

— 21 WAYS TO
*Divorce
Proof*
YOUR MARRIAGE

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Divorce Proof

YOUR MARRIAGE

Your Personal Guide to Creating a Strong and
Happy Marriage That Will Stand the Test of Time

DARREN & DONNA MCNEES



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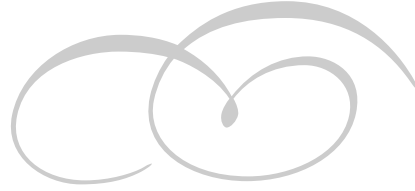
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Dedicated to building strong
and happy marriages that will
stand the test of time.

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INTRODUCTION

It has been said that life is a long strand of opportunities. Each and every day we have the opportunity to make decisions, choices that will affect the course of the day and ultimately our lives. This is true because every decision we make and every action we take has consequences either good or bad. Even the decision to do nothing has its consequences. While it may seem obvious that good decisions lead to positive results whereas bad decisions lead to negative results, it isn't always obvious in the moment to know which choice is the right choice.

That's what *21 Ways to Divorce Proof Your Marriage* is all about—helping you to make the right decisions and take

the appropriate actions regarding your marital relationship. By doing so you will be amazed by the positive results you'll experience. Often the smallest adjustment to how you interact with your spouse can lead to dramatic results, improving your marriage in ways that you may have never even imagined.

Think of *21 Ways to Divorce Proof Your Marriage* as more than just a way to keep you out of divorce court. Think of it as a tool that you can use to literally transform your marriage and quite possibly change your life forever.

**“The greatest discovery of my generation
is that man can alter his life simply
by altering his attitude of mind.”**

— William James

As you begin to read through this book, do so with an open mind and a receptive attitude. Avoid the temptation to think, “I already know that.” Instead, reflect on each point and really let it sink in. Ask yourself how you can better apply this information to your marriage and your life.

By doing so, you'll set the stage for great things to happen!

So let's begin...



CHAPTER 1



KNOW THE TRUTH

*“There are two ways to be fooled:
One is to believe what isn’t so; the
other is to refuse to believe what is so.”
– Soren Kierkegaard*

The shocking truth about marriage is that if you are not actively working on improving your relationship, it will deteriorate over time. At any given moment, your marriage is either getting better or it’s getting worse; there is no in-between.

A lot of married people don’t realize or understand this simple truth. They go from day to day doing what they’ve always done and assume that everything will be fine. Sure, many of them know that they have problems in their marriage (who doesn’t?) and that they and/or their spouse aren’t as happy as they would like to be, but they aren’t too worried because they figure things will eventually work out.

Then all of a sudden they wake up one day to discover that things are much worse than they had thought. A young man is crushed after he finds out that his wife of seven years is having an affair. A middle-aged woman is devastated after her husband tells her that he wants a divorce.

Men and women by the thousands are heart-broken when they hear their spouse say, “I don’t love you anymore.” And the statement that we hear the most from these people is, “I never thought it would happen to me.”

How can this happen? How can so many people let their marriages fall apart? Well, it’s not that they just “let” their marriage fall apart, it’s that they don’t “realize” that their marriage is falling apart.

If you were to gain six pounds per year, you may not even notice it at first. Since you look at yourself in the mirror every day, you can’t see the daily changes (0.02 pounds per day).

After a while you can’t help but notice that you’re putting on a few extra pounds. Every year or two you buy clothes that are a little bigger, but the change seems harmless enough. Then, ten years down the road, you come across a picture of yourself ten years earlier. You’re shocked! You take out a recent photo, compare the two and say, “Man—I’ve gotten fat!”

You didn’t gain sixty pounds the day you looked at the earlier photo. Likewise, people don’t “all of a sudden” have an affair, fall out of love or want a divorce.

**“To keep a lamp burning,
we have to keep putting oil in it.”
— Mother Teresa**

For dinner one evening you decide to have a delicious hot pizza. When it’s done baking you pull it out of the oven

and start to cut it when the phone rings.

You take the call in the other room and before you know it, twenty minutes have passed. By the time you get back to your pizza, it's stone cold. The only way to keep a pizza hot is to keep applying heat to it. Turn off the heat and the pizza gets cold.

Your marriage works the same way. The only way to keep it strong is to continually learn and do what it takes to make it so.

You Don't Have to Be a Statistic!

The other day I (Darren) was talking to a manager of a health club who told me that he was waiting to get called back to his "real job" in the telecommunications industry. He was studying heating and air-conditioning and told me that with this new knowledge added to what he already knew, he would always be employed.

On my way out, I mentioned that one way to increase his chances of not being laid off again was to start his own business. He very quickly said, "That's too risky—ninety-five percent of all businesses fail within the first five years."

While that statistic may be true, his logic was flawed.

Here he was waiting for a call-back from a company that let him go a year and a half ago. He felt that it was less risky to put his financial future in the hands of a company that had already demonstrated that they could let him go at any time without as much as a warning.

|| Maybe it's just me, but if he started a business and it later failed, couldn't he still get a job as a manager of a health club?

Ninety-five percent of new businesses may indeed fail. So what! Who said he had to be one of the ninety-five percent? Why not learn how to be among the five percent that succeed? Why not study and apply the successful habits of the five percent instead of unknowingly following the unsuccessful habits of the ninety-five percent?

Thank goodness for the many men and women throughout history who didn't pay attention to statistics, but rather followed their hearts and pursued their dreams. Look around you right now and you'll notice that virtually everything you see was manufactured by a company started by someone who ignored the statistics or at the very least decided to be part of the five percent.

So what does this business story have to do with your marriage? Well, there's another statistic floating around that can be potentially harmful to your marriage if you're not careful. It's the overused and unsubstantiated divorce statistic that has been talked about for years. You know the one, "Fifty percent of marriages end in divorce."

Don't you find it odd that the number never changes? Wouldn't you think that over time the percentage would change to perhaps fifty-five percent or forty-five percent? No, the number almost everyone has used for a long time now is fifty percent—a magical number that is somehow fixed for all of time.

According to pollster Louis Harris, *"The idea that half of American marriages are doomed is one of the most specious pieces of statistical nonsense ever perpetuated in modern times. It all began when the Census Bureau noted that during one year, there were*

2.4 million marriages and 1.2 million divorces. Someone did the math without calculating the 54 million marriages already in existence, and presto, a ridiculous but quotable statistic was born. Only one out of eight marriages will end in divorce. In any given year, only two percent of existing marriages will break up."

As a matter of fact, the rate of divorce per year per 1,000 people in the U.S. has been declining since 1981 and is now at its lowest level since 1970. The future for marriage in America is looking very bright for those who decide to make it so. And thanks to marriage retreats, marriage experts, relationship books, tapes and videos and the Internet, people who want to improve their marriages can find excellent advice from any number of sources.

But unfortunately the misleading fifty percent statistic is still causing a lot of harm. This is true because of the psychological influence factor known as *social proof*. Social proof is basically a means by which we determine what is correct by finding out what others think is correct. One example of social proof is the best seller list. If a book hits the best seller list, more people will buy it, assuming that it must be good because a lot of other people bought it.

Social proof also works in the reverse direction. If we aren't careful, the bombardment of negative bad news from the media outlets can have a profoundly negative impact on our lives.

A person struggling in his or her marriage can become very vulnerable to this kind of negative input. He or she hears of several celebrities who are splitting up, then sees similar reports on the cover of the grocery store tabloids and then remembers hearing that fifty percent of marriages end in divorce. Under these circumstances it's easy for this person to lose hope and think, "If so many people are doing it, then it must be okay for me to do it as well."