

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work	
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Divorce statistics	<p>There is a 67% chance of a first marriage ending in divorce over a 40-year period</p> <p>Half of all divorces occur in the first 7 years</p>
Regret	Neither spouse recognizes the value of a marriage until after the separation is complete
Effect on health	<p>An unhappy marriage can increase your chances of getting sick by roughly 35% and shorten your life by 4 years</p> <p>People who are happily married live longer, healthier lives than either divorced or unhappily married people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of the reason being that people experience chronic stress that adds wear and tear on the body and mind which presents itself in a number of physical ailments - Happily married people tend to be more health-conscious, in part due to spouses checking up on each other to have regular checkups, take medicine and eat nutritiously
Effect on children	<p>A study found that preschoolers in homes where there was great marital hostility had chronically elevated levels of stress hormones compared with other children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These kids were found to suffer far more from depression, peer rejection, aggression and low achievement at school - It is not wise to stay in a bad marriage for the sake of your children
<p>Myth</p> <p>Active listening</p>	<p>You can save your marriage just by learning to communicate more sensitively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common conflict-resolving technique in which complaints are stated as "I" statements that focus on feelings rather than making accusations, and the other person is asked to paraphrase the other's complaint <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I feel hurt when ..." - "It must be hard for you to ..." - It seems to make sense that calmly and lovingly listening to each other's perspective would lead couples to find compromise solutions - Even if validation and active listening make conflict resolution easier for a couple, it alone cannot save a marriage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A marital therapy study found that even after employing

	<p>active listening techniques, the typical couple was still distressed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The best of this type of marital therapy has only a 35% success rate
Conflict styles	<p>Couples have different styles of conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some avoid fights at all costs - Some fight a lot - Some are able to talk out their differences and find a compromise without raising their voices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No one style is better than the other - Different styles work for different couples
Friendship	<p>Happy marriages are based on a deep friendship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This entails mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other's company - These couples express fondness in little ways day in and day out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They are in positive sentiment override, meaning their positive thoughts about each other and their marriage supersede their negative feelings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a fundamentally positive view of your spouse and your marriage is a powerful buffer when bad times hit
Repair attempt	<p>Any statement or action, silly or otherwise, that prevents negativity from escalating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The success or failure of a couple's repair attempts is one of the primary factors in a marriage's success or failure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The strength of the marital friendship determines the success of the repair attempt
Physiological differences	<p>Men are more easily overwhelmed by marital conflict than are their wives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In most marriages, the wife, who is better able to handle the stress, brings up sensitive issues while the husband will attempt to avoid the subject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is true in most happy marriages as well - The male cardiovascular system is more reactive than the female and slower to recover from stress
	<p>The key to reviving or divorce-proofing a relationship is not in how you handle disagreements but in how you are with each other when you're not fighting</p>
Principle 1: Enhance your love maps	<p>The part of the brain where all the relevant information about your partner's life is stored</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remembering the major events in each other's history - Being intimately familiar with each other's world

	<p>concerning stresses from other areas of your lives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is where active listening is very beneficial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oftentimes your spouse isn't asking you to come up with a solution-just to be a good listener - "How can I help? Do you need me just to listen, or do you want me to help you brainstorm what to do next?" <p>Sometimes there is a disparity between the respective needs of each spouse for intimacy and independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some people have a greater and more frequent need for connection, others for independence - If your spouse's concept of closeness feels more like suffocation, the best thing to do is to talk it out to help you both learn how to give each other what you need
Principle 4: Let your partner influence you	<p>Study found that the happiest, most stable marriages in the long run were those where the husband treated his wife with respect and did not resist power sharing and decision making with her</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In cases of disagreement, these husband's search for common ground rather than insisting on getting their way - The wives of men who accept their influence are far less likely to be harsh with their husbands when broaching a difficult marital topic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Someone who does not accept influence will not have very much influence <p>A marriage can't work unless both partners honor and respect each other</p> <p>Women are usually more emotionally intelligent than men</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Their play as kids emphasizes social interactions and feelings <p>Ask your partner to gently point out to you instances where you are being unwittingly domineering, defensive or disrespectful</p>
Two types of marital conflict	<p>Resolvable and perpetual</p> <p>Problems that will remain in some form or another forever</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Majority of marital conflicts fall into this category <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wife complains that her husband drives too fast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - She accuses him of being selfish, he accuses her of being distrustful - Their disagreement is really about bigger issues such as trust and selfishness - "When choosing a long-term partner, you will inevitably be choosing a particular set of unsolvable problems" <p>You don't have to resolve your major marital conflicts for your marriage to thrive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In all arguments, both solvable and perpetual, no one is ever

	<p>right</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reality is subjective, which is why your partner's perspective on the argument may be different from yours without either being right or wrong <p>Human nature makes it virtually impossible to accept advice from someone unless you feel that that person understands you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Before asking your partner to change a particular habit, you must make your partner feel that you are understanding - When people feel criticized, disliked and unappreciated they are unable to change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We need to feel accepted by our spouse <p>For a marriage to go forward happily, you need to pardon each other and give up on past resentments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When you forgive, you both benefit
Principle 5: Solve your solvable problems	<p>To resolve conflict in a loving relationship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Soften your startup <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussions invariably end on the same note they begin - If you start by attacking your spouse verbally you'll end up with at least as much tension as you began - If most of your arguments start softly, your marriage is likely to be stable and happy - Harsh startup is often a reaction to feeling that one's partner doesn't respond to low-level complaints - Make statements that start with "I" instead of "You" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phrases starting with "I" are usually less likely to be critical and to make the listener defensive than statements starting with "You" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "You are not listening to me" versus "I would like it if you would listen to me" - Be polite by adding "please" and "I would appreciate it if" - Be appreciative by couching your request within an appreciation of what your partner did right in the past and how much you miss that - Describe what is happening, instead of accusing or blaming - Learn to make and receive repair attempts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are specific words you can say to your spouse to de-escalate the tension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using them when arguments get too negative will keep discussions from spiraling out of control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "That felt like an insult" - "I'm feeling unappreciated" - "This is important to me. Please listen" - "Let me try again"

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I might be wrong here" - "I know this isn't your fault" - Soothe yourself and each other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflict discussions can lead to feeling overwhelmed both emotionally and physically - If you find yourself exploding, you should stop the discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tell your spouse you need to take a break <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spend this time doing something soothing and distracting, like listening to music or exercising - Compromise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It doesn't work for either of you to get things all your way, even if you're convinced that you're right - An inability to be open minded is a real liability when it comes to conflict resolution - Be tolerant of each other's faults
Work stress	<p>Today's couples work an average of 1,000 hours more each year than people did 30 years ago</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the end of a long day you may need time to yourselves to decompress before interacting with each other
In-laws	<p>The family tension is more frequently between the wife and her mother-in-law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the core of the tension is a turf battle between the two women for the husband's love <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This throws him into the role of peacemaker <p>The only way out of his dilemma is for the husband to side with his wife against his mother</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One of the basic tasks of a marriage is to establish a sense of "we-ness" between husband and wife <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He and his wife need to establish their own family rituals, values and lifestyle <p>Much about relationships has to do with perception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If your wife believes you side with your mother against her, that's something you need to work on even if you don't agree with her perception
Sex	<p>The less clear you are about what you do and don't want, the less likely you are to get it</p> <p>The key to talking about sex is to be gentle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It's better to say "I loved when we did X last weekend" than to say "You never do X" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Even if you aren't satisfied with your current sex life, you need to accentuate the positive

	<p>Have the same attitude as a professional cook</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He or she makes accommodations that will satisfy the customer's palate
Housework	<p>When a husband doesn't do his agreed-upon share of the housework, the wife usually feels disrespected and unsupported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many husbands were raised in traditional homes where their father did no housework at all <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many men still consider housework to be a woman's job <p>When the husband does his share to maintain the home, both he and his wife report a more satisfying sex life than in marriages where the wife believes her husband is not doing his share</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In these relationships, the women are less likely to begin a discussion harshly
Baby	<p>67% of new mothers experience a plummet in their marital satisfaction as a result of lack of sleep, feeling overwhelmed and unappreciated, juggling mothering with a job and lack of time to oneself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What separates the other 33% is whether the husband transforms along with his wife <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new mother experiences a profound reorientation of meaning in her life - The important thing is that both parents are in it together <p>Dad's should not be excluded from baby care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new mother casts herself into a supervisory role, constantly directing the new father and chastising him <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This results in some husbands doing less and less and becoming less accomplished and confident in caring for the child - If the new mother doesn't like her husband's way, she should remember that the baby is his child too and will benefit from experiencing more than one parenting style <p>Men may take longer to bond with their children since women tend to be more nurturing toward children while men are more playful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most men assume you can't really play with a helpless baby - Newborns can be great playmates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The father who gets to know his babies by bathing, diapering and feeding them will find they love to play with him <p>Carve out time for the two of you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a babysitter, a relative or friend to get some time alone <p>It will help the marriage for the husband to modify his work hours so</p>

	<p>he can come home earlier and on the weekends take over for her now and then so she can get a needed break</p>
<p>Principle 6: Overcome gridlock</p>	<p>Gridlock is a sign that you have dreams for your life that aren't being addressed or respected by each other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deeper dreams sometimes remain hidden <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Underneath the dream to make lots of money may be a deep need for security <p>The happy couple understands that helping each other realize their dreams is one of the goals of marriage</p> <p>If you've gridlocked on any issue, big or small, the first step is to identify which dreams are fueling the conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on what each partner needs, wants and is feeling about the situation - Tell your partner that you support his or her dream <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This doesn't necessarily mean that you believe that the dream can or should be realized - You can express understanding of the dream and be interested in learning more about it even though you don't share it
<p>Principle 7: Create shared meaning</p>	<p>Each couple and family create its own microculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The culture incorporates both of their dreams <p>The more you can agree about the fundamentals in life, the richer, more meaningful, and easier your marriage will be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A crucial goal is to create an atmosphere that encourages each person to talk honestly about his or her convictions <p>Creating informal rituals when you can connect emotionally is critical in a marriage</p> <p>Your marriage will feel deeper to the degree that your expectations of each other are similar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Husband and wife both believe that a husband should be a protector and provider and the wife more of a nurturer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Or, husband and wife both believe in an egalitarian marriage in which the spouses support each other emotionally and financially - Having similar views about parenting, the kind of interaction you should have with parents and siblings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To the extent that you feel similarly about these issues, your marriage will be strengthened <p>Sharing your deepest goals with your spouse will increase the intimacy of your marriage and working together to achieve shared goals make the union even richer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We don't talk about our deepest goals

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The goal isn't to agree on every aspect of what is meaningful, but to have a marriage where both are open to each other's most dearly held beliefs
Focus on the good	<p>Anyone you marry will be lacking in certain desirable qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The problem is focusing on what's missing and not the fine qualities that are there <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Search for things to praise

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