

17 Chapter Seventeen: The Habits of Marriage

“My most brilliant achievement was my ability to be able to persuade my wife to marry me.”

-Winston Churchill

Why relationships? Because if you are alone with no one to share your life with, you become isolated, which leads to depression, and it becomes very difficult to focus on anything else but how sad you are, that's why. You're destined for more than that. Is that right or right? Okay, let's start with what relationships are. Relationships are about being connected. They are about sharing this experience we call life together. There are obviously many different personal relationships in your life. You have your spouse, your kids, your friends, your siblings, your boss, your coworkers, your acquaintances, etc. Have you ever thought about what you want in your relationships? More love? More patience? More acceptance? More fun?

Let's start with a little trick. Whatever you want more of, you must give more of. Do you want more love from your spouse? Give them more love. Do you want to be listened to more? Listen to them more. By the way, you were born with two ears and one mouth. I'm just saying! Do you want more respect? Give more respect. Do you need to be more appreciated? Appreciate more. This is one of those simple rules of life that aren't necessarily easy, but simple. Give it a shot.

We are going to focus on your spouse relationship and your children relationship, which hands down, are the two most important relationships in your life. If you do not have a spouse or kids yet, we will focus on your future spouse and kids. These relationships are where you spend most of your life, so make sure you put the time in to make them incredible. Marriage is a gift. Your children are gifts.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Fantastic marriages require fantastic individuals. If you have it together individually, you will have it together as a couple. My definition of a fabulous marriage is one that is based on unconditional love and commitment, communication, and total acceptance of one another with a shared purpose and vision. I know this is a big aspiration to shoot for, but regardless of where your marriage is now, shoot for it to always get better.

If you are not married yet, do you know what you want in a spouse? Do you know what questions to ask? When you choose a spouse, you are choosing someone to spend the rest of your life with. This person becomes a part of you, and together you will share your life's missions. Let's start from the beginning. In the beginning, there was love....and it was good...

CHOOSING A SPOUSE

I'm sure you have heard that opposites attract. This is true in many love relationships with regards to strengths and weaknesses but not so much in values. In a previous chapter, we talked about different personality types. Many times, not all times, but many times, couples share the opposite personality traits in order to balance out the relationship. This is a good thing because as the two of you become one, you can act as a more complete functional unit, "you complete me," right? If you are super formal, you may attract someone who is informal. If you are super dominant, you may attract someone who is easy going. This certainly isn't required for choosing a spouse; however, it is fun to watch when you meet couples. Sometimes, both in the relationship are very similar in personality traits, and that works fine, too. These couples tend to be very balanced at giving each other control when necessary.

If you are on the hunt for the love of your life, choose wisely. Read the questions below so you can prescreen your potential spouse. If you are in a relationship, and marriage is being considered, take the time to ask them some questions to make sure you know what you are getting yourself into.

Remember, a fabulous marriage is based on unconditional love and commitment, communication, and total acceptance of one another with a shared purpose and vision.

When I first was considering asking my beautiful wife to marry me, we went out for ice cream, and I totally drilled her with questions. She thought I was a little militant about it, but I needed to make sure my head was lining up with my heart. It was the best choice I ever made. Remember, a fabulous marriage is based on unconditional love and commitment, communication, and total acceptance of one another with a shared purpose and vision.

When you are in love and feeling the “feelings” all of the time, you will know when things are getting “serious.” Asking these serious potential deal breaker questions may be the last thing you feel like doing. With the divorce rate over fifty percent, it is pretty clear that not lining up your head *with* your heart does not work for most.

When it comes to new relationships, do you both know that what you see right now is what you get? This is similar for career interviews, too. How they are showing up to you in the first two days is the best presentation of themselves that they have. If you are picking up too many red flags during this initial process, then it’s time to do the moonwalk, back up and head out. Typically, the best you are ever going to have is what is in front of you right now. The point is, your future spouse may or may not *ever* change, so certainly be totally accepting of who they are and what they stand for right here, right now. We can all use improvement, but remember, you cannot change someone unless they are willing and coachable.

If you are already married, then these can be good questions to work through and strengthen your relationship. As a side note, I do not believe that getting a woman pregnant is reason for marriage. If that has happened, accept the fact that you both messed up big time and it’s time to be responsible and move forward. For the men out there, if you do not want to get married to each other, then BE A MAN and support her and your future child. Not getting married does not mean you are not going to be a dad. Be that kid’s dad, man. Break the cycle of children being raised without fathers. It starts with you! Buck up and be there from the start for your future little buckaroo.

**TWENTY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF
REGARDING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH A
POTENTIAL SPOUSE BEFORE CONSIDERING
MARRIAGE:**

1. Do your personalities complement each other? Do they bring out the best personality in you? Take an online personality test together one night for fun. This will really start the process of getting to know who you are considering marrying and what you are getting yourself into.
2. Do you still have a lot of fun together? Do you love each other's company?
3. Do you share common interests or hobbies?
4. Do you both know what you love about the other?
5. Do you both have strong sexual chemistry toward each other?
6. Do you both know each other's deal breaker rules for relationships?
7. Have you both read this book? Seriously. Make sure that you are considering marrying someone who knows who they are, why they are here, and what they want.
8. Have you gotten to know their family? Do they get along with their mom and dad? How well do they treat their parents?
9. Do you know their closest friends? What do they like to do with their friends?
10. How well do you both communicate or deal with stress in the relationship? Does that need to be worked on, or are you both good there?
11. Why did their past relationships end? What happened? What did they learn from them?
12. What are the red flags that you have noticed in your head but have ignored up to this point? Do those need to be discussed?
13. What does marriage mean to them? What do they believe about marriage?
14. What roles would you both have in the marriage? Who does what?

15. Do they like kids? Do they want children? How many? How do they want their future kids raised? What does family mean to them?
16. Do you line up spiritually? Do they have good character and moral code? Would you feel comfortable having them be the example for your future children?
17. Do you share the same lifestyle health habits? Are you on the same page on how to stay healthy? Do you both have the same health philosophy?
18. What do they do for income? Are you going to be satisfied financially with their current status as well as their potential? What is their relationship with money?
19. What is important to them and what is their life mission? Are you both on the same page with loving God, being your best, and helping others?
20. Where do they see the two of you in five years, ten years, twenty years?

Okay, how does your potential mate stand up or how does your spouse stand up? These are some deep questions. You need to decide which ones are your deal breakers and which ones you can live with. These twenty questions are the fundamentals. If you have ever been divorced, after reading these questions, is it pretty clear why the marriage didn't work? If this is you, you deserve a loving relationship regardless of what happened, so go get it again!

MARRIAGE A LITTLE ROCKY?

Now, with all that being said, know from the beginning that marriage is not always bliss. Whenever you meet a couple who has a great marriage, it is because they know how to ride through the ups and downs. Marriage is about commitment and communication. As long as each other's needs are being met, you really can have a life-long happy marriage. I used to think that when I met a couple that had a great marriage, it is because they never fight...ha! Not true. They do argue, they do take space from each other, and they do lose their cool with each other at times. With all of that being said, they also know that their commitment is more important than how they feel at the time. They give each other space when needed. They argue respectfully most of the time and they communicate effectively. If you and your spouse are going through a rocky time right now, really spend some time on the next two sections. You both are worth it.

I said before that fantastic marriages are made up between two fantastic individuals. That means that you each live by the principles in this book, or similar principles that keep you happy. Look, if you are not happy, your spouse will not be happy. You need to be happy first, and then you can bring your light into the marriage. Your spouse is not there to be the sole source of your happiness! You must be happy

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first and then the spouse magnifies that and makes your happiness even stronger. Now I hope you know that just because you live by the principles of this book doesn't mean every day is going to be a fantastic day for you or your marriage. These principles take a lifetime to get down. Even as the author, I think I have made it clear that I individually am a work in progress, my fantastic marriage is a work in progress, just like you, just like him, just like her, just like all of us.

If you have neglected your marriage so far to the point of considering divorce, take a minute to do a self-analysis. Number one, if you both are willing to give your marriage a fighting chance then move forward with these considerations. I repeat, if you both are willing to give it a shot then commit to giving it a shot. Consider the following point of view. You are bringing you into your current marriage. If you have failed to give your marriage the same attention you give your career, health, and any other key area in your life, then it is not acceptable as a self-responsible individual to throw in the towel and give up. If you got divorced, you would just bring your same self into the next marriage.

Everything that you do not like about your spouse can be addressed, confronted, changed or accepted if you both are willing to. If you think it would be better on the other side of the fence with someone else, then that new person may be better at the things you are seeking or may be better at fulfilling the needs you are missing, but they will not be as good as the things your current spouse is already doing that you don't realize you love so much. The new marriage will just bring new issues to work on. The key is knowing that improvement in the relationship with yourself and the relationship with your spouse is constant and never ending. Marriage is not about not having any issues. Marriage is about accepting each other completely. There is not a perfect spouse folks, just ask my wife. There is no such thing as a perfect human being!

Look, take an honest assessment of *yourself*. Would you be married to you? Are you at a level ten in all areas of your life? Do you communicate one hundred percent effectively? Are you completely spiritually at

peace? Do you have an incredible body and consider yourself a sexy beast? Are you the parent of the year? Do you never lose your temper? Are you loaded with tons of cash and free time? If you do have *all* of these, let me know the name of your book. I would love to read it.

Married couples who get divorced most always end up getting remarried, and studies show the divorce rate to be much higher on marriages after their first.¹³ Divorce is giving up on *your* self-growth. If you are reading this book, you are not someone who is like most people. You have the intellectual knowledge to not make the same decisions that over half of married couples do, divorce. You are smarter, better at this, and playing the game of life at a higher level than that.

Be honest with your spouse and let them know your needs are not being met. Ask them what needs are not being met for them. Commit to each other's needs again. Accept what you need to finally accept about the other, and get into mutual agreement on your needs. Commit to making it work.

If you think that being single for the rest of your life is the way to go, well, I would encourage you to talk to someone who has been single for over a year. Being single long term works for a very small group of people. The life of no responsibility, empty sex, and no one to answer to, is not your answer. There is a reason rock stars and movie stars get married, folks. Life is meant to be experienced with a partner. Create the "remember when" with your spouse.

Of course, the choice is ultimately yours, and of course, there are rule breakers for absolute divorce; however, if divorce is being considered, at least sit down and read this book together. Stay away from people who believe that marriage is terrible. Get around people who know every marriage has two individuals that are works in progress. Get on the same team and be friends along the path. If you are not happy in your marriage, it is because a need is not being met. When you don't feel like communicating, what do you need to do? Communicate.

MARRIAGE BEST PRACTICES

If you have decided that you want a better marriage, you are reading the right book. Marriages will always have ups and downs; it is part of the game. It does take work and it is not always easy. The following list is my top ten for keeping myself and my wife fulfilled in *our* marriage. This list is for the married men out there. If you want an awesome marriage, here is your action plan:

1. Appreciate her every day. I'm not kidding. Tell her how special she is to you and why, every day. I know fellas, just trust me on

this one. Sorry ladies, we need to be told to do this stuff. If you want a great marriage, just roll with this.

2. Make sure you know what makes her feel loved and schedule it in a variety of ways every week. Yes, schedule it. If you don't know, ask her. If she doesn't know, then take the Five Love Languages Quiz online and find out.
3. Be clear on each other's needs. What does she need on a regular basis to feel like she is in a solid, committed relationship? Make sure you both are clear on your roles in the marriage. I do this and you do this kinda thing.
4. Remain clear about each other's rules. "What are your deal breaker rules and what can we come together on mutual agreement with? Okay, here are mine. Are we both in agreement on each other's rules? Are we both in agreement on the consequences if these are broken?" I know this sounds very business-like, but marriage needs rules. Two people on the same team will only work if both of them know what the rules are.
5. Keep the sexual chemistry going. This is touchy, but I want the best for you both. Are you both still in the same shape you were in when you got married? Hubby, are you carrying around a big beer gut now and wonder why you are not sexually stimulated by your wife? Work on getting sexy yourself, Fabio, and then see how sexy you find your wife. Both hubby and wifey need to take continued care of their health. It is not fair not to. Keep it spicy folks. Get your sexy on.
6. Schedule a date night every week. Go enjoy a night out together without the kids weekly. This is the time to not only have fun but to ask each other, "On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate our marriage this week? Okay, what can I work on this week specifically to bring it back to a ten?"
7. There can be no concealments with your wife. None. If you can't talk to your wife with pure vulnerability then that is a big challenge to work on. Tell your wife everything. Look, if you have some concealments that you don't think you could ever talk to her about, do me a favor and re-read the Forgiveness of Self and Others chapter. Get some help if you have to. I care about you too much as a fellow human being to not let your soul die inside because you think you could never tell her the truth. Marriage *is* sacred. If you are sincerely sorry and you discuss it openly with her, and she is not willing to forgive you, then, brother, it may not work out. That is the risk you must take to

be happy. Nothing is worth you losing your soul over by not revealing concealments. Remember, marriage is total acceptance of one another.

8. Have a common unified purpose. What can you both work toward that is bigger than each other or your marriage? This could be a spiritual purpose. It could be a helping mankind purpose. Whatever is most important to you that is a cause bigger than yourself, unite with your wife on it, and make that purpose happen together.
9. Your wife needs to know you are committed no matter what. I know they like to push us away sometimes, but just make sure she knows that you love her unconditionally and will be right there when she is ready. If you ever need space, make sure she knows you love her but need to be alone and will be back.
10. Make sure you both know that you are on the same team. You can never “win” an argument with your wife. Think about that. You win, she feels terrible, but hey, you won. That doesn’t work. Don’t argue, communicate. It is too destructive to argue. It is better to step away if it comes down to useless nonproductive arguing. Never explain away her feelings.

TEN MARRIAGE COMMUNICATION GEMS

The following are a few relationship communication gems I have picked up over the years. They can apply to any relationship you have and are particularly helpful with your love relationship.

1. I mentioned earlier that what you don’t respect, you lose. This is a reality big time when it comes to relationships. Have you ever been talking to your spouse and your mind is completely somewhere else? Of course you have. I have for sure. Guys, listen to this one for our gals out there. The key to being present with your wife when your mind starts to wander is to mentally remind yourself of all the reasons you appreciate her. This brings you right back to focusing on what you need to be focusing on, your beautiful wife.
2. Always be interested in what your spouse has to say. Focus on being *interested*, not *interesting* all of the time. People want to talk about themselves and your spouse is no different.
3. When you need something from your spouse, talk in their values. Find out what they want and communicate in a way that helps them get what they want. For example, “Honey, I would

like to go fishing with my friends this Saturday. I will call up the babysitter and make sure she is available to watch the kids so you can have some downtime and go out with your friends if you would like.” Hey, marriage is always about win/win.

4. When communicating with your spouse, never be assumptive. Don't assume you know where they are coming from and then avoid confrontation. If you want to avoid some drama in your marriage, if you feel upset, have the courage to confront them and find out where they are coming from.
5. Do you use sarcasm in your relationships? Did you know that sarcasm is always, always perceived as a threat? For example, you forget to take out the trash and your spouse says, “Honey, *thanks a lot for taking out the trash*, just kidding!” That comment will always come back to bite the person who says it. Maybe not today, but it's coming.
6. Never criticize your spouse. Remember we are all works in progress. Be super slow to criticize and quick to appreciate. Appreciate your spouse, appreciate your spouse, appreciate your spouse. Did I say appreciate your spouse earlier?
7. If your spouse is upset with you and you have no idea why, ask to find out what's going on. If you still have no idea why and something is just off with them, it is usually because they have done something against *you* that you are not aware of and they are not happy or proud about it. Ask them about it with no judgment until it comes out because this kind of fester can destroy the relationship. Now that is some Jedi mind magic.
8. When needing to confront your spouse, don't say, “We need to talk.” That always conjures up fear. Instead say, “I need your help. I need to clarify a couple of things.” Big difference right? Right!
9. If you ever do not feel like communicating, it is time to communicate. If it looks like an argument is about to happen, nip it in the bud and ask her lovingly, “What do you want?” This is the fastest way to end the argument or prevent it.
10. Compliment her in front of others and always help her shine. Brag on her! Make her feel like the bomb with sincere compliments on who she is, what she did, and how awesome you think she is!

If you could put your entire marriage plan into five easy habits, and you could have the love life of your dreams if you stuck to them, would you want to learn them? Me too, again and again! Make the following five

habits part of your daily life and you will eventually have more love from your spouse than you will ever need. Always have a specific marriage target goal and review the Five-Step Action Jackson every day. When you hit that goal, make a new one.

TOP FIVE HABITS OF MARRIAGE

1. Take action on what makes your spouse feel loved weekly.
2. Have a date night once a week.
3. Reflect weekly on what is going well and what can be improved.
4. Keep the sex life sexy.
5. Ask each other daily if there is anything that they need help with.

Bottom line: Make the best choice with the tools you have when choosing a spouse. Continue to follow best practices of marriage if you want to spend your life happy. Your marriage will affect every area of your life. Make it a great one.