

Features



The Kozouz sisters answer your relationship questions every Tuesday in *The Detroit News*. Send your questions to Lowdown@detnews.com or write to *Motown Lowdown* c/o *The Detroit News*, 615 W. Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226.

Find ways to help your sister de-stress from hard marriage

MMy sister and brother-in-law have always had a shaky relationship. They've gone through marriage counseling off and on for the last five years, and nothing's getting better. They argue in front of the kids. My sister is due to have another baby in two weeks. When they talk about divorce, they say they can't do it because of the kids and money. Any suggestions on how to help them?

— Rocky in Royal Oak

Dear Rocky:

So many people use kids as an excuse not to escape a bored or faulty relationship. Kids become the crutch or a fantasy that they will bring the couple closer together. The stress of having children will only cause a greater fissure in an already weakened relationship. Your sister should not have escaped the reality of her unhealthy marriage by bringing yet another child into a feuding, unloving situation. She needs to stop thinking that she's doing this for the children when in reality all she's causing them is undue stress and mental anguish. She should find a way out of her marriage, settling the children in a peaceful environment with joint custody.

— Rana

It's hard to believe Rana and I are from the same family. Divorce? Her sister is obviously committed with children. I give her so much credit for sticking with it and attending counseling sessions for five years. Most couples would have given up after five months. Marriage and family take commitment, dedication and hard work. Tell your sister to hang in there and continue to work out their issues.

— Leena

Your sister and brother-in-law cannot make each other happy unless they find happiness within themselves first. Encourage them to seek individual counseling, as well as a new marriage counselor who may give them a new or different perspective.

— Ruba

It's difficult to stand by and watch family members struggle, but unfortunately there's not much you can do in this situation. Your sister and brother-in-law need to work this out on their own. The best thing you can do for her right now is to be supportive. Offer to baby-sit so she can have some alone time to de-stress or perhaps have a "date" night with her husband to

reconnect. Helping them alleviate the strain of life's everyday challenges may do them more good than you think.

— Reham

Our marriage was contingent on my husband agreeing to go to technical school and getting a better job. While he went to school, he has failed to find a job in the field. I feel stuck and now we are married. He currently has a job delivering goods. Is there any way I can encourage him to hold up his end of the bargain?

— Miffed in Madison Heights

Dear Miffed:

Sisters, read between the lines here! It sounds like our reader is too embarrassed to tell her girlfriends her husband has a job delivering goods. My advice is for her to quit being so shallow and actually help him look for a job in the technical field if that's what he still wants. Help him put together a resume, post it on the Internet, seek a recruiter specializing in the technical field. Until then, whether delivering pizzas or produce, being helpful instead of judgmental is much more constructive.

— Reham

The key words "contingent on getting married" and "feel stuck" concern me. There were problems long before he even gave you a ring if your commitment to one another was based on contingencies. It sounds as if you are using his current job as an excuse to escape an unhappy marriage. One would not feel trapped in a healthy marriage.

— Ruba

How many of us got our degrees and are actually in those fields? What are all the liberal arts majors from the class of '92 doing — liberating the arts? I don't think so. Just be happy that in today's hard economic climate and high unemployment rate that he's bringing home any money at all.

— Rana

If he truly gave you his word, he owes it to you. You went into this marriage with certain expectations of him and his career, and he misled you. As a husband, he has an obligation to provide for you and your family as promised. And please, sisters, don't tell me you wouldn't care.

— Leena