



**Built To Last – marriage through early parenthood**  
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I'm sure everyone reading this knows of at least one if not many couples who have been divorced when their children were young. On top of that, we all know couples who are struggling through those early parenthood years. Perhaps you fall into one of these categories yourself.

In my practice I have come across many individuals who are struggling in their marriage while raising their young families. This is not an uncommon occurrence. Parenthood is stressful and as many people put it, "everything changes" when you have kids. There is suddenly little room for yourself let alone your spouse, you are sleep deprived possibly for years at a time, there are new financial concerns, and so much more.

Since all new parents experience many of the same symptoms and pressures of parenthood, I began to wonder, "What's the difference between those marriages that will withstand early parenthood, versus those that will crumble under the pressure?"

This month I decided to conduct a very short and very unofficial study of real parents in real relationships with real kids. The slant of my crude study was to ask couples who felt they had a strong, healthy relationship that was built to last – "What are the secrets?" I asked the following questions and received responses from a great many people.

1. What is the key to a strong, lasting relationship?
2. What was your relationship built upon?
3. What has changed since you have had children?
4. What do you do to 'keep the love alive'?
5. How do you deal with conflict in your relationship?
6. What techniques do you use to get to the root of what's going on instead of dwell on the symptoms?
7. How have you overcome any direct issues that have arisen due to parenthood?

Over the next few months I will continue to dissect the answers to these questions. For now, let's look at the first one.

**What is the key to a strong, lasting relationship?**

- Unwavering commitment to the relationship - true belief that this is a lifelong commitment as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow!

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- Complete trust in each other
- Respect for one another
- Appreciation for one another
- Forgives
- Affection – physical and emotional
- BIG love – the deep kind
- Knowing who you are, understanding who your partner is, and appreciating both
- Open, honest, effective communication

In today's culture it is easy to enter into a marriage with a hidden chicken exit. Too often people are saying "I do...unless it gets too tough". The glue that holds a marriage together is this unwavering commitment that you are in it for life\*. Everything else can stem from there. From that space comes trust, respect, appreciation, forgiveness, and affection; the things that BIG love are made of. It is essential that you know who you are and understand who your partner is. Open, honest, effective communication laid atop this foundation will instill smoother (never completely smooth) sailing.

Overwhelmingly, people responded with COMMUNICATION as a key to a strong relationship. I see communication as a technique to use to help with all the rest.

We all know that communication is essential to any healthy relationship. Why then is it so difficult at times to do it? We learn what we live. If you lived in a family where there was no fighting, or fighting was displayed aggressively, you will learn just that. If you are exposed to people who communicate in a way that upholds the other, respects the other, truly listens and gets to the root of the problem, well...you are ahead of the game.

Communication takes techniques. Whether you know it or not, you are using communication techniques all the time. The question is, are your techniques working?

Tune in next month for more on communication techniques and other valuable insights from couples who are 'built to last'.

*(\*of course there are occasionally extenuating circumstances such as abuse that can and perhaps should challenge the commitment discussed above.)*

If you feel you are in a lasting, loving relationship and would like to contribute to my study, or if you have insights from your own experiences, please call or email, (303) 642-3105, [gretchen@motherhoodtransitions.com](mailto:gretchen@motherhoodtransitions.com). On the other hand, if you are struggling with the challenges of parenthood on your relationship, please feel free to call for support.

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confidence and self image, enjoy relationships with others, overcome guilt, and develop a sense of inner peace in your life.

Join group coaching for a safe space to work through challenges and discover your own answers while connecting with other moms in similar situations. Group Coaching will help you tap into your inner wisdom and quiet the external forces around you as you embark on large scale life transitions such as having a child, moving, or altering your work situation, or you are focused on day-to-day activities and discovering what works for you and your family.

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1. Entrepreneurial Moms Group
2. Mixed Moms Group

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