

## It must be awesome being married to a doctor?

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It must be awesome being married to a doctor? If you think having a doctor for a future husband is ideal, think again. Sure, McDreamy is every girl's dream but you'll bet your right arm it's not all fairy tales and rainbows. Blame E.R and Grey's Anatomy for putting these silly ideas in our pretty heads.

You have a handsome doctor, great with his hands, with a very high IQ and remains calm under all emergencies, ticks the box for good marriage material but they come with responsibility and challenges. Let me tell you about the reality behind Dr McDreamy. If you sign up to be a doctor's wife, you might as well tick the boxes for "single mother" or "married but complicated" or "MIA" 70% of the time. If she or he becomes specialised say good bye to more free time with them.

I should know because I am married to one. Dr A is an orthopaedic registrar but he was a new intern when we met and was just starting his career. Actually, we first met on a rugby field in Fiji when he was still in medical school and I thought he was studying to be a dentist!

Dating a doctor is one thing but being married to one is a different story. Like any marriage it's hard work but the non-medical parent will have to sacrifice a lot too for family. Dr A loves what he does and we keep coming back home because he is the most patriotic person I know. Surgeons are a different breed because they live for bones and everything else in between. They take their work very seriously and their focus is second to none. Dr McDreamy will spend 90% of his time with his patients and if he's not at the hospital, he's at home thinking about them.

Here are some realities when you are married to a doctor:

1. They are never home. They live for their vocation and they basically live at the hospital. Their life priorities are sick people and a mountain of paperwork. If they are studying or specialising, that is their focus for the next five years.
2. They are not your doctor and when you need them most, they are busy caring for others. Just because you are married to one doesn't mean you have a doctor on call for you 24/7, far from reality in Samoa. They are likely to be admitting patients in hospital wards instead of putting a cold cloth on you when you're sick.
3. They are good listeners but don't be fooled by the silent nature. Sometimes they are focused elsewhere. They are true perfectionists.
4. Humility is their nature. They can know people for years and won't share what they do for a living. In fact, he wants to discourage our daughter from being a doctor. He says her family deserves better and being a health professional is too much of a sacrifice once she has a family of her own. He wishes her well in whatever field she chooses to pursue. I wouldn't be surprised if she chooses medicine as well. She's already checking my vitals with a stethoscope at three years old.
5. You will be responsible for mostly everything in the home. Cooking, cleaning, child care, gardening and so forth unless you have hired help. Dr McDreamy will not always have the time and when he's home he's too tired to do those things.
6. Whether you are at funeral or birthday party, people will ask for free medical advice, prescriptions and on the spot checks. Even strangers will message you on Facebook for their phone number or try and come to your house. Set boundaries early so people do not expect this. Living away from town is an advantage and having a locked gate helps.

Believe me, they will call at any time sometimes at 4 am expecting the superhero doctor to appear like an angel at the hospital. You will have odd calls about signing a death certificate or if he can admit

someone via phone at the emergency room!

7. There are hard days especially when they lose patients. They are human just like the rest of us even though they seem like superheroes. You have to remind them that they are not God as only he decides between life and death, death is part of the job especially if they have done their utmost best.
8. They rarely talk about their work and surprisingly, they are not always great at communication. Maybe because they spend most of their time talking to patients and their families, they are all talked out when they come home.
9. You will always have intelligent conversation around the table and some funny ones too but this is not limited to surgeons, this can be for any industry.

I don't envy any doctor and I'm glad I did not choose medicine at the end of high school. I imagine I would have gone into surgery too because it's exciting. It's important to keep your own career and have your own hobbies even after having children. It just means balancing more things and being extra selective with who you spend your time with.

What I have is a compassionate man who will go above and beyond for his patients. I have an insight into sickness, state of our health system and dealing with different situations that I didn't have before. I have an excellent companion when it comes to listening and a good babysitter when he's not snoring because they usually pass out on the couch from exhaustion at the end of every call.

Thankfully, we don't choose a spouse because of their work, we choose them for their character, who they are as a person, their values and how they treat us. The job title can change, they might exchange scrubs for farm overalls one day.

So, having a doctor as a spouse is not a fairy-tale, especially in Samoa where they are over worked and underpaid compared to their Pacific counterparts. They themselves did not choose medicine for money, it is their vocation and their calling.

It is rewarding knowing that his work and sacrifice is helping to care for others. As we enjoy another peaceful Sunday in Samoa, let's pray for our health professionals, support, encourage them and our children would also come to know the sacrifice of their parents. It's a balance one must choose but if you want someone who will have more free time for you, stay away from

surgeons, choose GPs, paediatricians or public health professionals. I can guarantee they will have more free time for you.

## REFERENCE

The above paper was first published in the Samoa Observer as an opinion piece. The PHD obtained permission to publish.