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# Why I'll Never Regret Marrying My High School Sweetheart

We may have lost friends along the way, but I couldn't imagine my life without him.

BY BRETTE SEMBER

themix

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We were 17 when we met, the summer before senior year, at a barbecue a mutual friend was hosting. I had an extra hamburger. Terry didn't even have one. We've been together ever since.

Before I met my husband, I was fascinated by the parents of a friend. They were high school sweethearts, together forever, raising a big brood of children in a distinctly suburban house filled with chaos, laughter, and smiles. That life was my goal and was so different from what I lived as a child: isolated home in the country, career mother, detached father, and no siblings. As a lonely teen, I longed for a soulmate, who would become my entire life.

I dreamed of a life of love and as soon as we started to date, it seemed my dreams were coming true. Although we went to different high schools, dating gave me all a teen girl could want. We did everything I had always longed to do with a boyfriend: went to football games, had picnics, rode a camel at the zoo, went to dances, celebrated Sweetest Day, made Halloween costumes, and went to prom. It was the fairytale I'd been waiting for. Suddenly we had each other and because we were everything the other person needed, we started to lose touch with our friends who couldn't understand our instant and permanent partnership.

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We got married when we were 20. Our friends thought we were weird. Our parents thought we were foolish. We had no doubts. Ahead of the curve with our marital status, we drifted away from most friends who remained single for years. I finished college and went to law school and he worked to support us. We were busy and blissful.

At 23, I gave birth to our beautiful daughter. It was the right time for us and we quickly bought a starter home. Any friends we still had were mostly single or just beginning to think about marriage. We were a family and had moved to a different plane. I finished law school and we both worked hard. It took us years to conceive our son, and when he came along I left my law practice. We were deeply focused on our brood: kids and dogs and the joy they brought us.

Years passed and we shared the highs and lows that are the glue of marriage: deaths of loved ones, moves, financial crises, home repairs, successes, failures, and the everyday snapshots of family life. Through it all we relied on each other for laughter, hugs, support, and encouragement. Every moment of every day I knew I had my best friend to depend on.

The years have sped by and we recently celebrated our 26th anniversary. As always, we're ahead of the curve with people our age. Our daughter has moved out and is in medical school. Our son is a senior in high school and increasingly independent, busy, and absent. Suddenly, after all these years, it is the two of us alone, eating dinner together, walking the dogs, planning trips, and sharing the everyday highs and lows that have meaning when you can talk about them with someone who understands you. Our almost-empty nest has thrown the spotlight back on our relationship.

We're at a challenging juncture. We're not only adjusting to the fact that, for the most part, we are no longer hands-on parents, and we are coping with our aging parents and their health and lifestyle concerns. We're facing a few bumps in our own healthy paths and are planning and hoping for a future of grandchildren, retirement, travel, and happiness.

I have never regretted marrying the man who made my heart race when I was a teen. Since age 17, he has been my constant companion and fellow journeyman on the path we share. I find it incredibly comforting to have a shared past. We have the same memories, experiences, and frame of reference. Because we fell in love at such a young age, we have grown together, making choices and decisions that have further cemented our lives and our love. My only regret is that because we sped ahead so quickly with our lives, we lost touch with friends and never had the time to find new ones. Now that we have plenty of time, we have few people to share it with, other than family.

I look back on that couple I knew as a teen and realize the perfect family life I so envied probably was not nearly as perfect as it looked to this lonely child, but also realize with a start that I got the dream. And what an incredible gift it has been.

From: The Mix

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