

Some advice for a happy marriage

Over the years, I have literally spent thousands of dollars on courses, classes and books in an effort to be of most help to couples in their marriages. So, naturally, one of the most helpful things I ever found was not in any of those courses, classes or books. It was something I found at a flea market! Tell me God doesn't have a sense of humor.

So, for the June brides and for those of you who are getting married, or who are already married, I share this list of "Rules for a Happy Marriage." I will offer my commentary on each rule.

1. "Never both be angry at the same time." What usually happens is that one person attacks angrily and the other reacts with anger. Try not to react, to get defensive, to explain. Just listen. We argue to be right. We listen to be close. Choose closeness.
2. "Never yell at each other unless the house is on fire." Don't yell. Trying to intimidate or control a partner never produces closeness.
3. "If one of you has to win an argument, let it be your mate." Enough said!
4. "If you have to criticize, do it lovingly." I would suggest not criticizing at all. Instead of saying, "You made me mad!" or "You did this to hurt me!" Say, instead, how you feel, "I felt sad when you said this. I felt hurt when you did this." Blaming makes the other person defensive. Our partner is not responsible for how we feel. We are responsible for sharing how we feel.
5. "Never bring up mistakes of the past." Never. Bringing up mistakes from the past is like acid that eats away at a relationship.
6. "Neglect the whole world rather than each other." Even better, love each other so that you can love the whole world.
7. "Never go to sleep with an argument unsettled." St. Paul said that a long time ago: "Don't let the sun go down on your anger."

8. "At least once every day try to say one kind or complimentary thing to your life's partner." This is huge. As I say so often, "What we focus on, we will get more of. If we look for the good in others and in ourselves, we will see more good. If we look for what's wrong, we will find more that's wrong." Look for the good. Praise the good. Refuse to say the negative or critical thing.

9. "When you have done something wrong, be ready to admit it and ask for forgiveness." Just saying "I'm sorry" has healed many a marriage. And if your spouse expresses sorrow, always grant forgiveness. Not forgiving keeps the wound open, in yourself and in your spouse.

10. "It takes two to make a quarrel, and the one in the wrong is the one who does the most talking." Very humbling, but usually true!

Happy marriages! Remember, your best gift to your children and to the world is to be happy yourselves.