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Rendells shine light on love and real marriage

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Valentine's Day is coming and the Rendell's are giving each other an amicable separation. In a brief email to friends, they announced their split but offered no more details.

We don't know why the marriage is going in this direction because they're not disclosing the reasons. I applaud that. It's not our business. It has to have been a thoughtful, much discussed decision. They aren't capriciously discarding 40 years of marriage. It's not clear if they're doing more than reconfiguring the relationship.

Living apart, sleeping in separate beds, rooms, or dwellings, has saved more marriages than most people realize. And it's a more substantial gift than roses or heart-shaped boxes of candy.

They have family and friends who have shared their four-decade journey and by taking the high road, they ease this transition for themselves and their loved ones. They've announced that they will continue to do some things together. That, too, will make it less awkward for all those who have been part of their lives.

A marriage is both public and private. By taking out a marriage license, you involve the legal community; by having a ceremony, small or lavish, you involve the social community of family and friends.

Their friends don't have to agree with the decision to amend the marriage, but they will have to adjust.

Marriage is not a one-size-fits all entity. People evolve over time and two people are unlikely to change at the same pace as their significant other forever. That can either make life interesting or unwieldy. For some people, marriage means doing everything together. For some, it means quite separate lives. One is not better than the other; you need to create and maintain a marriage that fits each person's needs and wants.

Sometimes, people need distance to gain perspective; that may bring us closer or convince us that apart is better. A vital marriage is one where people put energy and time into the marriage as they put energy into other areas such as career, parenting, and exercising.

As was true with Al and Tipper Gore, they will probably not write Tell-All books and spread tales to tabloids. Better for them to be private in that area. I wish more people were.

It makes it easier for all concerned if loyalty to one is not demanded at the expense of the other. That way, everyone can be in the same room comfortably for the special events and the everyday times when being a family counts...even if it's in a new formation. If each side is blaming the other, the mud sticks to everyone.

Forty years of sharing space and creating conjoined memories...laughing and fighting, sleeping and snoring.

Marriages are work. Fun, too, if we're lucky and remember to put that on the To Do list...but we each have to decide if the work is worth it and, if we're compatible in that realm. Do we make each other laugh? Do we miss the other person when we're apart? Do we look forward to telling them our inane stories?

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