

“We do argue over the show but cracking a joke is my way out,”

ITV's *This Morning* presenters Eamonn Holmes and Ruth Langsford are a couple as well as co-presenters. They talk to Tricia Welch about their work and home lives

Eamonn and Ruth have been together for 11 years and have a six-year-old son, Jack. They're currently taking over the *This Morning* reins while Fern Britton and Phillip Schofield take their summer break.

Eamonn says...

I met Ruth on a street corner. I was driving to a party and looking for the house when I spotted a tall, very attractive girl with long blonde hair and thought, "She's nice. Now where would you meet a girl like that?"

I was lonely and lost when Ruth came into my life. I'd long been separated from my wife and was living in a flat in London during the week, and staying in the family home to be with my children in Belfast every weekend. I seemed fine, but I was putting on a show.

I first saw Ruth on television months before. I was sitting in my bathrobe on a Sunday

morning after another night on the couch. It was a period of my life when, unless I had to, I didn't want to get dressed and face the world. I remember watching *Country File* on TV and seeing a lovely looking presenter wearing a red jacket in a boat. It was a crush at first sight. The next time I saw her was in the rear view mirror of my car.

When I heard Ruth had broken up with her boyfriend I couldn't hide my delight. She came to my flat one night, smoked cigarettes, drank wine and sounded off about her failed relationship. When she got up to leave, she was in a bad way. I'd booked her a taxi and she stood swaying on the doorstep, saying goodbye over and over. So I gave her some money for the fare, just like my dad would have done.

She looked at her hand, uncomprehending. Afterwards, when she was sober she said, "Eamonn, if anyone had seen you giving me money that night, what do you think they would they have made of that?!"

Coming from an Irish Catholic background where nobody is divorced was very difficult. I felt that if divorce was going to happen, Gabrielle [Eamonn's ex-wife] would have to do it. I didn't want my kids thinking I'd divorce their mum. My big sadness

was not my marriage breaking up but my family breaking up, and I did everything possible to keep that unit together. Even now, that unit is there.

The press couldn't understand it. They'd run a story, "He goes back to his wife and children at weekends", with a photo of us in the park. They'd say, "He's making up with her, they're holding hands." Yes, we were in the park, but we weren't holding hands.

The children were wonderful about it all. Gabrielle was integral in that, saying to them, "This is okay". What she said mattered. I don't think any child is going to be cool about their dad moving on and for many years they were oblivious to the situation. Our focus always was to protect them. I wanted to be sure

my relationship with Ruth was flourishing before I introduced her to my kids.

There are seven of us in my family, including my ex-wife, and if we work as a unit it's because of the love and laughter between us all. I made the decision to take the slings and arrows in the chest, and I took an awful lot of abuse.

As soon as Ruth and I started getting close to being an item the bickering between us started! But the arguments are all on the surface. I'll usually aim to end it by cracking a joke to make Ruth laugh. It works every time.

Show me presenters who claim they never argue and I'll say they're fibbers. They all fight, they're all competitive.

It's a privilege to do *This Morning* with Ruth. To be on TV as yourself is an amazing thing, to get a job with the person you love is even more unbelievable, a double perk.

“To get a job with the person you love is unbelievable – a double perk”

“People mistake our bickering for something deeper, but at the core we are rock solid”

Right: Eamonn and Ruth with six-year-old son Jack



Ruth says ...

When my friend Sally [Meen] told me that Eamonn was giving us a lift to a party I was nervous because we'd never met. Then when he said he'd seen me on TV and described exactly what I was wearing I nearly fell off the back seat of the car.

It really hurt when Eamonn was painted as a bad father and I was painted as the woman who had stolen him. I was single and Eamonn had been separated for a long time. I've supported Eamonn 100 per cent and admired that he and Gabrielle took the children away on holiday together because

they're so lovely and balanced. I've never tried to be their mother. We have fun and our relationship was evolved in an organic way.

I grew up thinking all men could mend things because my dad, who sadly has Alzheimers now, could fix anything. But when I met Eamonn he didn't even own a tool box. One night a bulb went and he said he'd get an electrician in!

I was apprehensive about working with Eamonn on *This Morning*. We prepare so differently – I do lots of research beforehand, whereas Eamonn flies by the seat of his pants. But it works well because he's well

informed generally. After the show I've been known to say, "I can't believe you interrupted me or said such and such..." You can't help but take your work home with you and people notice what happens between you on TV. I was visiting my mum in Cornwall and this lovely couple started chatting to me and the woman said, "I love watching you both, but I get the feeling that Eamonn gets on your nerves sometimes." I just burst out laughing and said, "Well, you'd be absolutely right."

Our disagreements blow over quickly and by the time I've got home, seen to Jack and cooked the dinner, what's happened at work is a memory. And it never features in our pillow talk. People often mistake our bickering for something deeper, but it's completely on the surface. At the core we are rock solid.

Eamonn's very romantic. One Valentine's Day he booked The London Eye by night, the whole pod, for two spins. It was only when we were in it that we realised the waiters serving Champagne would be hovering, just inches away, the whole time. So there was no hanky panky. But it was a lovely thought.

I'm a great shopper and so is Eamonn. He loves buying things for the home – we'll walk around a big department store together and he'll be the one picking out the lamps and cutlery. I'm more sensible, whereas Eamonn unchecked will spend a fortune because he never thinks to look at price tags.

We do think about getting married and often talk about what kind of wedding we'd like, where it would be and who we'd invite but we've honestly not got round to organising it. Right now I've got Jack at school, Eamonn and I have got our work and we're enjoying living in the moment. **w&h Tune in to Ruth and Eamonn** on *This Morning* on ITV1, weekdays at 10.30am



The couple on the set of *This Morning*