

# Teamwork helped build gazebo — and marriage

Last summer, my husband and I stopped at Home Depot and bought ourselves an outdoor fabric gazebo. It was something I'd wanted for a while, so, when they went on sale, we took the plunge.

Driving home, I could already envision sunny days and balmy nights, spent outside under the gazebo's shelter.

Back at the house, our enthusiasm was high. But then we carried the box to the backyard and opened it.

For a moment, we didn't move. Our eyes stared downward at this single box containing 162 pieces, along with a few paragraphs of instructions for assembling this 10-foot-by-10-foot gazebo.

After the shock wore off, we looked at each other, as if to say, "What have we gotten ourselves into?"

I was designated the official instruction reader.

"What's first?" Stan asked, bent over surveying the contents.

"OK," I said, and cleared my throat. "Step One says, 'Fix the Panel A on the Panel B by using M6X35 bolts and nuts, which is



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Part L. Repeat this three times.' "

Our eyes met. I raised one eyebrow in a question mark.

Stan laughed. "Well, I guess we need to look for Panels A and B."

Within minutes, my handy man had Panels A and B completely upright. That left the nuts and bolts, and since I was also the keeper of the plastic bag, which was officially called Part L, I opened it and offered up the M6X35 nuts and bolts, precisely as directed. While I steadied the panels, Stan secured them with the hardware.

It got harder from there. We discovered a few of the parts were flawed, so Stan had to improvise. Then there was his tendency to skip ahead in his thought process,

thinking he knew what was coming.

I found myself saying things like, "Wait on that part," and, "No, that comes later." Other than these exchanges, we rarely talked.

At times, I could feel him watching me impatiently, as I fumbled in search of some elusive piece to the puzzle. I pretended not to notice. Putting together a gazebo required my total concentration.

Other times, I stood back and watched him work, admiring how he smiled whenever another step was crossed off the instruction list.

In our long marriage, this is not the first thing we've attempted to put together. Through the years, there were dollhouses and baby-doll strollers, swing-sets and an entertainment center or two. We know the drill.

All of these occasions have taught us a lot about how a partnership is supposed to operate.

It takes two participating individuals to make it work.

There's a right way to do things, and there's a wrong way. Do it the wrong way, and you'll wish you hadn't.

If you want to see the end-re-



Dayle Shockley and her husband successfully put together this gazebo, and learned a few things about marriage along the way.

Photo provided

sults, you have to stay with it. And that's the tough part — sticking it out when all you really want to do is split the scene.

Marriage is a lot like that. It takes both of you to make it work. There's a right way to treat each other, and there's a wrong way. And if you give up when the going gets rough, you'll never know the joys that come from having hung in there, even when you wanted to quit — especially when you wanted to quit.

Three hours after arriving home with a cumbersome box of assorted parts, my husband and I stepped

back and admired the fruits of our labor. It no longer mattered that Part F and Part J did not measure up, nor that one of the nuts fell through a crack in the patio.

The gazebo was standing tall and firm. Together, we had made it work. We had our very own backyard gazebo — a place to enjoy morning coffee and evening conversations, and every time I look at it, to this day, I remember that we are a team.

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