

# Making your marriage work

When a couple marry, a bond of love is invariably present; this bond will at times be put to the test, because marriage is no 'bed of roses'. For most couples this bond will grow, mature and become a wonderful source of joy despite the rough times. However, others may not cope well with the problems of living together. To split up is a terrible loss in every respect, especially for any children of the marriage.

Many troubled couples have achieved great happiness by following some basic rules of sharing.

The two big secrets of marital success  
are  
caring and responsibility.

## Some common causes of marital trouble

- Selfishness
- Financial problems/meanness
- Sickness (e.g. depression)
- 'Playing games' with each other
- Poor communication
- Unrealistic expectations
- Not listening to each other
- Drug or alcohol excess
- Jealousy, especially in men
- Fault finding
- Driving ambition
- Immaturity

## Some important facts

- Research has shown that we tend to choose partners who are similar to our parents and that we may take our childish and selfish attitudes into our marriage.
- The trouble spots listed above reflect this childishness; we often expect our partners to change and meet our needs.
- If we take proper care and responsibility, we can keep these problems to a minimum.
- Physical passion is not enough to hold a marriage together—'when it burns out, only ashes will be left'.
- While a good sexual relationship is great, most experts agree that what goes on *out* of bed counts for more.
- When we do something wrong, it is most important that we feel forgiven by our partner.

## Positive guidelines for success

1. *Know yourself.* The better you know yourself, the better you will know your mate.
2. *Share interests and goals.* Do not become too independent of each other. Develop mutual friends, interests and hobbies. Tell your partner 'I love you' regularly at the right moments.

3. *Continue courtship after marriage.* Spouses should continue to court and desire each other. Going out regularly for romantic evenings and giving unexpected gifts (such as flowers) are ways to help this love relationship. Engage in some high-energy fun activities such as massaging and dancing.
4. *Make love, not war.* Learn about sex and reproduction. A good sexual relationship can take years to develop, so work at making it better. Explore the techniques of lovemaking without feeling shy or inhibited. This can be helped by books such as *The Joy of Sex* and DVDs on lovemaking. Good grooming and a clean body are important.
5. *Cherish your mate.* Be proud of each other, not competitive or ambitious at the other's expense. Talk kindly about your spouse to others—do not put him or her down.
6. *Prepare yourself for parenthood.* Plan your family wisely and learn about child bearing and rearing. Learn about family planning methods and avoid the anxieties of an unplanned pregnancy. The best environment for a child is a happy marriage.
7. *Seek proper help when necessary.* If difficulties arise and are causing problems, seek help. Your general practitioner will be able to help. Stress-related problems and depression in particular can be lethal in a marriage—they must be 'nipped in the bud'.
8. *Do unto your mate as you would have your mate do unto you.* This gets back to the unconscious childhood needs. Be aware of each other's feelings and be sensitive to each other's needs. Any marriage based on this rule has an excellent chance of success.

### The Be Attitudes (virtues to help achieve success)

BE honest	BE loyal
BE loving	BE desiring
BE patient	BE fun to live with
BE forgiving	BE one
BE generous	BE caring

## Making lists—a practical task

Make lists for each other to compare and discuss.

- List qualities (desirable and undesirable) of your parents.
- List qualities of each other.
- List examples of behaviour each would like the other to change.
- List things you would like the other to do for you. Put aside special quiet times each week to share these things.