

Lee Rosen: Are you getting feedback still from the 75 couples you interviewed? Do you still hear from them?

Sheryl Kurland: I'm very good friends with some of them. I'm even a family member to some of them; I call them my adopted parents. And

April 20, 2009 - 50 Years - Possible?

unfortunately, because of their age, many have passed -- a spouse has passed on.

Lee Rosen: Right.

Sheryl Kurland: So that's a sad thing. But I still know many of the families and I just feel very close to them and I also feel like I can call upon them. And they continue to call upon me, actually. One gentleman is writing his autobiography so I'm helping him with that.

And again, every time I talk to them I listen to the warmth in their voices and how good they feel, even though they're way up in their 90s and they have crippling conditions that they hate living with, but they still have that love for their spouse. It just is there. And that really inspires them to keep on living.

Lee Rosen: So if you were to sum up I guess the most important thing that you took away -- we've been through some of the lessons you learned, but what really just feels like the most powerful lesson now that you have perspective on it all, you've been able to digest it, you've talked to lots of other people about your work and your book. What's your big takeaway from what you've learned in the years that you worked on this project?

Sheryl Kurland: By having written *Everlasting Matrimony* I found one common thread among all of the couples no matter where they were from, who they were, what types of people they were, and I call it the "D" word. And in today's generation the "D" word is divorce. If it's not working out we're just going to spilt up and call it quits. In their generation the "D" word was determination. No matter what, they were determined as partners to get through the issues and challenges and problems and restore contentment and harmony in the relationship. So determination is the key.

And I say it's not commitment, because commitment means you just have stuck with it and you maybe can't stand each other. Determination means you're going to get through it and you're going to keep the marriage alive and lively and loving.

Lee Rosen: Powerful lesson. Very powerful lesson. The "D" word, determination. I love that.

Well, thank you, Sheryl. I appreciate you talking with us and working through your research. I think reading the book is just -- it just makes a lot of sense because so much of what we learn is coming from folks that have done research in a different sort of way and looking at couples that have not been married nearly this long.

April 20, 2009 - 50 Years - Possible?

You've really gone to the source, the folks that have done it 50-plus years. And gosh, it just sounds like that is the place to find the answers to the questions that everybody's asking when they're trying to figure out how to stay married. So thank you so much for filling us in.

Sheryl Kurland: Thank you for having me. I really appreciate it.

Lee Rosen: You can find out a whole lot more about Sheryl and the book and the work that she does with corporations by visiting the website everlastingmatrimony.com. And I think you ought to get a copy of the book. It does not seem to me that you can go wrong with going to the source. And, gosh, she spent years digging through 75 couples' histories and listening to their stories. You can do it all by reading one book and walk away with the lessons that will make a difference in your marriage. Sounds like a plan. I think you ought to do it. Makes a lot of sense.

Listen. I appreciate you listening today and joining us and I hope that you will come back again next week. In the meantime, if you have feedback about this show or any of our shows we'd love to hear from you. I cannot tell you how grateful I am for the comments and the feedback that we get everyday on our comment line and at our e-mail address. The comment line is (919) 256-3083. The email address is comments@stayhappilymarried.com. Let us know how we're doing. We would love to hear from you.

Until next time, stay happily married.

Thank you for joining us today on Stay Happily Married. If you'd like more information, please visit us on the Web at stayhappilymarried.com. We would love to hear your feedback or comments. Please e-mail us at comments@stayhappilymarried.com or call us at (919) 256-3083. Until next time, best wishes.