

## Dr. Nelson: make your marriage work, without all the work

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Marriage is hard work, but it shouldn't always be hard work.

Chicago Marriage Examiner's Marina Mayer chats with clinical psychologist and self-proclaimed relationship expert Dr. Noelle Nelson about the pitfalls and repercussions of a marriage that becomes all work and no play.

**Chicago Marriage Examiner:** When marriage becomes all business, women complain and men leave. What does this mean?

**Dr. Noelle Nelson:** Women tend to speak up when something is bothering them. They'll complain to their friends, family, co-workers and their husbands. Men are different. Men are trained by our culture and society not to whine or complain, but to be stoic and put up with hardship. They bring that attitude to their relationships as well.

Their response to being frustrated by things happening in a marriage is often to leave -- not necessarily leave physically, although that may certainly happen -- but leave emotionally and mentally. They'll veg on the couch while family life swirls around them or just not be the happy-go-lucky guy he once was.

**Chicago Marriage Examiner:** Why/how do some marriages transform from a love-filled relationship to a business-type marriage? What are some red flags that couples can keep an eye on?

**Dr. Nelson:** Sometimes, it seems, all we have time for is getting the kids taken care of (back and forth to soccer practice, getting their homework done, making sure they are presentable before stepping out the front door), keeping the house clean, dealing with family finances, work and the inevitable "one crisis after another." The closeness, the feeling of true connection in a marriage diminishes under the weight of day-to-day living.

**Chicago Marriage Examiner:** What suggestions or advice do you have for a couple whose marriage is heading down the wrong road?

**Dr. Nelson:**

Pay as much attention to the connection side of your relationship as you do to the business side.

Openly express your appreciation to your mate every day, let him [or her] know how valuable he [or she] is -- to you and to your family. Say it with words, say it with touch (a smile, a kiss, a hug), say it with simple, sincere acts of showing how much you care.

Purposefully join in those activities your spouse enjoys, be that the ballgame on Sunday afternoon, his interest in golf, or his fascination with a new software program.

If you can't join in, be supportive, interested and enthusiastic. Don't put him [or her] down for trying something new or for truly enjoying baseball, for example, when you think it's the most boring game ever invented.

Be engaged in his or her work, show interest in what makes up your spouse's day, and engage your spouse in yours.

**Chicago Marriage Examiner:** Please provide additional information on this topic.

**Dr. Nelson:** Connection is automatic when we first fall in love, but it must be nurtured if it is to be maintained, and lovingly tended so you remain close, not apart, as the years go by.

**Chicago Marriage Examiner's Note:** Noelle C. Nelson, Ph.D., is a relationship expert, popular speaker in the United States and abroad, and author of nine best-selling books including her most recent, *Your Man is Wonderful* and *Dangerous Relationships*. Visit [www.yourmaniswonderful.com](http://www.yourmaniswonderful.com).