



January 27, 2009

5 Marriage Tips From the Obamas

How the presidential couple makes it work – from support to priorities to parenting

By Stacy D. Phillips

Maybe it is because the Obamas have young children – younger than most who have resided in the White House in decades past – that there is such an intense focus on family values, especially in terms of how to raise children. Then again, maybe it is the wonderful way in which the First Couple demonstrates what is meaningful to them, and what an important role a value system has in terms of their personal and familial relationships.

When Barack included his daughters, Malia, 7, and Sasha, 10, in his acceptance speech, the evening of Nov. 4, 2008, at Chicago's Grant Park, he talked about the puppy that would be going to the White House with them. What impressed me most was the intent with which he let them know – "Sasha and Malia, you have earned the new puppy that will be going to the White House with us," the President said.

The operative term "earned" is what really hit me. Obviously these two young children have already come to know that nothing is free or handed to them easily – that for all that is given much must be earned.

I can think of nothing more important than families teaching children they must work for what they get in life, not just expect everything to be handed to them, especially in a time when the news is fraught with headlines of greed among those who obviously felt they had more coming to them than a brand new puppy!

As we watch the manner in which this power couple treat one another and how they raise their two beautiful daughters, perhaps the focus will shift from the resentment toward those individuals whom the taxpayers will now have to support (those who fall under the government's new "bail out package"), to an up-and-coming generation whose focus will revolve around hard work and integrity – the bywords of what it really takes to cash in and receive what every individual ultimately deserve.



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The following is a list of personal, important values I predict the Obamas will draw attention to – behaviors I believe will influence others, both in terms of how they handle their personal relationship and how they instill family values in their children:

- 1. Time for one another as a couple.** Despite their hectic schedules, the couple has made it known they will enjoy nights out together – just the two of them. Their marriage and personal relationship will thrive because they make the “care and feeding” of their relationship a priority.
- 2. Support even on a day-to-day basis.** Whether it is managing their respective professional “careers” (an understatement), or making time to nurture and care for their two daughters, this couple will show others how to operate as an effective team. We will likely see the President with his children and wife in far more photos than we did with past presidents making the point that the couple has tremendous support for one another when it comes to their family life.
- 3. How to make significant contributions to the world in which we all live.** Through example, they will show each of us how we can and must make some meaningful changes that will impact the communities in which we live to make them better by offering service to others.
- 4. Responsible parenting.** Leading by example, they will remind all parents, daily, how to make children independent, responsible, considerate, accountable and concerned for others.
- 5. Juggle without sacrificing priorities.** Illustrating each day how to handle tremendous responsibility without losing sight of what they both agreed upon as their value system – giving preference to the priorities they both have said they will honor despite their new role as First Couple.

The Obamas will likely create a buzz with most everything they do. Because they bring with them a new vitality and a youthful energy, those watching will want to emulate their traditions and behaviors. Married couples, partners in committed relationships, and children of all ages, will be greatly influenced, in very positive ways, by the Obama’s style, and most importantly, by the way in which they implement their value systems in their everyday lives.

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