

Secrets of a Happy Marriage



How Marriage Can Be Happy

Secrets of a Happy Marriage

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Disclaimer

This information is based on the experience and research of the author. He believes that those who follow the principles outlined in this book will find their lives greatly enhanced. However, he assumes no responsibility for reader's personal choices.

Written by David Pearce

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HOW MARRIAGE CAN BE HAPPY

When a couple says, "*I do*" at their wedding, appearances suggest they will be in love forever. Why do so many marriages develop dark clouds? The vitality drains away, and the happy days disappear. Moonlight and roses turn into daylight and despair. Husband and wife take one another for granted and unfortunately for some, the marriage ends. For others, caring for the home and family becomes a duty that must be done. All too often the sparkle of romance has gone.

If you feel that there is nothing left in your marriage, don't despair. You can build a strong bond between you, your spouse and your children. But be prepared for some effort. Happy marriages don't just happen. If you want the sparkle of romance in your marriage, persevere, and you can be rewarded with a continuing happy marriage.

Sparkle in marriage

Your partner needs to know that for you, he or she is the most important person in the world. At appropriate times it's good to say, "*I love you*", with sincerity. When you express love, you experience an ever-deepening love. Practise genuine love by paying attention to small meaningful details. Do things willingly for your partner - often. What you do isn't quite as important as **how** you speak or act. Demonstrate love and affection by action. For example, perhaps the husband will carry a heavy parcel from the car for his wife. She will respond, "*Thank you darling*". He gives her a hug and says, "*It's a pleasure*".

To illustrate further, her husband is ready to leave for the day. She straightens his tie, holds his face gently in her hands and gives him a meaningful kiss. These small attentions keep romance alive and encourage a marriage to blossom. Endeavour to do as much as possible together. Set family goals together. Plan ahead to have something for which you can both look forward to with interest. Maybe you have plans to build a house, take a vacation, plant a garden, or go somewhere special

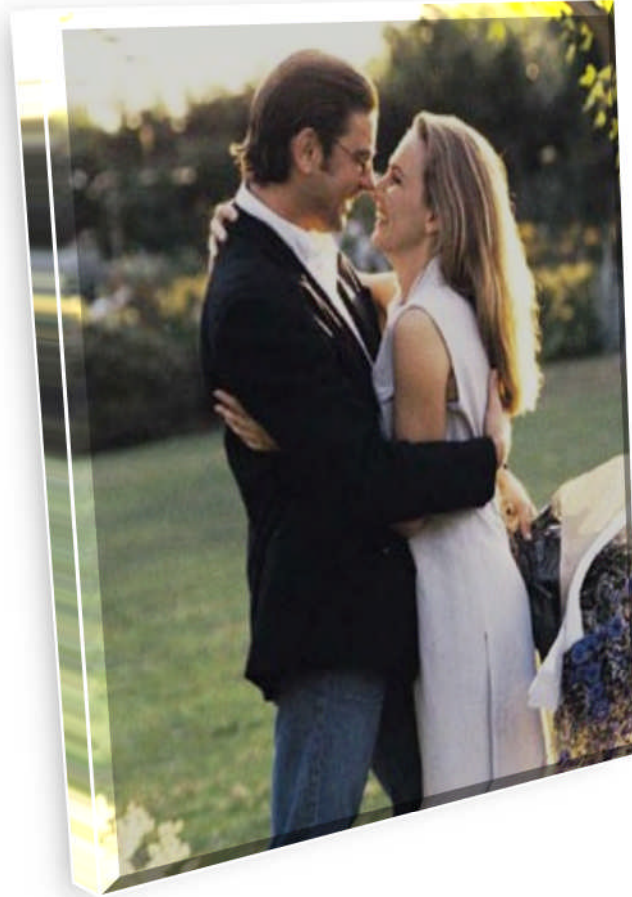
together. Anything, as long as you have a bright spot or two for the future.

Doing things together isn't quite as important as 'being together' physically and emotionally. This togetherness will make your marriage grow like a beautiful flower. It's important to express your love, but what is even more important is **how** you express your feelings. An old story illustrates this point. In the days when pocket watches were in vogue, a father-in-law gave one as a gift to his son-in-law on the wedding day, with the words inscribed inside, "*Say something nice to Sarah*". Each time he opened the watch to check the time he saw those words. This is good counsel for developing a happy marriage.

Sometimes men don't understand how women appreciate gentleness, kindness and thoughtfulness. Often men feel they must be tough and manly, and misinterpret the good quality of strength in a man to mean thoughtless "macho" behaviour. The genuine 'he-man' will be gentle with his woman. Let me assure you that women love strong men who are kind, tender and sensitive.

Remember to flame your romance by showing deep concern for each other's needs. It's easy to be selfish and expect favours in your direction, but such an attitude isn't the true ingredient of vibrant marriages. If you consider your partner before yourself, this has the effect of favours being reciprocated.

Be proud of one another, even in public and don't humiliate your partner. Show respect. Remember these little attentions. A wink, smile, nod, or wave when others are around maintains your special relationship. Don't let your marriage vegetate. Keep injecting special niceties. Do something different. Buy a bunch of flowers or go out for a meal. Buy something special for your partner. Perhaps these special attentions will start with only one of the partners, but continue with them, and the spirit can be catching. Romance can stay in your marriage for life, but it's important to keep making an effort. If you do, you can find happiness in marriage.



Marriage - a contract of love

Why do people marry? Obviously, because they are in love. At least, that's supposed to be the reason. It's been said -

First is the engagement ring -
Then the wedding ring -
Then suffer 'ring.

Some agree with the suffering part, and this is true in many cases. Living happily ever after is certainly the ideal, but unfortunately this often isn't the case. Approximately one in every three marriages in Australia will end in divorce. Other western countries are similar or even worse. These cold, hard facts have even led to the suggestion that the marriage vows be changed from "Till death do us part" to "Till divorce do us part." But, marriage **can** be successful and happy. However, it doesn't just happen by some magical formula. Marriage works if both partners are prepared to

make the commitment to a lifetime relationship. Marriages are made happier and more successful if both partners follow basic principles of human relationships. Making a contract of marriage and attempting to make it successful by doing your part, is much more pleasant than facing the turmoil of a marriage falling apart.

Yes, marriage can be happy! Let's look at some of the principles for a happy fulfilling marriage.

Marriage is a partnership

First of all, marriage is a partnership and mutual sharing discovers fulfillment. It's easy to develop the attitude of 'you give and I'll take', which is a sure recipe for disaster. To help counteract a natural tendency towards selfishness, concentrate more on the giving aspect. Look for things to do and things to help your spouse. Marriage isn't a one-way street. Both partners need to firmly fix the concept of partnership in their minds so that the responsibilities are shared as evenly as possible.

But marriage isn't just duty, there's fun, too. In whatever is done together, include the all-important atmosphere of affection. Certainly there are responsibilities and the importance of being considerate is vitally important, but the love atmosphere is the vital element needed to make the marriage glow. The magic ingredients are these: a total commitment to each other, a sense of loyalty, genuineness, unflinching honesty and deep sincerity. Together you are working toward a common goal and in the process, your marriage finds a satisfying fulfillment. Couples who follow these principles don't find fault and put one another down. Each senses the approval of their mate. They know they are accepted and appreciated. They feel the bond of affection.

If one partner destroys the self-esteem of the other, the temptation exists to look elsewhere for affection. The positive praise approach gives a sense of belonging and happiness. Rather than finding fault, look for the good points and give praise and credit. If faults must be mentioned, do it tactfully with a spirit of love, and with soft words, but major on praise, not

error. Create an aura of pleasantness, courteousness, agreeableness and respect. Most people melt in the presence of genuine love.

The married couple works as one unit but remain individuals. On some points they may have a difference of opinion, but this shouldn't be a problem or become an issue. Respect each other's point of view. Marriage doesn't take away our individual rights. The secret of handling differences comes in the **way** it's done. If there is a disagreement, disagree in an agreeable way. Argument is non-productive and divisive. Communicate in a calm, reasonable and pleasant atmosphere. Respect each other's individuality and your marriage will be more successful.



Attitude to conflict in marriage

Some marriages are filled with tension because of unresolved conflicts. Differences often lead to frustration, anger and even aggression. What can be done to handle such conflict in a positive way? Try these steps. Take several deep breaths and consider how to handle the situation calmly, then examine your motives. Is your plan simply to give your partner a piece of your mind, or do you have the interest of your spouse at heart? The latter is more likely to help in resolving the conflict. Make your aim, not to win the argument, but to resolve the differences. Ask helpful questions rather than give opinions or make judgments. The right questions will allow for open discussion and help you both find a genuine solution. Throughout this discussion, more positive results are achieved if you remain calm and in control. For more in depth reading on this subject read the book *“Meaningful Relationships”*.

Endeavour to see the situation through your partner's eyes. Put yourself in his/her position and imagine how you would feel. Recognise their special needs. Be kind.

Physical or verbal abuse, whether it be pushing, hitting or just being nasty is totally unacceptable and unproductive. Walking away from the conflict may be wiser, but retaliation will possibly worsen the situation. People who lose control this way may need professional help. Try the positive and pleasant way to resolve conflict. This helps you handle things better - and it can work very well.

Choosing a life partner

With approximately one in three marriages failing, wisdom suggests extreme carefulness for those who have reached maturity, when selecting a life partner. Those who choose on emotion alone, or even logic alone, may be wiser to re-think the situation. With the right start, it's easier to continue on the right road. Sometimes marriages are contracted between most unsuitable couples. The sayings, "opposites attract", or "like attracts like", may reflect some marriage choices but aren't necessarily the best rules. Recognising the differences between each other is all-important

when considering whether a mate will be complementary or conflicting. Some feel that everything will turn out fine after the marriage and he/she will change. It's possible, but unlikely. Weak points of character are usually accentuated after marriage because the inhibition barriers are removed. The tendency before marriage is to exhibit one's best behaviour, but after the wedding the attitude is often, "It doesn't matter anymore; I've got what I want". Be wise in your selection. Your future happiness may be at stake. Allow sufficient time to get to know your partner very well so that you really understand and accept each other before you say "Yes" at the marriage altar.

What do you want in a life partner?

Some marry for appearance only. Perhaps she is beautiful, or he is handsome. Naturally there must be a certain amount of physical attraction between couples. It seems wrong to marry someone you can't love. But marriage based on physical attraction alone may not have the necessary ingredients for a successful life partnership. It's much safer to marry a person of integrity, someone you can trust, even if that person does not quite have the looks of a Hollywood star. Other important characteristics to consider are emotional stability, the ability to stick with a task, attitudes of maturity and shared values.

A sense of humour is important too. But don't make the mistake of trying to find the perfect partner. If you do, you will never marry! We are human and make mistakes. Look at the "Big Picture", your potential partner's overall attitude to life, before making a commitment.



Important areas of agreement are religion, politics, culture and life values. If neither of you has strong views on these points, all may be fine. However, those who are serious about their religion may face fireworks if married to a person who is serious about a different religion, or who does not respect your religious commitment. To a lesser extent, politics can affect a stable relationship. Those with a completely different cultural background from their mate can also face real difficulties. Attitudes, values on raising children, sexuality, even to what motivates a person, all need to be carefully considered. These factors are not necessarily impossible to overcome, but will take time and understanding. If the couple cannot agree before marriage, the situation is unlikely to change after marriage.

The bottom line is this. Marriage, based on true love, will succeed. Make sure your attraction is not based on love's counterfeit - 'infatuation'. How do you know the difference? Infatuated love is very physical - more interested in sex than what a person thinks and feels emotionally. Sex is the ultimate expression of love between two adults, but it's not love itself. Love is a misused word. To many, it's the call to natural drives. To others, it cannot be discerned from mere infatuation. True love is more than just an emotion or a fleeting sensation that will burn out in a few weeks. True love grows deeper and stronger as the years go by, whether times are good or bad. Genuine love endures. This is the long-range test. The short-range test demonstrates unselfishness and kindness. Find the genuine. Don't be fooled by a counterfeit.

You have the right to marry whoever you wish, as long as the other partner is agreeable. This is your personal choice and nobody can take that away from you. A little wisdom applied in this vital life choice makes the future a whole lot better. A lifetime with someone you love is a better proposition than divorce or even worse, just tolerating one another. The future has so much good to offer. The right choice at the beginning can help you secure a better life.

Tips for a successful marriage

1. Be positive; not negative about your marriage

Don't say things like, *"Our marriage was a mistake"*, *"She doesn't understand me"*, *"I can't take much more of this"*, *"We can get a divorce if necessary"*, *"I'll go home to mother"*, *"He likes that woman"*, etc. If you want to destroy your marriage these attitudes will contribute. Thoughts go before actions. Rather, be positive. Say; *"We'll solve this problem"*, *"I'll explain it a little clearer"*, *"I'll do my best to make our marriage work"*, *"I love my partner"*. This healthy attitude helps create a happy marriage.

2. Don't go to bed angry with your partner

There is no shame in saying, *"Sorry, let's make up"*. Who is right and who is wrong, doesn't really matter. The real concern is that you are in conflict. Make a resolution to be happy and don't prolong the issue. Anger is best confronted with a soft answer, then silence. There is a wonderful power in silence. Continue with a tender, patient attitude and the anger will die away.

3. Don't even consider divorce

Divorce creates more problems than it solves. Think positively about your marriage.

4. Close the family circle

Solve your home problems privately. Don't bring in a third party, not even parents or very close friends. If necessary, see a marriage counsellor, but preferably not friends or relatives.

5. Don't humiliate your partner

Telling jokes at the expense of your partner is hurtful. Laugh **with** your mate, but not **at** your mate. Avoid hurtful statements, have fun but don't be insulting or offending.

6. Don't flirt with anyone but your partner

This is the breeding ground for an affair. Avoid flirting, even run away. Be true to your spouse.

7. Don't nag or criticise

Faultfinding won't bring a solution. Irritation and ill feeling are more likely. Don't try to reform, compel or control your partner. Remember he/she has individual rights. Your marriage success lies in, not **having** the right partner, but in **being** the right partner. Try to please your spouse. Don't be unbending. Try to be flexible. Find the compromise on non-principle issues.

8. Have a sense of humour

Practice being cheerful. This is contagious.

9. Be clean and orderly

Uncleanliness and laziness destroy respect for one another. Take pride in your appearance and your house.

10. Don't shout

Speak slowly, softly and kindly, even when asserting yourself. Harsh, angry words will crush your partner's desire to please you. Sometimes a cooling off period will help. Then you can approach the problem more rationally.

11. Be reasonable with money

Don't be wasteful or stingy. Work out your finances together and come to an agreement. Live within your means.

12. Often talk things over together

Cooperate with each other and you are more likely to stay together.



Express your love

When is the ideal time to let your husband or wife know you love them? The answer is simple. Before someone else does! Yes, we need to express with words our love for our partner. Gentle 'word' strokes are so important - words of praise and encouragement - genuine words to show love.

Yet there's more than just words, there's action, too. We need to be touched by those we love and we need this treatment often. At first, you may find some opposition if it's not been your usual practice, but don't let an initial rejection hinder your good intentions. Persevere, until your partner discovers your genuineness. If you hug your partner and your children, it's good for you and them. Everybody feels happy in this pleasant atmosphere. Perhaps you can do more than just give a hug - maybe a meaningful kiss or a hand on the shoulder, a gentle stroke of the

hair or cheek, or an arm around the waist or shoulders. We all need to be touched in a loving way. It binds families together.

If you express your love with an appropriate touch, it's like icing on the cake. A sweet atmosphere fills your home.

What your wife wants in marriage

Ideally, marriage is meant for life. However, a lifetime partnership is more likely if the couple endeavour to meet one another's needs. A blissful partnership isn't automatic but can be achieved day by day in a growing relationship. The perceived needs of a man differ from the perceived needs of a woman in many areas; therefore, it's good for us to understand these differences. Naturally, not everyone is the same, but generally there is a basically different mental outlook when we compare men with women.

1. Women want to be shown affection.

Women tend to desire affection, some more than others, but it rates high on their needs list. This can be expressed by letting your wife know you love her, rather than assuming she already knows. You can tell her. You can hug or kiss her. You can buy her flowers or special gifts. Whatever you choose, do it in sincerity and kindness, and she will glow.

2. Women like to have the opportunity to talk and share.

A wife likes to have her husband talk with her. It's good to have a special time each day for conversation with your wife. Sometimes men are so purely logical in everything they say they do not reach the wife's heart. It's good to communicate on an emotional level as well as in facts and figures. Talk about how you feel. It tends to reach the heart and binds you closer to each other. A wife also likes to talk, so listen with sensitivity. Be very open in your communication. This is quality time spent together, which will build a strong foundation for your marriage.

3. A wife likes to be involved.

Wherever you can, include her in your activities. A woman loves to stand by her husband's side. Likewise, she appreciates your help around the home. Put the children to bed and read them a story. Be a part of one another's world and you will be part of one another. A wife does like her companion to be honest and open rather than secretive and non-communicative. She is more contented in a financially secure atmosphere and wants her husband to be a good father.

What your husband wants in marriage

1. A husband wants his wife to look good.

Appearance rates high in the eyes of men. A man likes his wife to look good. He doesn't necessarily want her to look like Miss World, but he does want her to care for her appearance. A woman who takes no pride in her person is communicating to her husband that she doesn't really care about him. Therefore, dress well. Look feminine and he will be proud of you.

Take care of your health too. You will look vibrant and attractive if you exercise regularly and eat correctly. You will also feel better within yourself, and have a more placid disposition. Give him that special smile at appropriate times. He will like that, especially when he comes home, tired from work.

2. A husband wants a good sex partner.

Be a good sex partner for your husband. Psychologically, It's important for a man to know his wife wants him sexually. He feels more secure and contented. Men are wise not to be too demanding here and go to excess.

3. A husband likes to share activities

Show an interest in your husband's recreational activities. You may hate the football, or whatever else, but go with him now and then if he asks you. This may be a sacrifice of your time, but it will strengthen your marriage. A man likes companionship, so if he wants yours, don't deny him.

A man sees his home as a haven. He doesn't want to come into an atmosphere of fighting and yelling at the children. He wants tranquillity. Therefore, handle your home with a combination of firmness and kindness. Make it a happy home, and he will never want to leave. Be happy yourself and he will never want to leave you either. He will glow when you show admiration for him or demonstrate how you are proud of him.

An interesting Morgan Gallup poll asked women what was most important to them about men. Here are some of the answers.

- Communication
- Faithfulness
- Doing things together
- Mutual respect
- Understanding and tolerance

Then men were asked what they thought women wanted of them. The answers were quite different. Here is what the men said.

- Handsome
- Physically attractive
- Muscular
- Passionate in bed
- Wealthy

If this poll is accurate, perhaps men and women really don't understand one another! With an education and a change of attitude however, this problem certainly can be resolved, as many have done when the knowledge is understood.

Finding solutions

Often we hear of a couple who have been married for thirty to fifty years say how they are more in love now than on their wedding day. What's their secret? Is their marriage perfect? No! They will have faced the same situations most marriages encounter. They will also have experienced similar problems. The main difference will be in how they

handled these conflicts. Largely, it's a matter of attitude. They have concentrated on solutions rather than submitting to defeat. This positive approach brings positive solutions, which in turn develops a strong, united bond between husband and wife. This working together develops a fulfilling relationship where two people move through life as one.

They don't become preoccupied with relationship issues, such as the fear that one partner will leave. They are not continually anxious, always seeking reassurance. They are not clinging and smothering, causing one partner to demand space for a while. They are not worrying, with feelings of insecurity. Rather, theirs is a combination of various virtues, which when practised, create a relaxed, happy atmosphere. Some of these virtues are: creating a spirit of peace, happiness, patience, kindness, gentleness and most important of all, love. There is an aura of control where emotions are kept in check so they will not spoil the tranquillity. Implicit trust is demonstrated.

When this idealistic pattern is broken, what can be done? The key word is communication. To communicate effectively, we need to do three things.

1. Listen to your partner's grievance. (Don't interrupt)
2. Endeavour to understand your partner's view. (Be open-minded)
3. Express your own point of view. (Kindly, not aggressively)

When we are involved in deep communication it's good to maintain sincere eye contact. Show an interest in what is being said and not just listen in silence, but make appropriate body movements to show we care. A nod of the head, an occasional statement like *"I see"*, or asking a meaningful question to clarify a point. Summarise the problem when your spouse has finished. Now you are ready to state your point of view in a non-argumentative way. Remember that you are looking for solutions, not an argument. Disagreements are resolved when you talk about them. The attitude you show at this time is vital. Show how you care. Show how you want a solution. Show that you love your partner.

Don't major on minor issues. Minor differences, which irritate, are better approached with tolerance. (Not closing the toilet seat is often an issue) To be unselfish and be prepared to give a lot and take little is helpful to a relationship.

You will usually find you get what you want in a conflict. If you seek an argument, you'll get one. If you want peace, you'll achieve quietness, providing the matter is handled properly. Try to be creative in solving your problems. Yours is a unique situation that you understand best. You can't keep running to a counsellor for advice. If one method fails, don't quit trying. Attempt something else. Don't be afraid to think. Keep working diligently until you succeed. Don't be afraid to be your real self, but do show some responsibility here, and be constructive. Face reality, but avoid aggression. Be very firm, but mix your firmness with kindness. Sometimes you'll need to assert yourself, and state the situation as it really is without losing the softness of love. When you face a difficult time, be honest with yourself and your partner. Continue communicating until the solution eventuates.

Choose a solution, and you choose a happy marriage.

Don't be a doormat

Some spouses allow themselves to be used and abused by their partners. Sometimes it becomes necessary to be assertive and show strength, to maintain self-respect. Opposition may come, but if handled with tact, long term benefits will be attained. Every person deserves respect. We all have personal rights. If you have a healthy self-respect, you are more likely to be respected.

How do you assert yourself? First of all, be yourself. Be honest with yourself and others, but don't be aggressive. Be very firm, but be kind. Don't live in a dream world of hope, rather, face the situation with realism. Approach your marriage with responsibility. Explain your rights clearly as a human being, and state how you believe you should be treated - while all the time remaining calm and kind. Threats are not usually needed to

maintain your stand, but if you make one, be sure it's sensible, not extreme, and something you are prepared to carry out without damaging your marriage. Stand up and be counted. You are worthy of respect.

I'm sorry

"I'm sorry". These are two of the hardest words to say, even between husband and wife. Why? Because the one apologising tends to be placed in a vulnerable position. There is danger of rejection or being regarded as insincere, or there may even be a possibility of ridicule. But if you are sincere about your apology, you have nothing to fear and if you have had a good relationship, the apology is more likely to be accepted.

However, a mere apology may not immediately put an end to the trouble. Sometimes a little time is needed to convince your partner, particularly if your previous behaviour has been unfavourable. Perhaps your apology will need to be followed by a consistent change in behaviour. Depending on the offence, this may take years. At least the way is open for negotiation. Communication is an important key to resolving conflict. We need to understand our partner, because saying sorry considerably depends on how we were raised. For instance, a person whose parents always 'demanded an apology', may not always believe in the genuineness of your apology. As a child, to avoid punishment, they complied with their parent's demands, but had not been truly sorry. Such behaviour can carry through to adulthood. Never demand an apology. An apology that does not come from the heart has little value.

Then there are those who apologise too much. Being sorry for everything reveals low self-esteem. Such persons need to become more assertive or their behaviour will be looked upon as weakness. This is not normal. More often, the problem is usually the opposite extreme, where people find it hard to apologise. Saying sorry for a physical hurt is relatively easy. Saying sorry for emotional hurt is harder, because it doesn't have clearly defined boundaries.



Persons in control of their lives don't have to apologise every five minutes. Sometimes however, in a moment of weakness we can make a mistake. If we have hurt our partner, it's best to make the apology as soon as possible. We may have to swallow our pride. We may have to risk a rejection, but our action opens the doors of communication to resolve the problem. If our apology is not accepted, be patient. Obviously the partner is deeply hurt. Allow time to show the apology is genuine. Experience shows that being openly honest with one another forges a strong bond and a happy atmosphere in marriage.

Sex in marriage

Sex is a privilege of marriage. Some have grown up with the assumption that it's dirty or wrong. But it's really the ultimate expression of love between two people. In fact, it is a vital part of a happy marriage.

If a marriage is to last, there is a need for each partner's continual expression of love. There are many ways this can be done. A wife can be praised for her cooking or her appearance. Or a wife can show love to her husband in kind words and attention. Here love is being expressed, and

this is good because, **love, unexpressed dies.** Sex is a special way to express genuine love.

Sometimes this privilege is abused by excessive, intensive demands. Men are usually sexually aroused more quickly and more often than women are. When men demand more sex than a wife is happy to give, or thinks only of his gratification rather than a mutual pleasure and a sharing of two people, there is a danger of the wife becoming frigid or unwilling. A woman needs to know she is loved and to hear it expressed in intimacy. Love is a tender plant and needs constant attention. Therefore, consider each other's needs and you will find your sexual intimacy more gratifying and exciting.

Wives, don't deny your husbands the privilege of sexual union, within reason. Let him know how you feel about him as your husband. Share your admiration for him and he will be well satisfied.

Yes, sex is good! It's not wrong! Husband and wife, keep it for each other only, and you will find fulfilment in your marriage.

Is divorce a solution?

Some partners think divorce will solve all their problems. Maybe, in some cases, divorce is a solution, but mostly it creates further problems. Recently I read a bumper sticker, which said, "Divorce is better than murder". If the home situation has come to the stage of such hate, then the bumper sticker may be right! Most situations are not this bad, however. If you are contemplating a divorce, read this book and the companion book that goes with this one, entitled – *Meaningful Relationships*". Here is revealed the skills required to have successful human relationships.

The desire to divorce is sometimes triggered by one partner having an affair. I had a young married man come to me in distress, telling me his wife wanted to leave home. He couldn't understand why. They seemed to be so happy. Then she suddenly changed. I counselled with them on an

individual basis first, then together. She confessed she had a lover and wanted to direct her affection to him. After several sessions of counselling and terrible turmoil in the home, she gave up her lover and resettled with her husband. If she had decided to go, there would have been incredible problems. She saved herself much heartache by staying with her husband. He was a noble man to forgive her and accept her back. There was friction between them for some time, but eventually they were happy again. The saving of this marriage was certainly the best outcome.

Before you decide to terminate your marriage, follow this plan. Make three lists.

1. All the good things about your spouse. (Don't overlook any)
2. All the bad things. Check out the bad, and then write down solutions on how they can be resolved.
3. Continue writing with a further list on how things will be if you do divorce. Remember finance, children, where you will live etc. Analyse everything closely, and think about it intensely for a few weeks. If possible, have an attitude of saving your marriage. A solution is better than a divorce.

You may need to see a marriage counsellor. If your partner will not go, try to have him/her read this book or any good book on the subject. Not every case can be solved, but many can, by following proper principles. Hold on to your marriage if you can. It's usually the best solution.

What's wrong with an affair?

Sometimes "the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence", but when you taste the seeming delicacy, it's usually tougher to chew. Many have found this out, to their sorrow. If you're tempted to have an affair, don't just consider yourself; think of those you'll hurt. There's your spouse, your children, and your family. Consider how selfish it is on your part to put them through this trauma. To follow duty rather than inclination is usually a far safer option. Have principles, and stand by them. Yes, the stolen waters may seem sweet, but they come from a

bitter fountain. Many have tasted that bitterness, which usually affects them for the rest of their life.

Look at it logically for a moment. Being involved sexually with someone else can only be minimally different from having sex with your spouse. Everyone has very similar sexual equipment. The difference may well be in attitude. The mind is charmed because it's with someone different, but in reality the same experience can be achieved with your partner. Therefore, use a little common sense and remain with your spouse. Save yourself the entire unnecessary trauma.

Affairs usually come to an end. Sometimes they result in marriage. Stolen love is not the way of happiness. It's encumbered with guilt, lies, and fear of being discovered, just for the enchantment of spending a few moments together. Why become obsessed with sex? It is in fact, a very small part of our lives and takes up very little time. There are bigger issues in life to consider.

Think seriously. Do something creative and productive with your life. Don't destroy it, or your marriage, with a senseless affair.

If an affair ends in marriage, it's eventually going to be similar to any other marriage. The excitement of the love affair goes and life continues on an ordinary, everyday level. Romantic love has a limited lifespan. So, logically, what has been accomplished? Just another marriage, which may not even be as good as the first one, and in the process, many people have been hurt. It's hard to be logical when emotion is so overpowering, but if one doesn't think clearly about this infatuation, there's an extremely expensive price to pay.

What should you do if your partner is having an affair and wants to move out, or already has? So often I have seen the devastated victim of an affair grovelling and prepared to go to any lengths to have his/her spouse come back. Perhaps it's good to leave the door open. However, sometimes it's better to appear to close the door. While ever the person knows he/she

can return anytime, it's unlikely the affair will end. Human nature doesn't like to experience loss (even if it's a discarded wife or husband). We tend to want what we can't have. I have seen many distressed and jilted spouses who have wept for months and made not the slightest difference to their run-away partners. Yet the moment the partner sees a quest for independence and an attitude of *"I can live my life without you"; "I don't need you"*. An amazing change takes place. Suddenly they reassess their situation and wonder if it's really going to be better with their lover rather than their spouse. I have seen it happen in several cases, where the runaway returns when the victim gets tough. There is no guarantee it will work in every case, but it does work often. If nothing else works for you, it's certainly worth a try. Therefore, assert your independence. Show your strength. You will be happier in yourself and you may save your marriage.



MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

How to discipline your children

Those who know the most about training children usually don't have any! Having children of your own helps you realise the enormity of this tremendous task. There is no simple formula, because all children are different in nature. There isn't one basic method to apply to all children. However, there are some vital principles, which if followed, help make the difference between success and failure.

1. Children are both a privilege and a responsibility

It's a privilege to have children. Some see them as a burden, but they are really a pleasure. Yet they are also a responsibility. Generally speaking, if you guide your children on the right path, they will remain on it for life. What children become, is to a large extent, determined by their early training. This isn't always a guarantee though, because they do make their own choices in adulthood. They can, unfortunately, choose incorrectly, but by correct training, the chances of deviation are tremendously reduced.

2. Teach obedience and values

Obedience is one of the first lessons a child needs to learn. This principle can be understood at a very early age. Obedience on its own, however, isn't the fundamental meaning of discipline. It's one of the vital ingredients, but true discipline is far deeper and broader.

The purpose of discipline is to encourage children to voluntarily choose worthwhile values. This is where they learn self-control and independence. As their minds expand they can reason more clearly, knowing that correct choices lead to better living.

The army style obedience says, "Obey without question - right or wrong". This type of training may get temporary results in good behaviour, but obedience is perhaps attained through fear of punishment. Children under this type of pressure may later break out in excessively bad

behaviour when released from restriction. As they grow older, they may take one of two directions.

a. They may become wimps with no backbone.

b. They may become rebellious and delinquent.

An adult completely controlling the mind of a child is not the aim of child training. True discipline is not manipulating children so they become robots, but rather to encourage and guide them to choose the right road in life.

3. Don't be too tough

Being exacting with children does not attain long term results. Make obedience as easy as possible. Guide the will gently. Gradually mould it into the right shape. Whatever you do, don't crush a child's will. A determination of will is needed in real life to stand strong in difficult times. Don't force your children, rather, lead them.

4. Discipline quietly

Many parents shout orders at their children. A better response comes when we **ask** them to respond. They can then choose to obey, rather than being forced. If they question the request, there is then an opportunity to provide a reason for obedience. If the reason is understood, the child is more likely to happily comply. To retaliate with anger in response to a child's bad behaviour is not proper child training. You have simply reduced your image to their level - to act as they act. Be a step above. Handle the situation with intelligence and they will come to respect you.

5. Set boundaries

Make rules in your house. Make them few in number, but enforce them. Follow through. Be consistent. Remember that the purpose of discipline is for the well being of the child, not to satisfy the anger of the parent under distress. If any punishment is given, administer it in an atmosphere of love. But be firm. One of the most important basics in child training is to be **kind and firm** - together. This is the magic combination to achieve the best results. To allow a child to go unpunished for a wrongdoing is

detrimental to them. To punish in anger is also psychologically damaging. If you reach a balance in your discipline, in response, the child is more likely to be balanced.

6. Look for the good

Look for the good in your children, rather than the bad. This will help your attitude to act and speak correctly toward them. Give them praise and credit where it's due. This will encourage them to live up to the better image, which you have painted of them. If you continually scold for misbehaviour, the children will see their situation as normal and make no effort to improve. Also, they will copy your example, particularly in the poorer areas. Take a good look at yourself and ask, "What image do I portray to my children?" Whether you like it or not you are a role model for them to follow.

7. Ask questions - Don't judge in haste

So often we jump to conclusions and make incorrect assumptions. A better way is to ask questions and be sure of the facts. When we don't prejudge, home can be a much happier place.

8. Discipline by explanation

If children have done wrong call them aside and quietly explain their mistake. Try to reason with them before administering any form of punishment. It would be unfair to the child to punish first and talk about it later as so many do. Let the child see you are trying to help. Don't let him or her see you as one to be feared, but one who has their best interests at heart. Love is a stronger motive than fear. If punishment is administered in anger, relationship damage can occur. The child needs to understand you are reluctant to punish, but you must for their sake. You are training them for self-government. One day, you, as parents, will not be available when they have important decisions to make. Now is the time for them to learn how.

9. Punishment is sometimes necessary

When punishment must be given, err on the side of mercy rather than on the side of harshness, but be very fair. To allow punishment to pass by can be a serious mistake. If a rule, which they fully understand, has been willingly violated, a great injustice is done to children if it's overlooked. Train them to believe that rules are important and that they cannot get away with breaking them. Major on the positive side of discipline by giving encouragement when they do right, or alternatively give praise. However, the negative is sometimes needed and shouldn't be pushed aside. Punishment is needed much less as children grow older if correct principles are followed in earlier years. You are creating an atmosphere that's caught rather than taught. You are letting children know exactly where they stand, which in turn builds a happy home.

10. What type of punishment is appropriate?

What type of punishment should be administered? Whatever is done, do it for the benefit of the child. Maybe it will be denial of something the child really wants. Perhaps it's physical punishment. There are two schools of thought in the world today. Some believe in the old fashioned spanking, while some are totally opposed to physical punishment of any kind. If you do adopt the physical punishment method, you need to be aware of possible repercussions.

- a.** Make sure it's not illegal in your country to use physical punishment on your children. If you are breaking the law, you may be the one who is punished.
- b.** If it's not illegal, still let it be a last resort. Try something else first.
- c.** Don't hit children with little smacks all the time. This is poor quality child training.
- d.** Don't hit teenagers. It's too late for physical punishment. You may want to at times, but try appealing to their better nature instead. They need to know you love them.
- e.** Don't inflict any form of injury. This is nothing less than child bashing. If you feel you must punish physically, inflict the pain on a part of the body where it may hurt but not damage. The bottom is the most popular place.

f. Never allow yourself to use physical punishment if you are not in emotional control. You may do the child, not only physical, but psychological damage for life.

g. Absolute rebellion is usually the only time physical punishment can be justified. If children see you as a dictator, they may obey you, but will probably hate you. Life is much happier if they love you, therefore major on preventative discipline, (That is, encouraging your children to cooperate). Then you will have much less of the negative discipline to administer (that is - punishment).

11. You are in control

Maintain your position of authority. Don't allow your children to take control. Follow through. When you call, insist on an immediate response, not after six or seven calls. Be serious about discipline. It can make or break your child's future. Discipline is absolutely essential. Without it, our homes cannot truly succeed.

Children who are disciplined know their boundaries. They feel worthwhile people. They feel loved. They know you love them. Express this love to them. Let them know you discipline them for their benefit. Love is the correct motive for discipline.

One of the best ways to let your children know you love them is by affirmation. Love needs to be expressed, not kept a secret. Here are a few common statements to encourage bonding.

a. "Thank you for being so thoughtful."

b. "What a tremendous improvement."

c. "Very good work."

d. "You handled that well."

e. "You're incredible."

f. "You're great company."

g. "You're a special person."

h. "Great effort."

i. "You'll make it ok."

j. "That's impressive."



- k. "You're the greatest."
- l. "I like that very much."
- m. "I trust you."

Naturally, don't overdo praising your children. Avoid giving them the impression that they are invincible or perfect, or they will be shocked when they one day experience the real world. Keep a balance. Many tend to criticise or put down their children and damage their self-image. Words of praise, genuinely spoken from love motivation, will develop in them a healthy self-worth. The wise man, Solomon said, *"Pleasant words are as honeycomb, sweet to the mind and healing to the body."*

Some principles of child training

- 1. Parental control.** If you want to control your children, first control yourself. They will be more affected by what you are, than by what you say.
- 2. Cultivate good habits.** When habits are formed, they are hard to break. Establish good habits in your children when they are young. Habits are well established by the time a child is seven years of age.
- 3. Avoid nagging.** If censure, reproof or scolding is on your lips, spoken in anger, you are losing ground. When you lose your temper with your children, they lose their respect for you. Remember, be kind and firm.
- 4. Praise your children when they do right.** Don't flatter them, but be honest in their appraisal. What they do may mean nothing to an adult, but it's very important to them. Give credit where it's warranted. This practice can make your home the happiest place on earth. If they are happy at home, they are less inclined to leave (except when they want to set up a home of their own in adulthood).
- 5. Never punish in anger.** Because you are not well, or angry, don't take it out on the children. If you do, it will produce an unfavourable reaction from them. We have already noted this as incorrect child training. Use pleasant and cheerful words, rather than being harsh and exacting.
- 6. Do things together as a family.** Togetherness is one of the happiest words in the home. The family that plays together stays together.

7. Never say, "I don't love you." Rather say, *"I will always love you but I didn't like what you did"*. Some continually say, *"You are a naughty child"*. This encourages the child to grow up and fulfil this infamous title. Best to be trusting rather than doubting.

8. Don't continually threaten. This creates opposition and a competition of wits. Many parents make threats, then never carry them out. In some cases, this may be just as well, but as far as child training is concerned it's a futile exercise.

9. If you make a mistake - admit your error. This can only draw the family closer together. There is no shame in saying, *"I'm sorry"*.

10. Prepare your child for self-government. This is the ultimate aim of child training. One day the world must be faced alone, without parental guidance. Your children will be free to exercise their power of choice, but because you have prepared them well, they are more likely to decide on the better way. They have been helped to choose correctly when they have been under your care, so in their independence they are more likely to succeed. Sometimes we, as parents, are perplexed as to what to do for our children. But don't despair. Do your best now and the reward will eventually come.



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