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The New Bride's Guide to Overcoming "Post-Wedding Depression"

By Sierra Livermore

It had been two months since I wore my wedding dress. Our gifts were all unwrapped. The bistro lights and centerpieces were packed up and stored away. But I lay on my bed, curled up in a ball, immersed in deep, deep sorrow.

It didn't make sense. I enjoyed married life. My husband and I loved each other more with each passing day. And yet, I felt a peculiar anxiety I couldn't describe.

I was experiencing what I call "Post-Wedding Depression," a deep emptiness and anxiety triggered by the torrent of transitions I was going through at the

time. Interestingly, a recent study showed that 1-in-8 married women have a similar experience after their wedding.¹

If you find yourself in this same position, know that you are not alone. As you seek to break through this dark cloud of depression, here are four steps to help.

1. Avoid comparing your-self to other Newlyweds

In a world saturated with social media, it is easy to compare ourselves to others. Though it is tempting to assume everyone is better off than you, remember

that you only see what people want you to see on social media. Comparisons only hurt your own well-being, and when those comparisons lead to feeling disappointed in your relationship, they can create severe strain in your marriage.²

There is no single, correct way to have a happy and fulfilling marriage. The key is to identify what works best for you and your spouse.

The reality is that every couple is different. One couple may prioritize spontaneity and adventure, while another may emphasize consistency and comfort. One couple may receive financial support from family, another may be financially independent. One couple may travel often, another may be tied to home. Every couple has different circumstances, priorities, and goals. There is no single, correct way to have a happy and fulfilling marriage. The key is to identify what works best for you and your spouse.

Talk with your spouse about what you both envision for your marriage and create goals to achieve it. Remind yourself what matters most to you, specifically, and work together to create the life you want. Doing this will help you avoid the trap of comparison and prevent feelings of envy when it seems like other couples “have it all.”

2. Establish a support system outside of your spouse.

There are simply some needs your spouse cannot always meet. If you believe your husband is the only person you can turn towards to fulfill your emotional needs, you will likely feel disappointed if he does not meet these needs as well as, say, your best friend used to. When the only person you turn to is your husband, you may both become drained by a barrage of hard and heavy conversations.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Comfort, guidance, and advice from loved ones who care about you can be tremendously helpful. Though they should not replace emotional intimacy with your spouse, they can provide perspective and support to help you and your spouse navigate difficulties together. So long as you and your husband establish healthy boundaries, your friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors can be helpful emotional resources through difficult life transitions.³

3. Acknowledge the baby steps.

Transitioning to married life is no small feat. Beginning this new chapter may include moving, merging bank accounts, dividing household chores, balancing holidays between two families, making financial decisions, starting new daily routines, and much, much more. For some couples, it even means transitioning from abstinence to sexual activity.

One of the best ways to power through these massive changes is to recognize and record the small progress you make each day.⁴ Whether it's figuring out how to do the laundry in the new house for the first time, making an appointment to change your last name on your driver's license, or simply discussing goals for a family budget, acknowledge the progress you make every day and write them down in a journal. When you start to feel overwhelmed, open your journal and give yourself credit for how far you have come. There's no set timeline for making all these marital transitions.

4. Learn more about marriage.

It is never too late to learn about marriage! Marriage preparation courses are designed to help couples paint a realistic picture of married life, learn how to manage conflict, work on communication skills, and everything in between.⁵ They can be a great resource in educating both you and your partner on a healthy marriage. Marriage preparation isn't just for engaged couples!

You may also benefit from individual or couple's therapy.⁶ Many people assume that therapy is only to fix crumbling relationships, but it can also serve as a personalized guide to establish a healthy foundation for your marriage. Therapists are ecstatic when couples seek help early on to strengthen the foundation of their relationship rather than dragging themselves in to fix a serious problem that has been boiling

for years. Unfortunately, not every couple can afford therapy. Fortunately, however, there are a variety of free resources available, including podcasts, videos, library books, articles, social media accounts, and blogs.⁷ Take advantage of the resources around you to learn, understand, and grow together.

Final Thoughts

My husband and I have now been married for more than two years. Though the first several months of married life were difficult to adjust to, working through those challenges brought us closer together. It is through those trials that we learned how to lean on each other, how to meet each other's needs, and how to unify despite challenges. Looking back, learning those lessons at the beginning of our marriage turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It set a solid foundation for the years to come, and we are stronger because of it.

The first several months of your marriage may feel like a whirlwind of changes and emotions. If you find yourself confused by these emotions, know that you are not alone. As you navigate the challenging transition to married life, remember that this will not be difficult forever.⁸ Take care of yourself, lean on those around you, and take advantage of resources that can help you. In doing so, you and your spouse can rise from this trial stronger than ever before.

Endnotes

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