

by Dan Pearce



# **16 WAYS I BLEW MY MARRIAGE!**

*(confessions of a double-divorcee)*

The other night I was sitting with my family, most of whom are very successfully married. We were going around the circle, giving our best marriage advice to my little sister on the eve of her wedding. It's something of a family tradition.

But I've had two marriages, and neither of them was successful. So, when it was my turn, I just made a joke about divorce – how you should always remember why you loved your spouse when you first met her so that, when times get tough, you can find someone new that's just like she was.

There were a couple of courtesy giggles, but overall my humour wasn't welcome.

They finished round one, and started into another round. And that's when I realised. Hey, I don't have any good marriage advice to give. No. All I had was “don't dos” – “how not to botch your marriage like I did”. They were my regrets, not my successes. And I didn't really feel like anyone in that room would want to hear them.

So, later that night, I sat down and wrote out my ‘advice list’ for my little sister. You know ... things I wish I'd known or done differently so I didn't end up divorced (twice). And I thought maybe I'd share it with you, too.

(If you don't mind, I'll just refer to ‘her’ – even though, eventually, there were two of them.)

## 1 DON'T STOP HOLDING HER HAND

When I first dated the woman I ended up marrying, I always held her hand. In the car. While walking. At meals. At movies. It didn't matter where. But, over time, I stopped. I made up excuses, like my hand was too hot or it made me sweat or I wasn't comfortable doing it in public. Truth was, I stopped holding hands because I stopped making an effort to be close to my wife. No other reason.

**If I had it all over again:** I'd hold her hand in the car. I'd hold her hand on a star. I'd hold her hand in a box. I'd hold her hand

with a fox. And I'd hold her hand everywhere else, too, even during moments when we didn't particularly like each other.

**Bonus:** When you hold hands in the winter, they don't get cold. True story.

## 2 DON'T STOP TRYING TO BE ATTRACTIVE

Obviously when I was working to woo her, I kept myself well groomed. I always smelled good. I held in my farts until she wasn't around. But, for some reason, marriage made me feel like I could stop all that. I rarely, if ever, cared about making myself attractive just for her.

**If I had it all over again:** I'd try and put my best foot forward throughout our entire marriage. I'd make myself desirable so that she would desire me.

**Bonus:** Guess what? She'll return the favour!

### 3 DON'T DRAW ATTENTION TO HER WEAKNESSES

I sure as heck didn't do this while we were dating, but, somewhere along the way, I decided it was my place to tell her where she was weak and where she could do better. When I dated her I built her up, told her how amazing she was, and easily looked past her flaws – but, after we got married, she couldn't even cook eggs without me telling her how she might improve.

**If I had it all over again:** I wouldn't say a damned thing about anything that I thought could use some improvement. Since my marriages ended, I've learned that there's more than one right way to do most things, and that the imperfections of others are too beautiful to try and change.

**Bonus:** When you tell her what she's doing right, she'll tell you what *you're* doing right. And she'll also tell her friends. And her family. And the dentist. And even strangers on the street.

### 4 DON'T STOP COOKING FOR HER

I knew how to woo a girl, for sure. And the ticket was usually a night in, cooking a nice meal and having a romantic evening. So how come I didn't do that after we got married? Sure, I'd throw some canned soup in the microwave once in a while, but I rarely, if ever, went out of my way to sweep her off her feet by steaming crab

legs, or making fancy pasta, or setting up a candlelit table.

**If I had it all over again:** I'd make it a priority to cook for her, and only her, something awesome at least once a month. And I'd remember that meat in a can is never awesome.

**Bonus:** Candlelit dinners often lead to candlelit *bow-chica-bow-wow!*

### 5 DON'T CALL HER NAMES

I may not have called her stupid, or an idiot, or any of the other names she'd sometimes call me – but I often told her she was stubborn, or she was impossible, or she was so hard to deal with. And I'd often say things that started with “You should have ...” “You aren't ...” or “You didn't ...” followed by something negative.

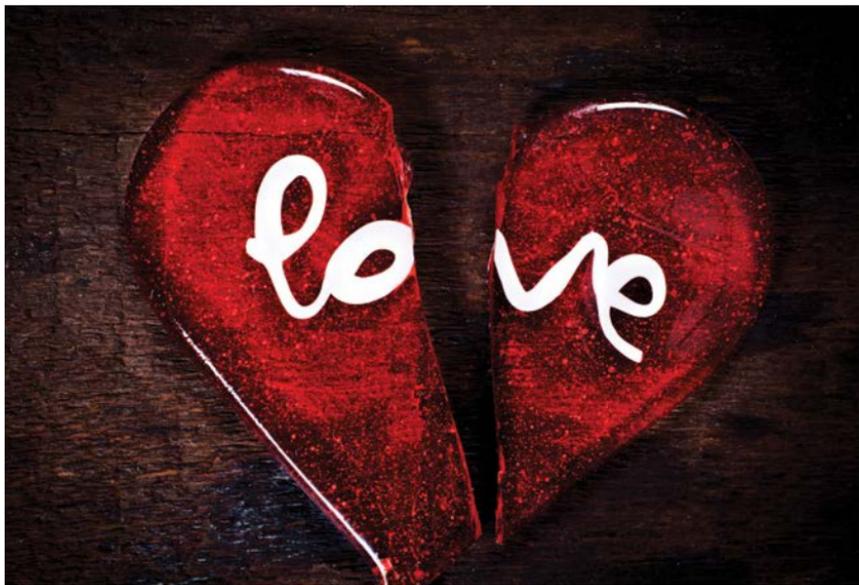
**If I had it all over again:** I'd practice saying positive things: “You are ...” instead of “You aren't ...” “You're great at ...” instead of “You didn't ...” And I'd call her names, but they'd be names like “super sexy” or “hotness.” Even in the heat of the moment.

**Bonus:** She'll call you names in better places. Like the bedroom. And you won't feel like a schmuck.

### 6 DON'T POOP WITH THE BATHROOM DOOR OPEN

I don't know why, but at some point I started thinking it was okay to go to the loo with the bathroom door open. Yuck! First of all, it's gross. Second of all, it stinks everything up. Third of all, there's no way to make pooping attractive – which means that every time she saw me do it, she, at least in some little way, must've thought I was *less* attractive.

**If I had it all over again:** I'd shut the damn door and do it in private.



**Bonus:** When she *does* think of your naked body, she's not going to be thinking about it in the squat position!

## 7 DON'T STOP KISSING HER

It often got to a point where I'd more-or-less stop kissing her. It was usually because there was tension in our relationship, and so I'd make it worse by refusing to kiss her. Which, of course, would lead to her feeling rejected. Which, of course, would lead to arguments. And so on ...

**If I had it all over again:** I'd kiss her in the morning when she looked like people do in the morning. I'd kiss her at night when she's had a long day. I'd kiss her any time I felt like she secretly wanted a kiss. And I'd kiss her even when my germ issues kicked in.

**Bonus:** She feels loved when you kiss her. That's bonus enough.

## 8 DON'T STOP DATING & HAVING FUN

When I was dating her, I'd have no problem paying a little more for something nice. If I wanted to charm her, 20 extra bucks was no big deal for nicer seats at the show or the ambiance of a nicer restaurant. So how come after marriage she was no longer worth it

**If I had it all over again:** I'd make a rule with her that we'd never stay home two weekends in a row. And I'd see every extra dollar spent as an investment in our relationship.

**Bonus:** Fun dates lead to fun pictures on her phone. Which lead to everyone on *Facebook* thinking you're the coolest hubby on the planet!

## 9 DON'T SKIP THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO HER

I used to find it so easy to veto things

that she enjoyed doing. My reasoning: “We should find things we *both* enjoy.” But that’s lame. There will always be things she enjoys that I will never enjoy, and that’s no reason not to support her in them. Sometimes the only thing she needs is to know that I’m there.

**If I had it all over again:** I’d say yes to many more of the things she wanted to do. I would actively participate and not go on about how I’d do it differently.

**Bonus:** Go to something she knows you don’t enjoy and the gratitude gets piled on later that night – like whipped cream on a cheesecake!

## 10 DON’T SHUT DOWN AFTER A FIGHT

I never got to experience the power of make-up sex because, any time my wife was mean or we got in a fight, I’d completely distance myself from her – usually for several days. Communication would shut down ... I’d avoid contact at all cost ... and eventually after it had happened enough times, I would explode unnecessarily.

**If I had it all over again:** I’d communicate my emotions and feelings more often – and any time we had an ugly bout I’d make sure she knew I still loved her.

**Bonus:** Fantastic make-up sex! Or at least that’s the theory ...

## 11 DON’T STOP BRINGING HER FLOWERS

When I was wooing her, I made it a point to show up with flowers. I’d have them delivered. I’d drop some at her door and run. I’d have them even if I was just showing up for a movie on her couch. I brought her flowers from day one to day married. But then, after we said I do, I

stopped. Flowers became an unnecessary expense, except for anniversaries or Valentine’s Day. And sadly not always on those days, either.

**If I had it all over again:** I’d make it a point to get her flowers often enough so that she never wondered what I’d done wrong when I did.

**Bonus:** It’s hard to hold grudges for the other stupid things you do when there are fresh flowers reminding her that you’re a good guy most of the time.

## 12 DON’T CHOOSE YOUR GADGETS OVER HER

It seemed that, when I got home from work, there was always important stuff that needed dealing with. There was always an email that needed answering ... always a call I had to make on my phone ... always something that couldn’t wait. And I’d happily ignore her to go and do it.

**If I had it all over again:** I’d power off my cell phone for an hour or two every night and, instead, spend that time with her – eating, talking, or just catching up on all the little things. The computer would be off limits. And so would the TV.

**Bonus:** A quality hour spent with her is far more fun than a six-hour fight about not spending enough quality time with her!

## 13 DON’T PUT HER DOWN IN FRONT OF OTHERS

It always seemed that the more bla our marriage got, the more I would (jokingly) crap on her awesome ideas and put her down in front of others. What’s worse is that I’d do it while she was standing there. And when she’d get mad, I’d throw it back on her and tell her she needed a sense of humour.

**If I had it all over again:** I'd remember that there's nothing very motivating about being put down. And that smart-mouthed know-it-alls usually end up alone.

**Bonus:** Building her up reassures her that her future lies with *you* – not Billy Bob over there!

## 14 DON'T MAKE HER GUILTY FOR NEEDING TO GET AWAY

For some reason, I always felt like something was secretly wrong when she wanted to duck out for a while. I'd insist she "talk" or that she tell me what was up. I'd never just let her go and get her much-needed moments without me.

**If I had it all over again:** I'd make sure she knew that it was always okay with me if she needed some time on her own, out with the girls, or doing whatever she wanted.

**Bonus:** Time away from you means you can sneak that triple bacon burger she rightfully never wants you to eat!

## 15 DON'T TOUCH HER ONLY WHEN YOU WANT SEX

Ever the Romeo, I would usually distance myself physically and emotionally for days or weeks – and then I'd roll over in bed one night, and start putting the moves on her. This, of course, would leave her feeling hurt and upset. And I would react by being more emotionally and physically distant.

**If I had it all over again:** I'd touch her gently and without sexual motives when she was lying in bed. I'd massage her feet when she was reading a book. I'd make circles on the small of her back while we washed dishes. I'd push the hair out of her eyes. I'd kiss her on the forehead. And the cheek. And the nose. And I'd do it all without the need to get it on.

**Bonus:** Wait for it ... wait for it ... more sex! Because you touching her doesn't give her the heebie-jeebies!

## 16 DON'T MAKE HER DO THE SCARY THINGS

When we were dating, I was her Knight in Shining Armour. Was there a spider that needed killing? I was the Gladiator. Was there a drain that needed unclogging? Who else would she call but me? Was one of the kids losing her lunch in the front porch? Sit back, my fair lady. I'll clean up the puke. But then, the second we were married, I told her to kill her own spiders. It was *her* hair clogging the drain, so why should I have to touch it? And it just seemed like a mum's duty to "help" a sick kid.

**If I had it all over again:** I'd cinch up my knickers and do the gross, scary things I was born to do. I'd remember that I fell in love with sugar and spice and all things nice – not slugs and snails and puppy dog tails.

**Bonus:** How do I put this? When she gets scared, she more often than not needs safe reassurance that she'll only feel in the arms of her big, brawny, tough, macho man! ❖

SAYS BLOGGER DAN PEARCE: "MY FAILURE AT MARRIAGE IS ONE OF THE THINGS I AM MOST INSECURE ABOUT. AND THIS IS A LIST I'LL FOREVER BE WORKING ON, NONE OF WHICH I'VE MASTERED." THE LIST HAS GOT LONGER, ENDING UP WITH 31 "DON'TS". IF YOU'D LIKE TO READ MORE, CHECK OUT [WWW.DANOAH.COM](http://WWW.DANOAH.COM). (REPRINTED IN GRAPEVINE BY PERMISSION.)



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