

the seven principles for making marriage work

the seven principles for making marriage work are essential guidelines that can significantly enhance the quality and longevity of a marital relationship. These principles, grounded in extensive psychological research and practical experience, provide couples with actionable strategies to foster intimacy, resolve conflicts, and build a resilient partnership. Understanding and applying these core concepts can help partners navigate the complexities of marriage, ensuring mutual respect, emotional connection, and shared growth. This article explores each of the seven principles in detail, offering insights into how couples can implement them effectively. By integrating these principles into daily life, couples can strengthen their bond and create a fulfilling, enduring marriage. The following sections outline each principle and its practical implications for making marriage work.

- Building Love Maps
- Nurturing Fondness and Admiration
- Turning Toward Each Other Instead of Away
- Letting Your Partner Influence You
- Solving Solvable Problems
- Overcoming Gridlock
- Creating Shared Meaning

Building Love Maps

Building Love Maps is the foundational principle for making marriage work. It involves developing a deep understanding of your partner's world, including their thoughts, feelings, hopes, and history. Love maps serve as mental representations of each other's inner worlds, which help spouses stay connected on an emotional level. Couples who maintain detailed and updated love maps tend to navigate challenges more effectively because they know what matters most to their partner.

Importance of Emotional Awareness

Emotional awareness is critical to creating accurate love maps. By consistently asking questions and engaging in meaningful conversations, couples gather information that enriches their understanding of one another. This process helps partners respond more empathetically to each other's needs, reducing misunderstandings and promoting emotional security.

Practical Ways to Build Love Maps

To build and maintain strong love maps, couples can:

- Regularly discuss daily experiences and feelings
- Learn about each other's dreams and fears
- Remember important dates and milestones
- Show genuine interest in personal preferences and opinions

Nurturing Fondness and Admiration

Nurturing fondness and admiration is the second principle for making marriage work. This principle emphasizes maintaining a positive view of one's partner, focusing on their strengths, and expressing appreciation. Fondness and admiration act as emotional glue that helps couples endure difficult times by reminding them of the value and goodness within their relationship.

The Role of Positive Sentiment Override

Positive sentiment override refers to the tendency to interpret a partner's actions in a positive light rather than assuming negative intent. Couples who cultivate fondness and admiration engage in positive sentiment override, which buffers against conflict and fosters goodwill. This mindset encourages forgiveness and compassion, essential elements in a thriving marriage.

Ways to Express Fondness and Admiration

Couples can nurture fondness and admiration through various methods, including:

- Regularly giving compliments and verbal affirmations
- Sharing memories of happy moments together

- Recognizing and celebrating each other's achievements
- Engaging in affectionate gestures like hugs and kind touches

Turning Toward Each Other Instead of Away

The third principle for making marriage work highlights the importance of turning toward one another during everyday interactions. This concept involves responding to bids for attention, affection, or support rather than ignoring or dismissing them. Couples who turn toward each other build emotional connection and trust, which are vital for relationship satisfaction.

Understanding Bids for Connection

Bids for connection are attempts by one partner to engage or connect with the other, whether through words, gestures, or expressions. Recognizing and responding positively to these bids strengthens the emotional bank account of the relationship. Ignoring bids, on the other hand, can lead to emotional disconnection and resentment over time.

Examples of Turning Toward

Examples of turning toward include:

- Making eye contact and actively listening when a partner speaks
- Showing interest in a partner's stories or emotions
- Offering support or comfort when needed
- Engaging in shared activities or moments of playfulness

Letting Your Partner Influence You

Letting your partner influence you is the fourth principle essential for making marriage work. It means being open to your partner's opinions, feelings, and needs, and allowing their influence to shape decisions, especially in important matters. This reflects mutual respect and equality within the relationship.

The Significance of Shared Power

Shared power dynamics contribute to marital satisfaction by ensuring that both partners feel valued and heard. When couples allow each other to influence them, they build trust and reduce power struggles. This cooperative approach helps resolve conflicts and promotes a sense of partnership.

Practices to Encourage Partner Influence

To practice letting your partner influence you, couples should:

- Listen attentively and consider their viewpoint seriously
- Engage in collaborative decision-making
- Avoid dismissing or minimizing the other's concerns
- Express willingness to compromise when appropriate

Solving Solvable Problems

Addressing solvable problems effectively is the fifth principle that contributes to a healthy marriage. Many conflicts arise from misunderstandings or unmet needs that can be resolved through constructive communication and problem-solving skills. Identifying which issues can be solved is crucial to avoid unnecessary frustration.

Techniques for Conflict Resolution

Effective conflict resolution involves several key techniques, such as:

- Using "I" statements to express feelings without blaming
- Listening actively and reflecting back what is heard
- Compromising and finding mutually acceptable solutions
- Timing discussions to avoid when emotions are too high

Distinguishing Solvable Problems from Perpetual

Issues

It is important for couples to distinguish between solvable problems and perpetual issues, which stem from fundamental personality differences or ongoing needs. Focused efforts should be on solvable problems to improve daily interactions and reduce stress in marriage.

Overcoming Gridlock

Overcoming gridlock is the sixth principle for making marriage work, referring to the ability to address persistent conflicts that resist easy solutions. These gridlocked issues often involve core values or deeply held beliefs, which require understanding and dialogue beyond simple compromise.

Understanding the Underlying Dreams

Gridlock frequently arises because each partner has underlying dreams or aspirations tied to the conflict. Recognizing and respecting these dreams helps couples move beyond surface arguments to find ways to honor both partners' needs. This process requires patience and empathy.

Strategies to Break Gridlock

Strategies to overcome gridlock include:

- Expressing underlying emotions and dreams openly
- Validating each other's perspectives without judgment
- Seeking creative solutions that accommodate both partners
- Engaging in ongoing dialogue rather than forcing immediate resolution

Creating Shared Meaning

The seventh and final principle for making marriage work involves creating shared meaning, which refers to building a sense of purpose and connection through shared rituals, goals, and values. Couples who cultivate shared meaning experience deeper intimacy and a stronger sense of partnership.

The Role of Rituals and Traditions

Rituals and traditions contribute to shared meaning by providing stability and identity within the marriage. These can include daily routines, holiday celebrations, or unique couple rituals that reinforce commitment and belonging.

Developing Shared Goals and Values

Developing shared goals and aligning values helps couples work together towards common aspirations. This process strengthens teamwork and fosters a sense of unity, making the marriage more resilient to external pressures.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the seven principles for making marriage work?

The seven principles are: 1) Enhance your love maps, 2) Nurture 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.

Who developed the seven principles for making marriage work?

The seven principles were developed by Dr. John Gottman, a renowned psychologist and relationship expert.

How can 'enhancing your love maps' improve a marriage?

Enhancing love maps means knowing your partner's world— their thoughts, feelings, hopes, and history— which builds emotional intimacy and understanding.

Why is 'nurturing fondness and admiration' important in a relationship?

Nurturing fondness and admiration helps maintain positive feelings and respect, which act as a buffer against conflict and negativity.

What does it mean to 'turn toward each other instead of away' in marriage?

Turning toward each other means responding positively to your partner's bids for attention and connection, strengthening emotional bonds.

How does 'letting your partner influence you' contribute to a successful marriage?

Letting your partner influence you shows respect and openness, promoting equality and reducing power struggles in the relationship.

What strategies are recommended for solving solvable problems according to the seven principles?

Strategies include gentle startup, making and receiving repair attempts, soothing yourself and each other, compromising, and being tolerant of each other's faults.

How can couples overcome gridlock using these principles?

Overcoming gridlock involves understanding underlying dreams and values behind conflicts, accepting differences, and finding ways to support each other's aspirations.

What does 'creating shared meaning' entail in a marriage?

Creating shared meaning involves developing rituals, roles, goals, and symbols together that provide a sense of purpose and connection beyond daily routines.

Additional Resources

1. *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* by John M. Gottman
This foundational book outlines the key principles that can help couples build and maintain a strong, healthy marriage. Based on decades of research, Gottman provides practical exercises and insights into communication, conflict resolution, and emotional connection. It is widely regarded as one of the most effective guides for couples seeking to improve their relationship.

2. *Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love* by Dr. Sue Johnson

This book focuses on Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and explores how

couples can create deeper emotional bonds through seven transformative conversations. Dr. Johnson emphasizes the importance of attachment and emotional responsiveness in building lasting intimacy. It offers practical advice for couples wanting to strengthen their connection.

3. *The Relationship Cure: A 5 Step Guide to Strengthening Your Marriage, Family, and Friendships* by John M. Gottman and Joan DeClaire

This book presents a five-step approach to improving communication and emotional connections in all types of relationships. Gottman and DeClaire provide tools to recognize and respond to emotional bids, which are crucial for maintaining closeness. It's an accessible resource for couples aiming to enhance their partnership and overall relational health.

4. *Love Sense: The Revolutionary New Science of Romantic Relationships* by Dr. Sue Johnson

In this book, Dr. Johnson delves into the science of love and attachment, explaining why we need emotional connection to thrive in relationships. She presents a new understanding of how love works in the brain and how couples can cultivate secure bonds. The book offers practical strategies for nurturing lasting love.

5. *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples* by Harville Hendrix

This classic book introduces Imago Relationship Therapy, which helps couples understand and heal childhood wounds that affect their adult relationships. Hendrix provides exercises and insights to foster empathy and mutual healing. It's a useful guide for couples seeking deeper understanding and connection.

6. *The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts* by Gary Chapman

Chapman's book explains the different ways people express and receive love, identifying five primary "love languages." Understanding and speaking your partner's love language can significantly improve communication and emotional intimacy. This book is a valuable tool for couples looking to enhance their emotional connection.

7. *Passionate Marriage: Keeping Love and Intimacy Alive in Committed Relationships* by Dr. David Schnarch

This book explores the importance of emotional and sexual intimacy in long-term relationships. Schnarch offers insights into personal growth, differentiation, and how couples can reignite passion. It's a thoughtful guide for couples wanting to deepen both their emotional and physical connection.

8. *Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment and How It Can Help You Find – and Keep – Love* by Amir Levine and Rachel Heller

This book explains the attachment theory in adult romantic relationships and helps readers understand their own attachment style. Knowing your attachment style can improve communication and conflict resolution in marriage. It offers practical advice for creating secure and fulfilling partnerships.

9. *The Dance of Connection: How to Talk to Someone When You're Mad, Hurt, Scared, Frustrated, Insulted, Betrayed, or Desperate* by Harriet Lerner

Lerner's book provides strategies for improving communication during difficult conversations in intimate relationships. It emphasizes honesty, empathy, and listening as tools for connection and conflict resolution. This book is especially helpful for couples striving to navigate emotional challenges constructively.

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