

Three Meltdown Milestones couples in the first seven years of marriage need to watch for.

- **The first one comes at two years.** A recent Danish study found that one in twelve marriages dissolves after only two years. *Why?* A few reasons. **First, after two years, most couples have a 50% percent drop in loving gestures, like holding hands.** Research also shows that couples who are the most “lovey-dovey” in the first two years were the more likely of this group to get divorced. Because they started so high, once they lose half of the affection, it feels like a huge loss, and they may start looking for it elsewhere. Another reason for this two year point is that it’s when the worries start: You may be afraid that any conflict is a sign that your marriage is shaky.
- **The next marriage milestone comes at four years.** According to Dr. Dino Pranzarone—a psychologist at Roanoke College—divorce rates peak in the 4th year of marriage all over the world. **Scientists believe this is the point when the chemicals in our brain responsible for “attraction” begin to wear off.** Once that hormone rush goes away, we start to see our partners for who they really are. You may start to feel your spouse has changed, when in reality, it’s your own neuro-chemistry that has. **Those attraction hormones get replaced with bonding hormones if you stick with it!**
- **Finally, the third marriage milestone comes at seven years.** This is the point when couples begin to feel restless, and scrutinize their relationship more than ever. There may be some curiosity about “what else is out there”. You may find yourself communicating less and less. Experts say if you’re prepared for these marriage ebbs and flows, you’ll be better equipped to handle the emotional strain. It’s normal to question things, and wonder if you’ve made the right decision. “Couples who do survive these Marriage Milestones often have what it takes to last forever—if they continue to invest in their marriages because there is also a **fourth meltdown milestone** not mentioned in this article at about **30 years**. Couples who have drifted far apart during child rearing years sometimes part when the children have left home.) (*Adapted from “3 Marriage Meltdown Milestones* by L. Snyder, “*Marriage Magazine*, Summer 2008.)