



My Mother's 7 Secrets to Having a Good Relationship:

1) Marriage is not a 50/50 relationship. It is more like a 70/30 relationship, where you always feel like you are contributing more than the other person. She said that each side always feels like you are contributing more to the relationship than the other. She said you just need to accept this as a starting point and that the problems start when the balance is even more slanted--like when you feel you are contributing way more than 70%. Whether it's 60/40 or 70/30 her advice was that you need to accept the feeling of imbalance up to the point where it really is way, way out of whack. Then, and only then, do you need to speak up and take this up with your partner. Because when the imbalance is so great is when you can only really make a point that can lead to progress. If you are always quibbling about the balance, it will only break down the relationship.

I have found this secret, the 70/30 test, to be true in my business relationships with my clients. It is a great way for an agency partner to measure their contribution. I know it is a great way for a client to gauge when it is time to declare a "time out" with their agency partner, to fix a potential situation that may be developing. Remember the 70/30 principle and only yelp when you really feel the imbalance is so crystal clear, there can be little debate.

2) Next-- "When you have problems, and you will, do not discuss them with a friend or other third party. It is always tempting to complain and offload to someone. However, doing so often magnifies the problem or issue psychologically by a third". She said, you need to talk the problem with your partner, not a bunch of other people who are not directly involved.

Now, she didn't object to the occasional need to seek advice from a qualified expert or counselor. She did say that we should resist this,

by trying every means to talk with our partners first. Work it out with them. Besides the fact that other third party friends and associates magnify the issue, talking to other people, other than your agency partner can cost you a lot of time and money. Try to work it out with your agency partner with a good honest dialogue. It is worth it, believe me. And, if the open dialogue solves the issue you have built a foundation of trust and open-ness that will serve you well when you have future problems. Like my mom said-- all relationships have problems at some time or another.

Speaking of exposing problems to others, here is a spot we did that kind of links this thought together:

3) The next secret my mother told me about marriage is related to this need to talk to each other, often. She said--"Everyone's biggest complaint is 'You don't listen to me'. Wow, I am sure we have all heard this one. "You don't listen to me. You don't listen to what I want. You don't listen to my advice", etc, etc.

To bring this point home, here is a spot we did in Brazil. It deals with listening and coming clean about telling each other the truth:

Listen to each other. Tell the truth to each other. Often. You will find like that commercial-- it could lead to a surprisingly beautiful relationship.

4) My mother told me, "Tim, tell her she is pretty every day. You will be amazed at just how far that little statement will make things go right. Tell her she is pretty everyday. Don't forget. Don't let a day go by, without somehow letting her know. She said it would have huge impact on her self-esteem. It will make her feel better and she will take better care to make sure she is looking and feeling better". I gotta tell you, she was absolutely right. I know, because a little positive appreciation goes a long, long way with me, too. Come on, I know it does for you as well.

A constant stream of negative feedback destroys the client/ agency relationship. It works both ways. Positive reinforcement is what you should think of with this secret. Each of us need to think of ways to positively reinforce the best of what we want and hope for each other.

It makes the difficult, critical comments we occasionally need to make to each other, get heard and embraced.

Sometimes it really is hard to find something positive to reinforce. Our minds often misguide us, because we assume we are seeing things the way they are. I think this next spot will give you an idea of what I mean about how we can sometimes see things which have nothing to do with the positive things we need to think about each other:

Beware of the voices. Remember to stay on track, with your objectives of having a great client agency love affair. Find a way to let your partner know, every day, that you treasure them. The dividends on your brand building efforts will be enormous.

5) A corollary secret on this was " Be careful of saying bad words to each other, because you can't get them back again. People can't forget. They may forgive, eventually, but they can never forget words said in anger. It just isn't worth it, especially on a regular basis. It does not lead to a peak-performing agency relationship. The reason, is that the agency is in the ideas business. Developing ideas is more art than science, you don't manufacture them like a widget. They come from inspiration and an environment that is more playful, than drudgery. So, keep it light and stay away from breeding an environment of fear or trepidation. The great brands, the one that lead over time, come from healthy environments between client and agency.

I think it took a healthy relationship to create the following copy.

6) Another piece of advice was "Surprise them with flowers once in a while. It shows them you are anticipating their needs without their having to ask, without the excuse of a special occasion." This is a really good one. We all like to be given great, new business- building ideas without having to ask for them all the damn time. We also don't like unpleasant or off the subject surprises, either.

There are two things you can do to foster a process of continual improvement, while minimizing the unwanted surprise. The first is encourage them by maintaining an open environment for any new ideas they may want to tell you about, assuming the basic plot you

have already agreed upon is being addressed. Neither partner should ever make promises they are not willing to keep. The old saying of "under-promise and over-deliver" is central to this. But, do make certain you are encouraging a healthy environment for exploring new thinking and ideas that can help the brand's business stay ahead of the game. Maintaining a winning position in a highly competitive marketing world, requires a healthy level of innovation--and surprise.

7) The final thing my mother always instilled in me--and I can see her now making the point emphatically, as she often did-- was "Never, Never, ever mention that word, divorce. Just don't let it creep into your mouth. Fight it, Tim. I'm tellin ya, it has no place in your relationship. Keep it out. Because once it creeps in, it creates a fear that'll make it hard to keep the relationship. If you want to keep the bond, never talk about divorce." Who among us here cannot relate to this? I know I have seen it. I have certainly heard clients talk about getting a new agency. Heck the grass is always greener, when it comes to a marriage or a business partnership. Resist the temptation my friends. Resist the temptation to even think that talking about this will be of any value to your business, except to destroy what you have invested in your partnership.

I talked earlier about the divorce rate and how this might be a trend influencing all relationships. I recently read some interesting research on affairs. You can draw your own conclusions from this data but its universally known that the main allure in an affair is the temporary thrill one can get.

But when people leave their marriages, their relationships in the light of day, a lot of passion disappears.

The divorce rate for second marriages is about 60%, higher than for first marriages. And even more interesting, the divorce rate for those who go ahead and marry the affair-partner is worse – at 75%.

So maybe my Mother was right. Divorce or even having an affair with another agency can lead to some pretty low odds of success for you and your brand.

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