6 Reasons Not to Stay Married
By Alisa Bowman

1. **The kids.** If you are in a hopelessly miserable marriage, you’ll do more harm to your children by staying put than you will by getting out. By enduring misery, you teach your children, “I don’t deserve to be happy.” By putting up with abuse, you teach your children, “Never rock the boat. Take crap from others at all costs.” By staying in a hopeless situation, you also teach them how not to communicate, how not to have healthy relationships, and how not to be assertive. Is this what you want to teach your children?

2. **You feel obligated.** I have news for you: you don’t have to do anything. There are no “have tos” in life. None. You don’t have to go to work. You don’t have to get out of bed in the morning. You don’t have to stay in your marriage. Every single thing you do or don’t do in life is a choice—and it’s your choice. Take control of your life by owning your choices. No one is forcing you stay in a miserable marriage. You have the choice to get out. Which choice will you make?

3. **You don’t want to be alone.** Being scared of singlehood is similar to a kid who is scared of the dark. You’re scared of it because you don’t know it. You can get used to being alone. You can even come to enjoy it. By being alone, you just might find yourself. You’ll grow into a stronger, more complete person.

4. **You made a promise.** You’ve probably made many promises to yourself that you’ve eventually broken. Think back to any number of New Year’s Resolutions. Why should this one be so different? The most important promise for you to keep is this one: I promise to do what I need to do in order to live a happy and fulfilling life.

5. **You’d rather have the misery you know than the misery you don’t know.** Misery is misery. More important, life is one big problem. The sooner you start solving your problems and making the necessary changes in your life, the less miserable you will become. Misery happens when you stand still and do nothing. If you embrace change, you’ll also embrace happiness.
6. **You’re afraid of what will happen to your spouse if you leave.** You are not responsible for your spouse. You are responsible for your self. By staying with your spouse, you are enabling your spouse’s dysfunction. If your spouse has an addiction, an anger problem, a drinking problem, or depression and refuses to seek help, the best thing you can do is remove yourself as a crutch. Once your spouse is forced to walk on his or her own two feet—as all grownups should—he or she might just grow up and seek treatment.

In the end, you should stay in your marriage because you want to, not because you think you have to. You stay in your marriage because you believe it has potential. You stay in your marriage because, most of the time, you still love your spouse. You stay in your marriage because, by being with your spouse, you see yourself growing into a stronger, happier person.

You stay in your marriage because you’ve made the choice to do so.

You get out of a marriage because you’ve made the choice to do so, too. Not every marriage can be saved. Try everything to improve your marriage. If your spouse refuses to change or you see not one ounce of improvement after several months of hard work, it’s time to think about getting a divorce and start thinking about living the rest of your life.

No one can tell you the right thing to do. It’s your decision. It’s your choice. It’s your life. It’s your happiness.

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**5 Reasons to Stay Married**

In my opinion, good reasons to stay married—even if you are both currently unhappy—include:

1. **You are both willing to work together to try to improve your marriage.** It takes two people to create a good marriage. It only takes one to ruin one.
2. **You haven’t yet tried everything possible to save your marriage.** You have not gone to marital counseling, sex counseling, or individual therapy. You have not read marital improvement books or gone on couples weekends.

3. **You are going through a temporary rough patch.** Maybe one of you just lost a job. Perhaps one of you is grieving the loss of a loved one. You can easily pinpoint when your problems started, and you can see an end in sight.

4. **You feel hopeful that your marriage can be saved.** You think your marriage has potential.

5. **You’ve been working on your marriage and you see some improvement.** You might not be anywhere close to nirvana, but you’re certainly better than you once were.

These are all good reasons to try. They are all good reasons to muster every ounce of endurance and resilience you have. These are things that just might carry you through so that, one day, you can look back and say, “Wow I’m really glad we stuck it out because look at how far we’ve come. I’m so happy you are still in my life.”