

Inside the Marriage Lab

February 13, 2018

I remember the moment I realized my marriage was going to have to change. It happened shortly after I became a parent, as it does for many people. I was 29. My husband and I had been married for four years, together for six, and we'd just brought our newborn son home from the hospital. It was our first night alone with him, our first night with no family or nurses in the next room to offset the fact that neither of us had any idea what we were doing. Our child slept soundly on the car ride home. He slept as we moved him to his bassinet. He slept as day turned into night, as we unpacked our hospital bag and ordered takeout.

I once asked a friend who owned a restaurant with her husband if working together was a strain on their relationship. She dismissed the idea, saying, "If you're raising kids, you're working together. We just get paid for it." I remembered her words that first night as Pete and I clung for a few final hours to the way we had been. It turns out I was discovering what Eli Finkel, a research psychologist at Northwestern University and the director of its groundbreaking Relationships and Motivation Lab, has known for some time: Marriages that don't change don't last.