

# TOWARDS A HEALTHY MARRIAGE

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Building and maintaining a healthy marriage takes time and effort. With the day-to-day pressures of work, children and chores it can be easy to neglect to nurture your relationship and to take your mate for granted. This teaching is designed to remind you about the importance of fostering a healthy relationship. It offers basic tips to help you build a successful marriage every day.

A strong, healthy marriage isn't a matter of luck or romance, it takes work and compatibility. Wishful thinking never builds a strong and vibrant marriage, but hard work does. The application of biblical principles for successful marriage will produce a healthy and enduring marriage for any couple anywhere in the world.

Some factors that contribute to a healthy relationship are static -- they're things you can't really change, others are things that are dynamic -- things that you can work on to improve your relationship. Either way, they are important to know for anyone who is married or is thinking of marriage.

## 10 indicators of a good relationship:

- **Fostering good communication.** Happy couples talk to each other, and they listen to each other. The best communicators recognize when outside distractions or emotional states are at work to prevent good communication, and find ways to work through them when both partners are ready.
- **Resolving conflict in a positive way.** According to the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education in the USA, habitual avoidance of conflict is the No. 1 predictor of divorce. Strong relationships are earmarked by a couple's ability to handle disagreements in a positive manner. Don't run from conflicts, but face and overcome them.
- **Having realistic expectations.** When people first meet, they put their best foot forward and try to mask their flaws. Couples should realize that as time goes on, the "real" person will emerge. Relationships develop over time, but unrealistic expectations of a partner, or of a relationship, can cause undue stress. It is proper to give room for failure. What this does is that it helps in developing shock absorbers in relationships. The offended person is able to absorb the offence because he or she has prepared for it before hand.
- **Paying attention to details of your partner's life.** People in strong marriages know their partner well. They know major events in their partner's past, and they know each other's likes, dislikes, hopes and worries. And, they keep updating this information as their partner's world changes. Based on this knowledge he relates with his spouse avoiding what will cause pain and disrupt the peace in the home.

*1 Peter 3:7*

*7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

*KJV*

- **Experiencing more positive interactions than negative ones.** Some research indicates that successful marriages have five times as many positive interactions as negative ones. Giving positive responses to a partner's bid for attention -- whether it's a question, an extended hand, or just a glance -- strengthens the relationship.
- **Building trust.** Trust develops slowly, but it is fostered by communicating honestly and following through on promises. Be honest in your dealings with your spouse and be a promise keeper at all times in all things.
- **Spending time together.** Sharing experiences is a good way to build a relationship. Couples who enjoy doing things together -- rather than feeling obligated or forced into doing things together -- have a stronger, healthier relationship.
- **Shared values.** Couples who start out with a wide array of shared values -- who agree on what's important in life and the principles to live by -- have a better chance at building a solid relationship.
- **Shared responsibilities.** Both partners have the obligation of nurturing the relationship, keeping the household running smoothly and working toward common goals. Allowing only half of the couple to bear the brunt of these responsibilities can cause resentment to build.
- **Adapting to change.** People and relationships change over time. That's to be expected, not feared. Even people's expectations of a relationship can change. Partners need to be able to talk about these changes and find ways to adapt to them.

### **Tips for a Healthy Marriage**

- **Learn to communicate effectively.** Communication is perhaps the most important key to a strong, healthy relationship. Effective communication requires you to be an active listener - listening without judgment and focusing on what your partner is saying - as well as expressing your own feelings in a positive, truthful way.
- **Make time for each other.** Part of being able to communicate effectively is making time for meaningful conversations in a setting free of distractions. For example, turn off the television in the evening to make it possible to have a real conversation and catch up during a quiet night at home.
- **Fight fair.** Don't expect to agree on everything. An important part of resolving conflicts is being respectful of your partner's feelings, even when you are arguing. Let your partner know you value what he or she is saying, even if you don't agree. Try to avoid criticizing, ridiculing, dismissing or rejecting your partner or what he or she is saying. If you're feeling frustrated and feel as if your anger is taking over, take a time out from the conversation and agree to resume it at a specific time later. Note, if you ever feel as if you may physically hurt your partner, walk away and seek help immediately.
- **Make a commitment to your relationship.** Make your relationship with your partner a priority in your life. A relationship is a work in progress. It needs attention and effort to grow. No matter how busy you are, make time to spend quality time together, even if you have to schedule out specific time slots on your calendars. Celebrate each other's accomplishments together and support each other during harder times.

- **Express appreciation.** Saying thank you can go a long way toward making your partner feel special and appreciated. Even though you may feel that your partner knows you care, it doesn't hurt to say thanks—even for everyday things like cooking dinner, putting the kids to bed, or taking out the trash.
- **Maintain a sense of humor.** Laugh often with your mate and be willing to laugh at yourself. Maintaining a sense of humor can relieve stress and tension, and help you get through a difficult time together.
- **Learn to compromise.** Compromise is important in any relationship, but it's especially important in a marriage. If you disagree on an issue, discuss the problem calmly, allow each person to explain his or her point of view, and look for ways to meet each other in the middle.
- **Practice forgiveness.** There may be times when your partner makes a mistake or says or does something hurtful - whether intentionally or unintentionally. While it's okay to be angry, it's also important to then let go of the anger and move on. If you constantly bring up past hurts, it's difficult to have a mutually loving relationship.
- **Keep romance alive.** Relationships are often romantic in the beginning, but as time passes and couples become distracted by other things—work, children, bills, the house—they often take each other for granted. Make your partner feel special by doing something romantic, no matter how small. For example, make breakfast in bed for your partner, make a date for a special night out, take a walk on the beach, or have a picnic.
- **Take time for yourself.** It's normal for couples to have different hobbies, interests and friends. While it's important to spend quality time with each other, it's equally important to spend time alone or with friends. For example, plan a girls' or guys' night out, take time out with other men at the gym or men's fellowship activity. By making time for yourselves, you'll appreciate each other more.

Finally, if you are having difficulty with your marriage or relationship, seek help. There are many resources available to help you including, clergy members, therapists, marriage workshops, and support groups.

### **Qualities of a Healthy Marriage**

Several social scientists, in examining “healthy marriages,” have identified a number of traits, qualities and skills of people who had been able to maintain successful, satisfying relationships, and found out that these people:

1. Share a healthy philosophy of life with clear ideals.
2. Are growing in friendship and respect as well as love for each other.
3. Share many interests and activities together.
4. Enjoy each other's company.
5. Are trusting and trustworthy, are interpersonally honest yet tactful.
6. Are interdependent.
7. Are proud of each other's achievements, and give realistic praise.
8. Are interested in and respect each other's work.
9. Share in decision making.
10. Try to share and make monotonous work interesting, such as household chores.
11. Have realistic hopes linked to attainable goals.

12. Take responsibility for decisions and behavior.
13. Will, if education is needed to reach goals, patiently delay marriage to continue their schooling.
14. Have a mindset which sees problems as challenges to be solved.
15. Have had previous relationships which they properly exited in non-destructive ways without looking back ever since.
16. Are able to live within their financial means.
17. Are aware of their weaknesses and show efforts at constructive change.
18. Use criticism wisely, but maintain a balance in which there is more praise than criticism.
19. Are "real" people, genuine and authentic - No deception and pretence is practiced.
20. Find that the growing relationship helps each person become surer of him or herself.
21. Engage in healthy physical activities – get adequate nutrition, exercise and sleep.
22. Restrict their use of sarcasm, nagging, embarrassment and complaining.
23. Enjoy talking and listening to one another, even when discussing areas of conflict.
24. Experienced courtships that were not frantic or rushed (over 60% of the early divorces were due to hurried marriages - where the couples were very young, not well acquainted, and where the engagement period was very short).
25. Are empathic and attempt to understand and meet their partner's needs.
26. Did not elope (leave secretly to marry without the consent of parents, guardian or family). Four out of five couples who elope, divorce.
27. Enjoy giving of themselves to others – they desire to give as well as to get.
28. Used their courtship time to thoroughly get acquainted, and grow in love.
29. Carefully consider the issues that face them, evaluating the pros and cons of alternatives. They try not to jump to hasty conclusions regarding important relationship issues.
30. Marry out of respect and affection, not out of pity or sympathy.
31. Enjoy each other's families, in spite of their possible faults.
32. Talked through a number of sexual issues during their engagement period.
33. Enjoy a healthy, non-destructive and appropriate use of humor.
34. Are satisfied with the amount of affection demonstrated in their relationship.
35. Try to change personal habits that are irritating to their spouse.
36. Try not to dwell on past mistakes, but look ahead to ways of avoiding similar situations in the future.
37. Are able to forgive and receive forgiveness from one another.

### **10 Things to do for a Healthy Relationship**

- 1 Ask "How was your day?"
- 2 Practice the art of physical touching every day – especially a lingering kiss.
- 3 Get in the habit of saying what you want rather than what you don't want.
- 4 Go on a two-hour date once a week to talk.
- 5 Avoid criticism, defensiveness, withdrawal and contempt.
- 6 Remember to put your partner's needs first.
- 7 Resolve your problems with humor, interest, support and affection.
- 8 Be open and honest with caring and compassion.
- 9 Share chores.
- 10 Show appreciation to your partner each and every day. Learn to say, "Thank you".

## **WORDS OF WISDOM**

- 1. Love is an action word that is tangible and visible for all to see. You can't love and be hurting without remorse the one you claim to love.**
- 2. When enthusiasm and passion is taken out of love, it becomes lifeless and useless.**
- 3. Successful and blissful marriage is not a product of wishful thinking, but the diligent application of the biblical principles of marriage.**
- 4. To guard your mind is to guard your marriage. Your thoughts determine how you feel, speak, act, respond or react to the things you see and experience in your relationship.**
- 5. Focusing on the negative things your spouse says and does will kill your love for him or her and enrage you to do the wrong things that will not help your relationship.**
- 6. Good character is what sustains love and keeps excitement in a relationship.**
- 7. Regular communication with the Lord for your marriage will make available great grace for successful marriage and parenting.**
- 8. Children are blessings from the Lord. They are the assets, responsibilities and liabilities of marriage. If you do not train them well in the way and fear of the Lord, they will become like a dripping sore to you.**
- 9. Those who make haste in the choice of a partner end up in pain and regret, but those who take their time and seek the help and guidance of the Lord rejoice and celebrate.**