

7 principles for making marriage work

7 Principles for Making Marriage Work

Marriage is one of the most significant commitments one can make in life. It involves two individuals coming together to share their lives, dreams, and challenges. However, maintaining a successful marriage requires effort, understanding, and dedication. Based on extensive research, including the work of renowned psychologist John Gottman, there are seven core principles that can help couples foster a healthier and more fulfilling relationship. This article outlines these principles and provides practical advice on how to implement them in your marriage.

1. Enhance Your Love Maps

The concept of a Love Map refers to the detailed knowledge you have about your partner's world. This includes their history, preferences, values, and dreams. The first principle emphasizes the importance of knowing your partner deeply.

How to Enhance Your Love Maps:

- Ask Open-Ended Questions: Regularly engage in conversations that delve into your partner's thoughts and feelings. Questions such as, "What are your biggest dreams?" or "What was your happiest childhood memory?" can help deepen your understanding.
- Share Experiences: Explore new activities together—whether it's traveling to a new place or trying a new hobby. Shared experiences help build memories and strengthen your connection.
- Regular Check-Ins: Make it a point to discuss each other's experiences, feelings, and thoughts regularly. This can be a daily or weekly ritual that fosters intimacy and understanding.

2. Nurture Your Fondness and Admiration

A strong marriage is built on mutual respect and admiration. Nurturing fondness for one another can serve as a protective barrier against conflict and resentment.

How to Nurture Fondness and Admiration:

- Express Appreciation: Make it a habit to express gratitude for the little things your partner does. This could be as simple as thanking them for making dinner or recognizing their hard work.
- Compliment and Affirm: Regularly compliment your partner and affirm their strengths. Acknowledging their positive qualities reinforces your bond.
- Focus on Positivity: Try to maintain a ratio of at least five positive interactions for every negative one. This helps create a positive atmosphere in your relationship.

3. Turn Towards Each Other Instead of Away

In a marriage, partners have numerous opportunities to connect or disconnect. The third principle emphasizes the importance of turning toward your partner in moments of stress or joy.

How to Turn Towards Each Other:

- Respond to Bids for Attention: When your partner seeks your attention, respond positively. This could be as simple as putting down your phone when they speak to you.
- Engage in Daily Moments of Connection: Make time for small interactions throughout the day—sharing a meal, discussing the day's events, or just taking a walk together.
- Be Supportive in Times of Stress: During challenging situations, offer support and understanding instead of withdrawing or becoming defensive.

4. Let Your Partner Influence You

Marriage is a partnership, and both individuals should feel empowered to contribute to the relationship. The fourth principle advocates for mutual respect and influence.

How to Let Your Partner Influence You:

- Consider Their Opinions: When making decisions, take your partner's views seriously. This shows respect for their thoughts and feelings.
- Practice Compromise: Be willing to meet in the middle. Compromise is essential for a healthy relationship and demonstrates that you value each other's needs.
- Encourage Each Other's Growth: Support each other's personal goals and dreams, fostering an environment where both partners can thrive.

5. Solve Your Solvable Problems

Every couple encounters conflicts; however, not all problems are solvable. The fifth principle focuses on addressing conflicts constructively.

How to Solve Solvable Problems:

- Stay Calm: Approach conflicts with a level head. Avoid raising your voice or using accusatory language.
- Use "I" Statements: Communicate your feelings by using "I" statements rather than "you" statements. For example, say, "I feel hurt when..." instead of "You always...".
- Focus on the Issue: Stick to the topic at hand and avoid bringing up past grievances. This prevents the conversation from escalating into a larger conflict.

6. Overcome Gridlock

Some issues in marriage can become longstanding sources of conflict, often referred to as gridlocked problems. The sixth principle emphasizes understanding and addressing these deeper issues.

How to Overcome Gridlock:

- Identify the Underlying Dream: Understand the deeper dreams or values that are causing the conflict. Discuss these underlying issues openly with your partner.
- Seek Compromise: Look for creative solutions that allow both partners to feel heard and validated. This may involve renegotiating expectations or finding alternatives.
- Practice Patience: Acknowledge that some issues may take time to resolve. Be patient with each other as you navigate these complex topics.

7. Create Shared Meaning

The final principle emphasizes the importance of building a shared sense of purpose in your marriage. This involves creating rituals, goals, and values that both partners cherish.

How to Create Shared Meaning:

- Establish Rituals: Create rituals that are unique to your relationship, such as special date nights or family traditions during holidays.
- Set Goals Together: Work on shared goals, whether they are related to finances, family, or personal development. This fosters a sense of teamwork and unity.
- Discuss Values: Regularly engage in conversations about your beliefs, values, and aspirations. This ensures that you are both aligned in your vision for the future.

Conclusion

Making a marriage work is a continuous journey that requires commitment, patience, and understanding. By implementing these seven principles—enhancing love maps, nurturing fondness and admiration, turning toward each other, letting your partner influence you, solving solvable problems, overcoming gridlock, and creating shared meaning—you can foster a stronger, more fulfilling relationship. Remember, every marriage faces challenges, but by focusing on these principles, you can build a solid foundation that weather life's storms together. Prioritize your partnership, and invest in the love that brought you together in the first place.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the 7 principles for making marriage work?

The 7 principles are: 1) Enhance your love maps, 2) Nurture your fondness and admiration, 3) Turn toward each other instead of away, 4) Let your partner influence you, 5) Solve your solvable problems, 6) Overcome gridlock, and 7) Create shared meaning.

How does enhancing your love maps contribute to a successful marriage?

Enhancing your love maps involves knowing your partner's inner world, including their dreams, goals, and fears, which fosters intimacy and connection, making it easier to navigate challenges together.

Why is nurturing fondness and admiration important in a marriage?

Nurturing fondness and admiration strengthens the emotional bond between partners, allowing them to appreciate each other's positive qualities and build a foundation of respect and affection.

What does turning toward each other instead of away mean?

Turning toward each other means responding positively to your partner's bids for attention, affection, and support, which reinforces the emotional connection and builds a strong partnership.

How can couples let their partner influence them effectively?

Couples can let their partner influence them by actively listening, valuing their opinions, and making decisions together, which fosters equality and respect in the relationship.

What are some strategies for overcoming gridlock in marriage?

Strategies for overcoming gridlock include identifying the underlying dreams behind perpetual conflicts, finding compromise, creating rituals of connection, and seeking professional help if needed.

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