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5 ways to help recession-proof your relationship

I get stuff sent to me all the time, but with the recession taking an emotional toll on marriages and relationships, I thought I'd pass on this advice from Noelle Nelson, author of "Your Man is Wonderful."

"We've seen the result in violent family tragedies across the country," says Nelson, "but that's just the tip of the iceberg. The heartbreak comes in many forms. One spouse blames the other spouse for their financial predicament. It's a constant blame game. ... People lose hope and leave the marriage either emotionally or physically."

Nelson's five rules to recession-proof your relationship:

1. See yourself as a team. The power of "together" is tremendous. A couple who sees themselves as a team will pool their talents and resources to mutual advantage, give strength to one another, and sustain hope.

2. Focus on each other's strengths and qualities. This is not the time to dwell on your own or your partner's weaknesses. On the contrary, this is the time to empower each other by taking inventory of your strengths and qualities.

3. Express appreciation to one another -- resist the temptation to put down or criticize. Insecurity is rampant, not just in our external lives, but also internally. In times of crisis, we doubt our abilities, we question whether we have what it takes to pull through, we worry about how much worse things can get. Criticizing or putting down your partner just intensifies those fears, not only in them, but in yourself. Instead, let your partner know how much you appreciate them just as they are, and reassure them of your love. Express your gratitude often -- for however they contribute to the betterment of your lives -- whether it is helping out with the kids, putting in overtime, or sending out yet another resume.

4. Set goals you can work on together -- focus on problem-solving, not blaming. The only way there is light at the end of the tunnel is if you see it there. Brainstorm together to figure out what goals you seek, break those down into smaller goals and rough out a plan for getting there. Keep your sights constantly on "How do we resolve this?" not "You'll never be able to do that." Keep that precious "we" front and center, respect your partner's ideas and input as much as you do your own.

5. Acknowledge and celebrate small victories along the way. The more crisis enters your life, the more difficult it is to sustain positivity and pro-activity. That's why it's so important to acknowledge and celebrate every small gain you achieve. Whether it's figuring out a swap with the neighbor -- after school child care in return for computer lessons -- or making it through the next round of layoffs without losing your job, enthusiastically cheer every bit of progress.

"The economic crisis is not going to change overnight," says Nelson. "In an age of instant gratification, it's sometimes hard to be patient and remain strong and committed within a marriage during trying times. In the end, however, these ordeals can make a marriage stronger as partners truly commit to each other."