

Selected Excerpts from
Married for Real: Building a Loving, Powerful Life Together
by Eddie and Tamara George

GETTING REAL

Are we relationship experts? No. Do we have degrees in psychology or counseling? No again. But we believe we have something worth saying. We each bring a lifetime of relationship experience to this book and we've got 13 years of togetherness that have taught us what it takes to make a relationship work. Could we have benefited from a book like this? Absolutely! That's one of the big reasons we wanted to do it. We know how important it is to hear from real people who've been through good and bad and come out the other end united—and smiling!

For whatever reason, most books like this don't get "real." Anyone who knows us knows that we are *definitely* real. That's not something we have to work at. It's just who we are. And so we've done our best to bring that to the table. You'll get to see us, warts and all. We'll talk about real situations and real outcomes. This is life, not fairy tales. But we're hoping you can learn from everything we've been through, that you can sort through the laughter and the tears and pick up some tips you can use to build your own great relationship.

We're going to present six very "doable rules:

- Find and Polish the True YOU
- Put in the TIME
- Live by FAITH
- Handle your MONEY
- Learn the True Art of SEX
- Live the Power of ONE

FIND AND POLISH THE REAL YOU

[Eddie] My idea of family was shattered at the age of five when my mom and dad were divorced. I really didn't know why they were splitting up, but I thought it was because of me... because I didn't help my mom with the chores around the house. As sad as that is, that's what I thought. Little did I know that my father abused my mom and that he verbally, physically and sexually abused my sister. That's what drove a spike through the family, but I still carried the thought that I had caused it. As the years went by, the relationship between my mom and my sister was affected too. They just didn't get along. My family was dismantled for reasons I didn't know at that time.

My mom was a flight attendant, and she was gone a lot. My sister and I lived with my grandmother most of the time while I was in grade school and high school, and I only saw my mom on the weekends. My father was in and out of my life a lot during those years. He lived right around the corner from me, but he was high all the time. Some of my friends, even some of my cousins, sold him drugs. They'd laugh about it as they told me. My father's behavior had a big effect on me. The things he was doing right there in the neighborhood eroded my confidence and self esteem and chipped away at my very identity.

During those years, with no one I viewed as a real disciplinary figure, I became quite the little menace. I wasn't doing things like stealing or robbing people—it was more like skipping class or skipping school altogether, not studying or applying myself academically. I didn't care about school. I cared about football. That's where I poured all my dreams.

. . . My mom saw what was happening and decided after my sophomore year at Abington High School in Philadelphia to send me to Fork Union Military Academy in Virginia. She saw my potential, the part I was using and the part I was wasting, and she made a huge financial sacrifice to send me away to school.

It was there that I was given the opportunity to change my perception of what my life could be. My football coach was a huge anchor in my life at that time. He challenged me and pushed me hard. He told me I could be a Division 1 running back, maybe even a Heisman Trophy winner.

All of us have good and bad influences battling inside us, and despite the people who were pushing me to do well, it was very difficult for me. I put a lot of defense mechanisms in place just to survive, because there had always been other people and situations that were negative when it came to what I was doing or wanted to accomplish. Those defenses would stay with me well into my adulthood.

[Taj] I grew up in a violent household with a stint of molestation from a cousin. My stepfather, who came into my life when I was three years old, was a serious drug addict who was physically abusive to my family—mostly to my mother. To go into detail about the abuse that he put my family through would require a book in itself. We'll save my stepfather and cousin for a to-be-continued autobiography. My biological dad died when I was 9, my mom when I was 14. My three brothers and I were then split up. I had to live with a cousin who was not nurturing at all. In fact, I pretty much lived the Cinderella story—the first part, before the fairy godmother.

. . . Living in a one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment in New York City with six people was a bit crowded. That I could deal with. What I didn't like was having to clean up after everyone else, especially since Monday-Friday I was attending school, followed by work. I had to wash dishes every day, no matter what time I came home, and clean the bathroom, which was about the size of a large closet. It was just horrendous for me. I wanted my fairy godmother!

. . . Growing up, I can't remember seeing a couple that made me say to myself, 'When I have a boyfriend, I want my relationship to be just like that'. Every person I knew was having some kind of physical or emotional abuse or marital problem.

I felt like I couldn't open up to anybody, so I closed myself off. It became hard to manage my emotions around people. When I did find someone who seemed to reciprocate my love—who ended up being a boyfriend—I became so attached and overbearing that I think I just pushed him away. I was 18 or 19 and ready to be in love for the rest of my life. I realized later how crazy I must have seemed. I just wanted an incredible marriage and a family that I could depend on and I would think, I've found it every time I found a boyfriend who treated me nicely (at first). I would believe that with him my life could finally have some kind of foundation. Of course, there aren't many boys that age ready for anything like that, so I found myself sabotaging my relationships almost from the start.

PUT IN THE TIME

Getting to know someone—which is what you want to do before you commit to forever—takes time. Learning *anything* takes time, and a human being is about the most complex subject you can tackle. You need to see someone in a lot of different situations. *How is your partner in social settings? How does he react to disappointment? How does she handle success? How does he treat his family? How does she like your friends? How is he with money? What are her dreams?* and a hundred other questions. Yes, you can spend a lifetime learning all there is to know about someone, but you should have a pretty good start before you say, "I do."

And we're talking about getting to know them in every way—not just physically! We'll spend a whole chapter on sex, but the point now is that sex is not a highway to the kind of knowledge you need about your partner—and it can actually be a roadblock. You can spend hour after hour in bed and not know any more about your partner than you did beforehand.

LIVE BY FAITH

[Taj] I won't say that walking in faith wasn't tough, because while you're trying to believe in God you have all kinds of situations coming at you to tell you, "Oh, it's not going to work. He doesn't exist!" But you have to continue to believe and keep that faith and know that whatever you're going through, it's for a reason, and that reason is to make you stronger and prepare you for something else.

And if I hadn't had the sense to turn to God when I did, my relationship with Eddie may not have worked. I wouldn't have been ready. Now, don't get me wrong. I wasn't in church 24 hours a day and I never tell people they have to do that. I didn't go to Bible studies. I didn't go to church every day. I went every Sunday. That was my God Day, the day I spent in my deepest meditation modes.

[Eddie] When we knew we were heading toward marriage and a family, we started counseling through the church. We really wanted ours to be a strong foundation, and we felt like if we could get God at the center of our relationship, we could get through everything, good and bad.

Our first sessions, with the Rev. Barry Tolles, gave us a chance to open up and talk about our backgrounds, our hopes and fears, and how we felt about each other. They helped us learn to pray for each other when we were apart and to keep each other encouraged, to have each other's back no matter what. Those sessions really brought us close together and helped us grow on a spiritual level.

Going to church while we were dating was important for us. It helped keep us in the Word. Altogether, our faith gave us a bigger vision than we might have had otherwise. It taught us not to take the good times for granted and it taught us that when things go bad, it's not the end. It's not the time to quit. Bad times are just part of the process. Faith means you're willing to work through them, to look for common ground, to give and take, knowing there's a solution somewhere up ahead.

HANDLE YOUR MONEY

[Taj] Eddie and I both have personal accounts. I happen to like Louis Vuitton bags. He loves shoes and clothes. Those aren't things we should be taking from our home account. That's our economic foundation, and we don't want to weaken that. We have "allowances," money we can spend for those indulgences. We discussed from the beginning what the reasonable limits were so that we don't have to worry about somebody doing something crazy with our family's savings.

At this point, he still makes more than I do but we are balanced in that fact and I add to the household as much as he does. When Eddie's NFL career ended, he had a sense of, Am I still going to be the head of the house? And I'm like, Absolutely! We're in this together! We've always been in this together, and I would never look at him as if he were any less of a man when his career or salary level changed. I would never look down on him because his situation changed because he didn't look down on me when mine changed. I appreciated that and I have to give him as much respect as he gave me when I was in transition. And that means if he likes that golf course and he needs to go out there sometimes and think, I say, You go right ahead. We both came in as individuals and keeping our fun personal accounts gives us a sense of life being half full instead of half empty.

. . . When it's something major that draws on our joint account, then we sit down face to face and talk it through. When we went looking for our house, there were things each of us wanted and argued for, but they were things that fit inside the price range we had agreed on. We didn't always agree on the style of the house or the size of the yard, but after we'd looked at enough places, we found something that made us both happy.

PRACTICE THE ART OF SEX

[Taj] I consider anything we do in terms of expressing our love to be an outpouring of thankfulness to God for bringing us together. So I make sure—and at times I may drive him crazy—that now and then I come up behind Eddie and I just hug him, or I walk up to him and say “Hold me!” And we just hold each other. He'll say, "Are you OK today?" and I'll tell him, "I'm great" or “I'm glad you're home.” With his touch, I feel the presence of something wonderful and profound because it's a love that can't be broken.

Those moments may seem like such little things, but given the realities of people's schedules, it's hard to spend hours and hours together. I think a lot of people could avoid couples therapy if they'd just recognize the importance of those little moments. They count! And it's so important to try to enjoy sex with your mate and not feel like you have to do it because they want you to do it. It shouldn't feel like an obligation. It should be something that you enjoy and want to do.

Eddie and I have mastered the art of loving on each other on the go! I mean I'm on the road half the time and during the season he's gone. Sometimes we only see each other once a week. You have to find a moment to say "I love you" physically without going into a routine. You have to keep it fresh, and that's what we try to do.

BUILD THE POWER OF ONE

As we've seen, it's not about becoming perfect. Lord knows the two of us aren't and we don't plan on getting there soon! But if you are honestly working on the areas of your life that we've been talking about, you can form a partnership that is bigger and better than the sum of its parts. You'll arrive at a place where you're able to work through your differences at home and present a unified front to the world, a place where you always know you've got each other's backs.

We have come to call that place The Power of One. Put simply, it's a united structure, built step by step on a foundation of faith, from which you live the rest of your lives together. It's the place from which you'll draw the strength to weather life's storms as a couple.

#

EXCERPT REPRINT PERMISSION IS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Married for Real: Building a Loving, Powerful Life Together

By Eddie and Tamara George
with Rob Simbeck

Available February 1, 2012

U.S. \$19.95, jacketed hardcover, 144 pages + 8-page photo insert

ISBN-13: 978-1-4267-2248-6

BISAC category: Religion/Christian Life/Love & Marriage

E-book also available

For review copies and interviews: Pamela McClure, McClure Muntsinger Public Relations,
pamela@mmpublicrelations.com, 615-595-8321