

Could Coronavirus Cause a Spike in Divorce Rates? Experts Weigh In

HERE'S WHY YOUR MARRIAGE COULD BE AT STAKE DURING SELF-ISOLATION.

By Allie Hogan

Sure, being stuck at home with your significant other may sound like a dream. After all, who wouldn't want unlimited hours to cuddle on the couch or cook nice dinners for each other? But too much time together, especially under such stressful circumstances, could spell disaster for any relationship. In fact, one of the most shocking side effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has been an increase in divorce rates.

Take China, which has experienced record-high divorce filings in the last month, according to Bloomberg Businessweek. And in Turkey, a lawyer reported four times the amount of divorce filings since the beginning of the nation's lockdown. So what, exactly, is the cause behind these splits? Oliver Gibbons, Esq. says spending too much time together, losing your job (or having a spouse's income drop),

Dror Bikel of Bikel & Schanfield Law says he is actually seeing a "tightening of family bonds as kids and parents work together to make the most of a bad situation." He adds that many marriages that were teetering before quarantine seem to now be back on track, and some clients have even called to withdraw their divorce filing.

and taking care of children at home are stressors that likely contribute to skyrocketing divorce rates.

Although it's normal to have arguments when you're around each other 24/7, there's a difference between a small spat and a deal-breaking discussion. "Without a doubt, there will be a wave of divorces to come," says New York City divorce lawyer Todd A. Spodek. However, despite the high number of calls Spodek has received in recent weeks, he says he believes many of the couples are just fighting and will eventually cool down.

If arguments involve assaults on one's character or problems that cannot be solved, then it may be a sign of a bigger marital issue rather than a simple quarantine squabble. Relationship counselor Viktor Sander says quarantine will only fast-track the trajectory a relationship is

already on. “If your relationship is slowly moving toward a divorce (maybe even without you knowing), spending all your time together would make that divorce happen sooner,” says Sander.

But there may be some hope yet. Dror Bikel of Bikel & Schanfield Law says he is actually seeing a “tightening of family bonds as kids and parents work together to make the most of a bad situation.” He adds that many marriages that were teetering before quarantine seem to now be back on track, and some clients have even called to withdraw their divorce filing.

So whether you’re taking this time to try and work it out with your partner, or you’re just looking to strengthen your relationship, there are some important tips you should follow to keep the magic alive.

“You can do things like schedule a date night at home. Order a nice dinner in, get dressed up, and watch a movie—whatever you would normally do on a date night,” says Lyndsey Harper, MD and founder and CEO of Rosy.

Another essential aspect of a healthy union is physical attraction. “Having sex can be a great indicator of a strong relationship, so I would ensure making sex part of your new routine,” says Harper. “Many couples find success putting sex

on the calendar, as working-from-home and other parental priorities can often get in the way.”

If you want to know the real secret to a successful marriage, it’s simply having patience and compassion for your partner. According to Harper, the key is to prioritize intimacy and communicate openly and honestly. Think of yourself and your spouse as a team up against quarantine rather than two separate people battling each other. If you learn to listen and support each other now, you could come out of this a stronger, more in-sync couple.

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