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P1 First Person
with PoliceOne Special Contributors

8 keys to a happy police marriage

Working on your marriage may not be easy at times, but the more you work on it, the more you get used to doing it, the more you enjoy it, and the more you see results in your life and your marriage

Editor's Note: This week's PoliceOne First Person essay is from PoliceOne Member Brian Miller. In PoliceOne "First Person" essays, our Members and Columnists candidly share their own unique view of the world. This is a platform from which individual officers can share their own personal insights on issues confronting cops today, as well as opinions, observations, and advice on living life behind the thin blue line. If you want to share your own perspective with other P1 Members, simply [send us an email](#) with your story.

By Brian Miller, PoliceOne Member

A couple was celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. It was a huge party with many guests. Someone asked the wife if she had ever considered divorce. The white-haired lady smiled sweetly and replied, "Oh, I've never considered divorce. Murder, maybe. But never divorce."

If you've been on the job for some time, you've likely heard or seen that this job has a high divorce rate. I've never been divorced, but I can only imagine the pain for those involved, especially kids.

I don't like divorce statistics for cops. They're a bunch of numbers that seem to imply that a police marriage is a gamble at best. Baloney. I'm not a marriage expert, but I've been married to the same lady for seventeen years. We have two great kids, and I'm more in love with her than I've ever been.

One of my buddies calls her 'St. Debbie.' She is very supportive of me and the job — she even helped me write this article — and our love continues to grow. That's no accident. I want to share some points that have helped my marriage, and I believe will help others, too.

First and foremost, you need to love your wife. It's been said that communication is the key to marriage. Not really. Communication is important, and love certainly includes communication, but love is most important.

So what is love? It's not an emotion you feel. You may have heard "love" songs about giddy, fluttery emotions, and sleazy songs that should instead be called "lust songs." But that is not what love is about.

Love is an action you choose to take, in word or deed, at your own expense, for the benefit of someone else. So with that thought in mind, one easy way to love your wife is to give her gifts. They don't need to be pricey. Here are some meaningful gifts you can give:

1. Give her support and credit for marrying you. Most wives don't have to deal with their husbands working crazy shifts, weekends, and holidays; or missing kids' birthdays or other important family functions because of work; not to mention the danger and many stresses of the job. Your wife took these things on willingly. Don't think for a minute that they don't bug her sometimes. Show appreciation to her for putting up with the job.
2. Give her compliments. Is she a great cook? Is she smart with money? Does she keep a clean house? Does she take good care of the kids? Tell her these things. Tell her in front of the kids. You'll also be giving them an object lesson in how husbands should treat wives.
3. Give her kind words and courtesy. Say "please" and "thank you" often. Before you leave for work, say "I love you" — that may be the last thing she hears from you. Open doors for her. It's awful to see a man and woman go into a building together, and she has to open the door because he doesn't have the class to open it for her.
4. Give her your undivided attention. If she wants to talk, even if the subject isn't important to you, it's important to her. Mute the TV. Put down the paper. Turn away from the computer. Even if you are listening, don't give her the impression that you're not.
5. Give her a break around the house. Help with housework. Do the dishes or the laundry (whites go in hot water, colors go in cold, and not too much detergent; it's not hard). Give her money. Send her out with for some time with "the girls" while you take care of the kids.
6. Give her affection. If she's tired after work or after taking care of the kids, give her a back rub. When you're in public, hold hands. Don't be embarrassed to put your arm around her. I saw a great picture of former President Gerald Ford in the 70's. He and his wife, Betty, were at some formal occasion. He had his arm around her waist. It looked so classy, to see this older guy showing affection to his wife like that.

7. Give her the benefit of the doubt. There will be times when you argue and aren't happy with each other. It doesn't mean that "love has grown cold," like some goofy song may say. It does mean that you have to choose consciously to love her, even if you don't think she deserves it. You have to choose calm, reasonable, loving words, even if you think she deserves sharp, biting, hurtful words — even when she's used hurtful words on you.

8. Sometimes you have to give her an apology. If I had a buck for every time I had to apologize for doing or saying something stupid, I wouldn't have to work part-time. Don't be too proud to apologize. Even if you argue and you're 30 percent wrong and she's 70 percent wrong, apologize for your 30 percent. Even if she doesn't apologize for her 70 percent, you've done the right thing.

Much more could be said, but hopefully these tips will help. A happy marriage, just like good police work, takes consistent effort. Your wife is special but she's imperfect, just like you. Loving her is like an exercise program. You keep working diligently at it and don't quit. It may not be easy in some aspects, but the more you do it, the more you get used to doing it, the more you enjoy it, and the more you see results in your life and your marriage.

About the author

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[Back to previous page](#)