

## Madonna's Divorce and Your Marriage

Learn how high-powered women make their relationships work

By [Divorce360.com Staff](#) Posted October 17, 2008 from [Divorce360.com](#)

After months of denying the rumors, "Material Girl" Madonna has announced to the Associated Press that she and her husband, filmmaker, Guy Ritchie, are planning to divorce.

Madonna, 50, had wanted to wait until her latest tour, "Sticky and Sweet," ends in December before making the announcement, but British tabloids splashed the news across the front page this week, prompting Madonna's publicist to confirm the news.

The split isn't a surprise to Divorce360 expert [Brette McWhorter Sember](#), a former divorce attorney turned author, whose books include *No Fight Divorce* and *The Divorce Organizer and Planner*. "When everyone is asking 'Is your marriage is OK?,' you yourself may begin to question it. You wonder, 'What do they see that I don't?' and 'What do they know that I don't?' " "I don't think the average person can understand just how hard it is to have the eyes of the entire world on you 24-7...Imagine how nervous you'd be having your neighborhood peering into your windows, your family members selling the secrets you spill ...or feeling like the press has set up a timer that counts down the hours until divorce the second you walk down the aisle. I don't care how much you love someone, that negative energy is likely to have a negative effect," said Brenda Della Casa, relationship expert and author of [Cinderella was a Liar](#).

Part of the problem with anyone who is in a relationship with the pop star is her larger-than-life popularity, said [Tina Tessina](#), Ph.D., author of *Money, Sex and Kids: Stop Fighting about the Three Things that Can Ruin your Marriage*. Tessina, a Long Beach, Calif., psychotherapist said it's simply hard for high-powered women to find a man who can deal with their status. "I think when one career is up, and the other down, is the most difficult thing for couples, especially if the man's career is the less successful," she said. Divorces happen "if you don't know how to be a team," Tessina said. "Relationships without teamwork are brittle, and crack easily. If you learn to be a team, then even the partner who's not doing so well gets kudos for being the 'Wind beneath the Wings' and the more successful partner should be able to help and support," she said.

Spouses of high-profile people, like Madonna, need to know that "your partner's success isn't your failure," Della Casa said. "There's a difference between being inspired by your spouse and so competitive that you feel you are always being one-upped or outshone. This happens in non-celebrity couples as well as those in the limelight. I have seen relationships disintegrate when one partner is more successful socially or in his or her career than the other and there is a feeling of imbalance and inequality."

Madonna and Rich married in December 2000 and have two children, Rocco, 8, and David Banda, 3, who is adopted from Malawi. Madonna also has a 12-year-old daughter, Lourdes, with personal trainer Carlos Leon.

According to the [Associated Press](#), the couple is worth about \$525 million, most of which belongs to Madonna. The couple owns homes in London, Los Angeles, New York and Wiltshire, England. The couple's potential breakup has been in the media since this summer when Cynthia Rodriguez, the ex-wife of New York Yankees player Alex Rodriguez, suggested the pop star was having an emotional affair with her then husband.



Photo: © Comstock

"Emotional affairs exist because I think a lot of people stay in marriages that are not the best for them. This way, their feelings and emotions get taken into account somewhere else," said Alice Aspen March, a Los Angeles-based author of [The Attention Factor](#). They are appreciated somewhere else, loved somewhere else, respected somewhere else, where they aren't at home. It might just be keeping that marriage together."

During the rumors this summer, Madonna denied the reports about her impending divorce and about A-Rod, calling the two friends. After that, media reports said the couple started spending less and less time together, which may have been a clue that things were not as well as the couple had portrayed.

"Emotional affairs can be as damaging as sexual affairs," Tessina said. "You can have an innocent crush on someone, and it doesn't need to become disrespectful. Married people, especially parents, need to grow up emotionally and learn self-control. If you're a celeb, and acting in ways the paparazzi can document as out-of-bounds, that's not respectful to your wife and family. To recover, talk about it calmly, and share the facts...If you weren't doing wrong, then sharing the facts will sort things out. "

If the reports were true, Sember said the only way they could have avoided a divorce is by getting professional help. "You need to find a way to re-commit to each other on an emotional level. Usually counseling is the way to get through this," she said.

As the divorce was announced, [Us magazine](#) linked Madonna with A-Rod again, saying she had dinner with him on Oct. 2 at Dos Caminos in New York City, but she "has agreed to be discreet about her relationship with A-Rod until her tour ends and a divorce is announced."

Tessina had this advice for other couples struggling with similar issues: "Learn to work together, to be each others' 'Go-to' person and to pool your energy and talents. Also, learn to relax with each other, and shield each other from the public eye."

Della Casa suggested that partners learn how to respect each other, so one partner isn't overpowered by what the other partner wants. "The more you push someone to do it your way the more they will run into the other direction... Ask yourself, 'Do I want to be right 100 percent of the time or do I want to have a relationship with another person?' The fact is any two people who relate to one another are not going to see, think and feel the same all of the time. That's just reality," she said.

So what's next for Madonna and Ritchie? A formal divorce agreement about custody and visitation issues as well as how to split their financial assets, depending on the use of a prenuptial agreement, Sember said.

"When you have two strong personalities one way to make the divorce as friendly as possible is to keep your focus on the children and what they need, not what each of you wants," she said.

#### **KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE WITH A HIGH-POWERED WOMAN**

##### **1. Talk, talk, talk!**

You're both busy, but share ideas, wants and needs. You need to keep up with each other.

##### **2. Two strong heads are best when they work together.**

Your individual strengths can cancel out each other's weaknesses. Learn to be a team, and pull together.

##### **3. Don't compete with each other.**

Focus on using your collective power to compete in the outside world, not against each other.

##### **4. Learn to brainstorm.**

Sharing ideas outloud, without criticism, really opens up your creative thinking. Together, you could save the world!

##### **5. Don't forget to have downtime.**

Be the safe place for each other to let down, and stop being so gosh darn in charge.--*Tina Tessina*

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