

Professions: Howard is a senior partner with the law firm Kelley Kronenberg Gilmartin Fichtel Wander. Debra runs the family household and makes sure everyone is happy and where they need to be.

Children: Daughters Erica and Emilee, and son Jacob

Married: 20 years

Their story: The Wanders met in 1982 while students at Michigan State University, and got engaged the night of Debra's sister's wedding. At the end of the wedding, Howard asked Debra's father for permission. He already had a ring, and asked room service at their hotel to place it under a platter and bring it up to the room. He proposed. She said yes.

Describe something you discovered about marriage that you hadn't thought would be true.

Debra: "The ability to be selfless and place others' needs before our own."

Howard: "Having children has a profound impact on your marriage and your ability to put others before yourself."

What's the most difficult aspect of adjusting to married life?

H: "Learning to make compromises for others is a process, but something that comes naturally when you find the right partner."

What has been your philosophy for a peaceful, happy marriage?

D: "One of the best things we did was establish a close bond as friends, and then build our relationship through respect for each other."

What did you learn from your parents' marriage that helped make yours successful?

H: "Both of our parents are still married today and the one thing that really stands out about each couple is the ability to make each other better together than apart."

Do you think marriage is more difficult to enter into now or back when you got married?

D: "Sadly, it seems much more difficult today because divorce is more mainstream. It seems more couples choose to break up than to try and resolve issues, whereas 40 years ago you rarely heard of divorce."

H: "Plus, the new technologies today - cell phones, computers - take away from interpersonal interaction and disrupt quality time together."

Why do you think the divorce rate is so much higher than it used to be?

H: "There seems to be a greater inability for some to take the time to really work out issues. Plus it's easier now to get divorced, so many people would rather take the easy way out."

Who's the boss in the house?

D: "When it comes to a decision that affects our family, we always discuss it to try and come to a conclusion we both agree on."

Any final advice?

D: "No matter how long you are married, never stop telling and showing your partner you appreciate and love them."

LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE

Howard & Debra Wander
Boca Raton