

Here's How to Not Repeat Your Parents' Mistakes In Your Marriage

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Perhaps your parents [called it quits on marriage](#) after several passionless years, or maybe your [model for a happy marriage](#) looks a little like making up after the umpteenth [dirty fight](#) of the day. Whatever the issue, watching your parents' less than perfect union has made you reasonably wary of making the same marital mistakes.

But you're not destined to follow in their relationship footsteps. "We can either learn from the mistakes, miscues, and neglect our parents practiced in marriage, or we can repeat them," says [John Duffy](#), Ph.D., licensed clinical psychologist and author of *The Available Parent*. The latter, he says, "requires some intention and deliberation, but the practice is well worth it."

First, adds [Rachel Needle](#), Psy.D, clinical psychologist and certified sex therapist based in West Palm Beach, Florida, fight the urge to simply accept that your model for marriage is the only possible way to exist with a man or woman you love. "Instead," she says, "understand yourself and your needs in a relationship as well as what you desire and deserve."

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Then, our experts say, you must stop to note the best things about your parents' marriage, alongside those things you wish you could change. "This simple list-making can provide immediate clarity into what an individual really wants in a relationship, and if she is attentive to the list on an ongoing basis, she will ensure her marriage doesn't fall into the same traps her parents' marriage fell into over time," explains Duffy.

Next, consider [having a conversation](#) with your parents about their marriage. While it may feel uncomfortable to ask them what worked and what didn't, such a conversation "can shine a light on what went wrong in a parental relationship, so that the child and her spouse do not repeat the pattern," says Duffy. Plus, "an unpredictable side-effect is often the impact the conversation has on the parents' marriage. Openly discussing the nature of their relationship, sometimes for the first time in decades, can result in positive change in this relationship, no matter how long some of the negativity has been taking place."

Remember, your parents' poor example or even divorce does not doom your marriage, "but it does take some work and focused attention to break an inter-generational pattern," says Duffy. "Attention is required to ensure you do not settle for a poor, disconnected spousal relationship. This can be accomplished regardless of the nature of your parents' marriage."