

The Coronavirus and Your Marriage - Don't let this coronavirus infect your MARRIAGE

Our physical health might not be the only way the Coronavirus might be a threat to us right now. Have you considered the potential relationship risk to your marriage as a result of this virus?

As most of you know, the origin of this virus began in China. In many ways, we have been learning from how they have managed this and responded to this. I am not a health expert and will not begin to comment on that aspect, however what I did learn this morning does fall into my area of expertise. In China, they have seen an unprecedented number of divorce appointments as a result of the stress created from this crisis.

Our marriages may be tested like never before due to the uniqueness of our circumstances. Keep in mind that we may not be able to change our circumstances, but we definitely can change how we respond to our circumstances. Trust God for He alone is trustworthy.

This is such a unique situation right now because we have never had to deal with “self-isolation” and “social-distancing”. This is also unique since it could be causing unprecedented stress in numerous ways:

- Having normal tension that comes with facing a disaster that includes dealing with fear and anxiety or even boredom
- Financial stress
- Logistical stress from working from home and home schooling children
- Isolation stress as our support systems are being taken away or changing
- Personality differences and coping differences can also increase stress levels

As Black Rock Church is evolving to consider how to help all the people affected by this, and we wanted to offer our married couples some tips on how to manage this unique health crisis:

1. **Be hyper-committed to address this AS A TEAM!** In everything you do to figure out how to manage the unique challenges you face in your marriage, **DECIDE** to fight this **TOGETHER**, not separately. Keep reminding yourself “**YOU ARE ON THE SAME TEAM**”
2. Respect each other's way of dealing with this. I remember when I (Bob Donovan) went through the 9/11 crisis in my office in New York, we (Human Resources) had one clear message to our managers. Allow people to grieve and manage this crisis in their own way. Some people chose to dive immediately back into work and some needed weeks and months to process their emotions. So, do not place the way you manage your own emotions on your spouse. He or she will likely not deal with this crisis the same way you do.

3. **Establish a schedule** (as best you can). Given the new challenges of working from home, home schooling your kids, and not being able to maintain any semblance of routine, take control of this and address it in a way that works for your family: to include how you work, home school your kids, get your downtime, personal space, exercise, etc so that it does not disrupt your family.
4. **Limit media exposure.** Over the past few days I have heard so many mixed messages. From the extreme that this will last 18 months and kills 1.2 million people to this is an over-reaction. Decide on what you watch and read, how much you watch and read.
5. **Adjust your mindset** and look at this as an opportunity and use your time wisely. Do something that you always said you never had time for. Read some books, listen to podcasts or sermons, go for more walks together, play games, do puzzles, etc.
6. **Maintain “virtual-connections”.** FaceTime or call people close to you, take advantage of the numerous virtual connections Black Rock is offering, or reach out to someone God has placed on your heart. My son-in-law recently called his former choir director and found him to be somewhat depressed being isolated. So he has been calling him every day since to check in on him.

And finally, and MOST IMPORTANTLY, use this time to do something most of us say we wished we had more time for – **growing closer to God**. Be more intentional about reading the Bible, praying together, listening to podcasts or sermons and then discussing. Setting up some “quiet time” in your day. Seeing how God might want to use you both as a couple during this time. Maybe there is a neighbor or a friend who needs a call or help with groceries. Etc.

Despite the uncertainty of all of this, we can trust and rely on our God who is sovereign and trustworthy in the face of this crisis. One of my favorite quotes from Gary Thomas is “***The more you are filled by God, the less you will demand of your spouse***”. This has likely never been more relevant.

