

**White Robed Monks of St. Benedict**

***Making a Difference:  
Building a Lasting Relationship  
as Partner and Parent***

***Just read IT!***

# Acknowledgement

This book comes to you compliments of the White Robed Monks of St. Benedict. Enjoy!

Some parts of this booklet were generated by a language model and these parts have been reviewed and edited accordingly.

Many folks contributed to the text by offering insights and recommendations. Some of these folks are married, have been married, and/or about to be married. Others are wedding officiants, religious and not. And yet others are single with no intention of marrying (at this time). Thank you ever so much for sharing your time, insights and expertise.

And a special thanks to Puja and Shellen who lit the fire to get this manual written. A heartfelt thank you also to Ingrid Delle Jacobson of [word-2-kindle.com](http://word-2-kindle.com) who edited the manuscript and offered as well her profound insights.

The reader is requested to make judicious use of the information herein, to check it out and verify it for one's self. Apply due diligence to enter into marriage, having made a truly informed decision. This request is made not so much for the couple, but definitely more so for the children who may issue therefrom. It is the children who suffer greatly from the infantile and/or adolescent, unaware behavior of their parents. Thank you.

May many blessings be to you and yours.

Peace and Joy!

White Robed Monks of St. Benedict

# Forward

Hello and Peace be with you.

The White Robed Monks of St. Benedict offer this booklet with the intention of ameliorating unnecessary pain and suffering that may come from making uninformed decisions. Human beings are about relationships. This booklet provides information about relationships. The information contained herein centers on realities and expectations that are implied in couple's relationships in particular and any relationships in general.

Because we humans are about relationships, we, The Monks, acknowledge that we have initiated a relationship with you, the reader. Please understand that we mean no harm if the text comes across at times as direct, straightforward and to the point. We do ask that you meet yourself on your own path of self-discovery and enlightenment.

The reader may note the emphasis on children having a “good enough”<sup>1</sup> parental environment in which they may be able to thrive. (Identical twin studies indicate that how a twin responds (epigenetically) to the environment produces different paths, personality, etc.<sup>2</sup>) Please note: The information herein may be used by anyone intending to improve their relationships in general, with “friends” and “enemies” alike.

What is the purpose of a relationship, it might be asked. When all is said and done, the dramas and personas set aside, the purpose is nothing better than a peaceful environment. As with any successful harmonious human enterprise, keep focus on the mission statement: a peaceful environment.

**For the sake of the couple and (as advocates for) any children issuing there from, we ask that proper and careful reading of the following take place. Also, for your own sake and that of the people in your purview, we ask for a proper and careful reading of the following. We ask that you integrate pertinent information with due diligence in the Spirit of Compassion. Thank you for your cooperation.**

**May many blessings be to you and yours.**

**Peace and Joy!**

**White Robed Monks of St. Benedict**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/going-beyond-intelligence/202011/what-does-it-mean-be-good-enough-parent>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2013/jun/02/twins-identical-genes-different-health-study>

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## Chapter 1: Preliminary Considerations

Why are you getting married? Why have a relationship?

In this booklet, our goal is to share what we have learned with unmarried and previously married individuals who are considering marriage. Our goal is to provide information so couples can make informed decisions and avoid unnecessary pain and suffering for themselves and (the possibility of) their children, who may or may not at this time be nothing more or less than a concept or idea. This booklet is not intended to discourage people from getting married, but rather to help them approach marriage (and relationships) in a more thoughtful, intentional, and informed manner. ***Due diligence.***

Although addressed to the people about to marry, the following information may be used as a point of departure for anyone intending to improve their relationships. This booklet, then, is about growing in personal responsibility for growth and being a relational member of a family and society. ***Take heed.***

Marriage conversations usually involve the people getting married, their hopes, dreams, desires, and aspirations. Yes, such conversations are essential. What is often left out of the conversation is mention of “the children” and our responsibility to the evolution/success of the next generation. And some decide not to have children. Look at your own childhood. If it was typical you most likely experienced a lot of discussions between your parents – heated and otherwise.

You may have experienced divorce. Half of all marriages end in divorce, but only when it comes to first marriages, half of which are dissolved<sup>3</sup>. Second (67%) and third (73%) marriages actually fail at a far higher rate<sup>4</sup>, sometimes caused by remarrying too soon. Factors leading to divorce include lack of commitment, financial stresses, infidelity, conflict, in-law interference, Adult Children of Alcoholics

(ACA)<sup>5</sup> issues, domestic violence, and substance use disorders. Please remember the negative impact of divorce (not to mention a dysfunctional marriage) has upon the children.

Even though only a possibility, divorce must be acknowledged – especially for the sake of the children. What is the underlying factor behind these and other factors leading to divorce? One answer is that the people getting married were not mature enough, responsible enough, and/or aware enough to get married much less to procreate. In short, they were either childish, adolescent, sexually precocious or simply unaware irresponsible human beings who opt to engage in a lack of commitment, personal responsibility and integrity; infidelity; conflict; domestic violence, and/or substance use, *etc.* In addition, they may also be unaware of the economic issues and pressures around security, stability, and parenting.

How does our upbringing influence the choices that we make in choosing a life partner if we remain unaware? The more aware we are of our learned conditioning, the better choices we may make. So please consider the following ever-so-general information:

Are you aware that your masculine/feminine, man/woman (as differentiated from male/female) behaviors are conditioned habit patterns? You learned them while in the same moment you have been conditioned by your milieu to act as such and to expect such from others. For example, an “American Masculine Man” is a product of the culture (American), the neighborhood in which one matured (masculine), and the family (man). Be aware of this conditioning so it does not cloud your perception (too much) of not only yourself, but also your partner (and other people within your purview, for that matter). Be aware and let go of those conditioned habit patterns of behavior. Taking a heartfelt tough-love approach: **Grow-up!**

In general, how did this conditioning take place (acknowledging a spectrum of identities)?

*The man I am is the man my mother wished her husband had been when I was 5.*

*The woman I am is the woman my father wished his wife had been when I was 5.*

*The woman I marry is the woman my father wished his wife had been when I was 5.*

*The man I marry is the man my mother wished her husband had been when I was 5.*

Why 5? At 5 we are configuring our egoic (**Me, Myself, & I**) identities.

**Scenario** (*albeit, perhaps outdated*): 5-year-old kids are minding their own business, playing in the sidelines. Dad comes home and says with *that* intentional (or unintentional) tone of voice: “Dinner ready yet?” Mother perceives the request such that she yells back, “What the hell do you think I’ve been doing all day? And you want dinner!” And the flight is on! Mother really just wants some appreciation for her good efforts. Dad really wants some cooperation for his good efforts.

What happens? Within 72 hours, daughter meets her father at the door with some cookies and son tweaks his mother’s skirt expressing his “love” for his mother. Parents feel gratified, being unaware that they have set their kids up for such behavior by their spousal childish outbursts.

Later on in adolescence, let’s say, the son brings his girlfriend over for dinner. Mother dislikes that girl; father likes the girl. Each parent subconsciously perceives in the girl the tweaks the spouse has “suggested” over the years. (The opposite is true when the girl brings the boyfriend over for dinner).



The short of it: **You are what your children will be.** Who are you?

Be also aware that you must have successfully integrated and learned needed maturation lessons while growing up. For example, in general, in order to handle adolescence with some serenity, one needs to have fully integrated one's childish identity and let it go. Furthermore, in order to handle early adulthood (18-25) with some serenity, *i.e.*, with an adequate sense of confidence or awareness of responsibility or personal assurance, one needs to have fully integrated one's adolescent identity and let it go. In order to handle adulthood (25+) with some serenity, one needs to have fully integrated one's early adulthood identity and let it go. In order to handle being a fiancé/fiancée with some serenity, one needs to have fully integrated one's adulthood identity and let it go. In order to handle being a husband/wife with some serenity, one needs to have fully integrated one's fiancé/fiancée identity and let it go. And most importantly, in order to handle being a father/mother with some serenity, one needs to have fully integrated one's husband/wife identity and let it go.

To the degree we have not fully integrated a previous identity, in moments of stress or just life, we fall back to an earlier default position – or earlier – and act accordingly. The more trauma we have experienced at any of these stages, the more likely it is that that stage's identity will resurface too. Unresolved trauma tends to cement the identity of the person at that stage in the psyche. Those traumatized identities are never very far from the surface and, of course, traumas need not be major issues like abuse or death or accident. 'little T' traumas like neglect due to a parent being too busy/too poor to provide enough nurturing (c.f. Attachment Theory), may emerge. Even an outside experience such as on the playground, with a teacher, or school environment may elicit archaic behavior. Sometimes these 'little T' traumas have a profoundly lasting effect on an individual. In either instance, programs such as

<https://www.scienceandnonduality.com/audio/sand18-spirituality-archetypes-and-trauma>

in general or the trauma workshops or writings of Gabor Maté may assist in integrating such experiences.

Marriage is a significant decision that can have a profound impact on one's life, as well as the lives of any children who may result from the union.

We hold that building a lasting relationship with your partner and your children is one of the most important and rewarding things that you can do in life. However, this is not always an easy task, and it requires a great deal of effort, communication, and commitment. Our hope is that this book will provide you with the tools and insights you need to create a successful and fulfilling marriage that benefits both you and your children.

We recognize and affirm that marriage is a sacred bond between two people who have chosen to spend their lives together. While marriage can be a source of joy and fulfillment, it can also be challenging at times. Building a lasting relationship with your partner and your children requires effort, dedication, and a willingness to overcome obstacles. And it goes without saying that, for a marriage to last for a long time, the couple must transform over the years and must become and remain friends who share passions and interests, as well as be lovers, otherwise they inevitably risk leading separate lives.

Of critical note is awareness of your and your partner's ability to form a secure relationship. There are three main attachment styles: secure, anxious, or avoidant. These attachment styles have a significant impact on marriage relationships.

**Securely attached individuals** tend to have trusting, supportive, and balanced marriages. They have a positive view of themselves

and their partners, effectively communicate their needs, and are responsive to their partner's needs. This leads to a stable and satisfying marital bond. Their caregiver provided them comfort, support, and a secure base during their infancy. This reliable caregiving created a sense of safety and trust that enabled them to explore the world confidently. As an adult, they tend to have positive beliefs about themselves and others.

**Anxiously attached individuals** often exhibit clingy and insecure behaviors in marriage. They crave intimacy and reassurance, frequently worrying about their partner's availability and commitment. This can lead to emotional rollercoasters, frequent conflicts, and a sense of dissatisfaction. Their caregiver provided them with inconsistent caregiving during their infancy. Their caregivers may have been intermittently responsive or unpredictable in meeting their emotional and/or physical needs that led them to experience insecurity and anxiety. As an adult, they often seek reassurance and fear rejection which may cause them to exhibit clingy or demanding behaviors.

**Avoidantly attached individuals** tend to be emotionally distant, independent, and hesitant to fully engage in marriage. They prioritize self-reliance and may struggle with expressing vulnerability and intimacy. Their partners may perceive them as distant or unresponsive, leading to relationship dissatisfaction and difficulties in resolving conflicts. Their caregivers consistently disregarded or rejected their emotional needs during their infancy. They learned to suppress their emotions and to develop self-reliance as a coping mechanism. As an adult, they tend to be emotionally distant, avoid intimacy, and struggle with expressing vulnerability.

Being aware of and understanding your attachment styles in marriage can help you recognize and address underlying patterns

that affect you and your partner's relationship dynamics. To obtain a self appraisal of your current attachment style, please refer to:

<https://psychcentral.com/quizzes/attachment-style-quiz>.

By fostering secure attachment, you can work towards building trust, enhancing communication, and providing emotional support, resulting in healthier and more fulfilling marriages. Pre-marital counseling can be an invaluable asset in helping you navigate attachment-related challenges and create a secure and loving bond for your sake and those of your children.

In this regard, you might ask yourself: Who was I 10 years ago? You will agree that you are different now. Be guaranteed you will be even more different in 10 years time. So if your relationship does not develop and change with you and your partner changing, then it may no longer fit. Maybe you have witnessed other couples go through that? (Most folks have!) So, what is your plan to make sure that doesn't happen to you? Make a plan. Write it out.

Please note that some find it difficult to know:

- a) Where am I (and my potential partner) on the spectrum of 'good to poor communicator'?
- b) How developed to undeveloped is my understanding of my intimacy needs?
- c) How aware or unaware am I with regard to my security needs, and
- d) How able am I to be happy and single?
- e) How do I want to raise my children? Is this in sync with my partner's wishes?
- f) If there is a 5 year or more age difference: How will I be in 10, 20 years? My partner?
- g) If there are cultural differences: How may these impact my relationship? Child rearing?

- h) If there are religious differences: How may these impact my relationship? Child rearing?
- i) If there are educational differences: How may these impact my relationship? Child rearing?
- j) If there are sociological differences: How may these impact my relationship? Child rearing?

***Ask yourself these questions honestly.***

Whether you are about to marry, newly married, a seasoned couple, or a parent looking to strengthen your family bonds, this book is for you. We hope that the information and guidance presented here will inspire you to approach your marriage with intention and purpose, and that it will help you navigate the ups and downs of married life with grace and resilience.

One last introductory note: Express gratitude, acceptance, appreciation and just say:

**Thank you.**

And a respectful acknowledgement:

**You're welcome.**

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<sup>3</sup> <https://psychcentral.com/health/the-myth-of-the-high-rate-of-divorce>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-intelligent-divorce/201202/the-high-failure-rate-of-second-and-third-marriages>

<sup>5</sup> ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics) see <http://www.wrmosb.org/aca.html>

## **Chapter 2: Understanding Why People Get Married**

Whatever the reason, it's essential to understand that the reasons behind getting married can significantly impact the outcome of the marriage. For example, if two people get married because they're deeply in love and committed to each other, they're more likely to work hard to make the marriage work, even when faced with challenges. In contrast, if two people get married solely for sex or status, due to parental pressures, or for financial reasons, the marriage may be more fragile and may not withstand the stresses and difficulties that come with married life.

Therefore, it's essential to take the time to understand your own reasons for wanting to get married and ensure they align with your partner's. It's important to have open and honest communication with your partner about your motivations and expectations for the marriage. If you're on the same page about why you're getting married, it's more likely that your marriage will be successful and last.

Additionally, it's important to note that the reasons people get married will change over time. For example, a couple may get married because they want to start a family, but as their children grow older, their focus may shift towards their personal relationship and strengthening their bond as a couple. It's crucial to be aware of these changes and to be willing to adapt and work together as a team to ensure the marriage stays strong.

What is the difference between a “partnership” and a “relationship”? Marriage is a partnership and also involves a relationship. A partnership involves contributing resources, sharing in profits and losses, and accepting individual personal responsibility and liability for the actions of the married partners. Partnerships succeed or fail depending upon trust, loyalty, and self-knowledge of the partners.

A relationship may take many forms. For example, a romantic relationship is perhaps due to infatuation wherein an individual's brain releases specific neurotransmitters such as dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin, all of which cause the individual to feel somewhat euphoric or "in love". Just because one feels in love does not mean that the person loves the other. More often, the person is in love with an idealized perception the person holds about the other – being blind to how or what the other truly is (*c.f.* above suppositions).

Be aware of subconscious motivations. Do you want to marry because all your friends are married? Do you want to marry because of parental pressure? Do you want to marry because of religious reasons? Do you want to marry because you feel that "it's (about) time"? Do you want to marry as an "excuse" to move-out? Do you want financial or emotional security? Are you lonely and want a companion (and not necessarily a wife or husband)? Do you want to marry because you do not want to be a single parent? Do you really want to be a mother or father and not necessarily a wife or husband? Are you in love with the idea of a partner rather than the reality of a partner? Motivations are neither "right" nor "wrong". Yes, personal motivations to marry, to remain single, or to stay in a relationship are boundless. What is key is to be honest with yourself and your intended.

Take the time to reflect on your motivations for wanting to get married. List your motivations to get married. Have your partner write a list. Then engage in open communication with your partner. Be willing to adapt and grow together as your relationship evolves over time: one, five, 10, 20 years and counting. By doing so, you'll be better equipped to build a healthy and fulfilling marriage that stands the test of time.

And remember, as Clint Eastwood opined:

***They say marriages are made in Heaven. But so is  
thunder and lightning.***



## Chapter 3: Choosing the Right Partner

Choosing the right partner is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. A successful marriage requires more than just love and attraction – it also requires compatibility, shared values, and a willingness to work together through the ups and downs of life. In this chapter, we will explore the qualities to look for in a partner and the importance of taking your time to make the right decision.

### ***Taking notes of traits***

There has always been a controversial, if not great, debate about the differences between traits or activities. Personality traits are not opposites as they are complimentary states of being on a continuum of being human. Hence, some biological females will resonate with a male trait and vice versa. We offer the following information<sup>6</sup> to provide a mirror of understanding, self-awareness, and appreciation within the domain of human conversation or communication.

### ***Childhood:***

Males tend to establish a hierarchical social order (Alpha, Sigma, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Zeta, Sigma, Omega c.f. <https://www.wikihow.com/Male-Personality-Types>)

Females tend to establish a network of social conversation to enhance intimacy and communication.

### ***Conversation***

Males tend to communicate to preserve their independence.

Females tend to communicate to negotiate closeness and intimacy.

### ***Perspective***

Males tend to enhance their relative dominance.

Females tend to enhance their connection and intimacy.

### ***Intimacy/Friendship***

Males tend to do things together.  
Females tend to sit and talk together.

### ***Illness***

Males tend not to say anything so as not to invite worry.  
Females tend to take not being told as a form of rejection.

### ***Trouble talk***

Males tend to understand trouble talk as a request for advice.  
Females tend to share their troubles to enhance closeness.

### **Trouble talk result**

Males tend to feel frustration as their solution is denied.  
Females tend to feel abandoned as they are not heard.

### ***Qualities to Look for in a Partner***

When it comes to choosing a partner, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. However, there are certain qualities that are important to consider. Here are some key qualities to look for in a partner:

01. ***Shared values and goals:*** It's important to have similar values and goals in life, such as beliefs about family, finances, religion, and politics. These shared values will help you build a strong foundation for your relationship and work towards a common future. ***Make a list.***
02. ***Respect:*** A healthy relationship is built on mutual respect, where both partners treat each other with kindness, consideration, and empathy. Look for a partner who shows respect for you and others in their life.
03. ***Trustworthiness:*** Trust is essential in any relationship. Look for a partner who is honest, dependable, and reliable. Trust is an individual's characteristic. Build and keep trust. Never react,

rather respond. Maintaining trust at all times (mutuality) is an ongoing practice.

04. **Communication skills:** Good communication is key to a healthy relationship. Look for a partner who is willing to listen, express themselves clearly, and work through conflicts in a respectful way. Communication is a skill to be cultivated and maintained. The other person may have excellent communication skills now but may lose them, feeling and acting more subdued at later stages of married life. Practice. Practice. Practice.
05. **Emotional intelligence:** Emotional intelligence refers to a person's ability to recognize and manage their own emotions, as well as understand and empathize with others. Look for a partner who is emotionally mature and able to handle difficult situations with grace and compassion. (c.f. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-emotional-intelligence-2795423>)
06. **Similar interests and hobbies:** While it's not necessary to have all the same interests, having some common ground can help you build a strong connection and have fun together.

### ***Taking Your Time***

Choosing a partner is not a decision to be taken lightly. Rushing into a relationship can lead to disappointment, heartache, and even divorce. It's important to take your time and get to know someone before making a commitment.

Here are some tips for taking your time when choosing a partner:

01. **Don't rush:** It's important to give yourself time to get to know someone before jumping into a relationship. Take your time and enjoy the dating process, getting to know more of who you are and who the other is.

02. ***Pay attention to red flags:*** If something doesn't feel right or you notice red flags in the relationship, **don't ignore them.** Trust your instincts and take the time to address any concerns before moving forward. However, be flexible. Is Life not like an ECG report? There is never a straight line. Life is always a rollercoaster. You must be flexible to change yourself, first, before even expecting your partner to change or adapt.
03. ***Get to know their family and friends:*** A person's family and friends can provide valuable insights into their character and values. Take the time to get to know the people in their life.
04. ***Consider seeking advice:*** If you're unsure about whether someone is the right partner for you, consider seeking advice from a trusted friend, family member, or therapist.

## ***Conclusion***

Choosing the right partner is essential for building a successful and lasting marriage. Remember, it is essential that one be self-aware of who one is in order to be in a position to know another, rather than seeing only the fantasy and holding unrealistic expectations one might have of another. By looking for qualities like shared values, respect, trustworthiness, communication skills, emotional intelligence, and similar interests, you can increase your chances of finding a compatible partner. And by taking your time and being intentional in your search, you can avoid unnecessary heartache and build a strong foundation for your relationship.

Nevertheless, despite these thoughts in one's mind/heart, the choice fails flat on its face under ever-changing scenarios. One needs to be committed to the relationship itself, keeping all ego aside, to make the relationship happen and continue. In short, marriage is – as is any relationship – nothing but *compromise* – the most amiable way towards mutual cohabitation, and/or friendly partnership, and/or a

relationship for life. Some might consider such a predisposition as empathy, a subject for discussion on its own.

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<sup>6</sup> From "Why Men and Women Can't Talk: New Insights that can move us from blame to understanding," Interview with Deborah Tannen by Peggy Taylor; *New Age Journal*, December, 1990, 30.

## Chapter 4: Preparing for Marriage

Getting married is one of the most significant decisions you will ever make in your life. It is a commitment to spend the rest of your life with another person, and it requires careful planning and preparation. This chapter will discuss the importance of pre-marriage counseling, setting expectations and goals for the marriage, and the role of communication in building a strong foundation for the marriage.

### ***Premarital counseling***

Premarital counseling is a process whereby couples meet with a counselor or therapist to discuss various topics related to marriage. The sessions can cover a wide range of topics, including communication, conflict resolution, financial management, and family planning. The primary goal of premarital counseling is to help couples identify potential issues before they become problems and provide them with the tools to manage those issues effectively. We strongly recommend engaging in premarital counseling. A couple could even enroll before marriage in a Marriage and Family Course at a Community College.

There are several benefits to premarital counseling. First, it allows couples to identify any areas of disagreement and work on resolving them before they get married. It also helps couples develop effective communication and conflict resolution skills, which are essential for a healthy and lasting marriage. Premarital counseling can also provide couples with a safe space to discuss sensitive topics and **set realistic expectations** for the marriage.

### ***Setting expectations and goals for the marriage***

One of the keys to a successful marriage is setting expectations and goals for the relationship. These expectations and goals should be discussed openly and honestly between partners to ensure that both

parties are on the same page. Setting expectations and goals can also help couples navigate any challenges that may arise during the marriage.

When setting expectations and goals, it's essential to be specific and realistic. For example, instead of saying, "We want to be happy together," couples can set specific goals, such as "We will spend quality time together at least once a week" or "We will take turns planning date nights." These specific goals give couples something to work towards and can help strengthen the relationship.

One also needs to be overtly understanding and aware of the other person's background and limitations. Giving "benefit of doubt" is the key, in most cases, where a situation faced by the couple is beyond the imagination/comprehension of the other.

### **Communication**

One way to improve communication in the relationship is to practice active listening. This means fully focusing on what your partner is saying, asking questions to clarify their meaning, and summarizing what you heard to ensure that you understood correctly. It's also essential to communicate your own feelings and needs clearly, using "I" statements instead of "you" statements that can sound accusatory.

If you're frustrated by conflicts with your spouse or significant other – as most people are at some point – you might try implementing practices based on PREP<sup>Z</sup> ground rules. Obviously, in the absence of a mediator, you and your spouse might have to work a little harder at being reasonable, rather than let the discussion boil over in an unmanageable conflict. Here are the rules:

- Either of you can bring up any issue at any time, but the listener can say, "This is not a good time," as long as either sets up another opportunity to talk in the near future.

- If a discussion gets too heated, call a time-out.
- Separate discussing the problem – putting the issue on the table and just listening – from solving the problem. For that first phase (when couples normally get caught in miscommunication and negative escalation) try active listening: One person speaks and the other paraphrases or summarizes what has been said.
- Remember to give the speaker non-verbal cues – nod your head and touch your partner's arm or make body contact that shows you're receptive and empathetic.
- Strive to understand – not change – your partner's position. Don't mind-read or anticipate what your partner will say,
- Edit your comments to be sensitive to a situation or to your partner's mood on a given day, but don't squelch the feeling. They will only blow up later on.
- Avoid "kitchen-sinking," griping about everything that's bothered you for the past month; instead, stick to one issue at a time.
- Examine your expectations of marriage and what you think your partner expects. Talk about your own feelings, rather than how you think the other person feels. Also, remember you only have control over your *own* behavior.
- Move into the future; avoid rehashing the past.
- Schedule weekly couple meetings and special pleasuring sessions to talk about good stuff that's happened and to dream about a beautiful future together. Also set aside time for various types of sensual and sexual activities.
- Share your perceptions of what closeness and intimacy mean. Some generally want face-to-face contact, whereas others prefer to just be someone's company while engaging in an activity. It might be a good idea to combine the two: Talk while driving or taking a Sunday morning walk.

### ***The In-Laws***



Remember the in-laws who can have both positive and negative impacts on a marriage.

***Positive impacts:***

- ***Emotional support:*** Supportive in-laws can provide emotional encouragement and a sense of belonging to both partners, strengthening the marital bond.
- ***Wisdom and guidance:*** In-laws with experience in long-lasting marriages can offer valuable advice and guidance to the couple, helping them navigate challenges and conflicts.
- ***Family traditions and values:*** In-laws can enrich the marital relationship by sharing family traditions, values, and cultural practices, creating a sense of shared identity.
- ***Childcare and assistance:*** Supportive in-laws can offer assistance with childcare, household tasks, or financial matters, reducing stress on the couple and fostering a healthier relationship.

***Negative impacts:***

- ***Interference and boundary issues:*** In-laws who constantly interfere in the couple's decisions, try to control their lives, or disregard boundaries can strain the marriage and lead to conflicts between the spouses.
- ***Unrealistic expectations:*** In-laws may have specific expectations about how the couple should behave, make financial decisions, or raise children, causing tension and disagreement within the marriage.
- ***Criticism and comparison:*** In-laws who constantly criticize or compare one spouse to the other can damage self-esteem and create resentment between the partners.

- **Loyalty conflicts:** If one spouse feels caught between their loyalty to their parents and their commitment to their partner, it can lead to significant strain on the marriage.

***Red flags to be aware of prior to marriage:***

- ***Overbearing or controlling behavior:*** If your partner's family consistently exhibits controlling or intrusive behavior, it could be a warning sign of potential issues in the future.
- ***Lack of respect for boundaries:*** If your partner's family disregards your boundaries or consistently violates your privacy, it may indicate difficulties in maintaining healthy boundaries within the marriage.
- ***Frequent conflicts or strained relationships:*** Pay attention to how your partner and their family handle conflicts. If there is a pattern of unresolved tension or hostility, it could affect your marriage as well.
- ***Incompatible values or expectations:*** If you and your partner have fundamentally different values or if their family's expectations don't align with yours, it's important to address these differences and consider how they may impact your relationship.

***Children: Yes or No or Maybe***

You are in a relationship. You may or may not want a legal marriage. Consciously decide if children are a desired outcome. If there is agreement to have children and the relationship proceeds:

01. How would you respond if your partner decides later on that children are no longer an option?
02. How would you respond if you and your partner come to find infertility is the case? Discuss options such as in vitro, surrogacy, adoption, etc.

<https://www.americansurrogacy.com/parents/options-for-infertility>

If there is agreement to not have children and the relationship proceeds:

03. How would you respond if your partner decides later on that children are then an imperative option?

### ***Conclusion***

Preparing for marriage is an essential step in building a strong and lasting relationship. Pre-marriage counseling can help couples identify potential issues and develop the tools to manage them effectively. Setting expectations and goals for the marriage provides couples with something to work towards, while effective communication is the foundation of a strong relationship. *Open communication and mutual understanding between partners are crucial to navigating in-law relationships and addressing any challenges that arise.* By taking the time to prepare for marriage, couples can build a strong foundation for their future together.

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<sup>7</sup> *American Health*, December, 1990, page 45.

## Chapter 5: Maintaining a Healthy Marriage: A Peaceful Environment

**Maintaining any relationship is continuous practice.** Maintaining a marriage is a moment-to-moment practice. One of the most important skills for maintaining a healthy marriage is the ability to compromise. In any relationship, there will be times when you and your partner don't see eye to eye. It's important to learn how to find a middle ground that works for both of you, even if it means giving up some of your own wants or needs. This doesn't mean sacrificing your own happiness or values, but rather finding a way to meet in the middle that honors both you and your partner.

As a side note, there is a difference between “surrender”, “resignation”, and “compromise”.

- **Surrender** involves willingly letting go of control or ego for the sake of the relationship's well-being.
- **Resignation** refers to giving up without actively seeking resolution, often leading to disengagement.
- **Compromise** involves finding a middle ground through negotiation and mutual understanding, with the aim of promoting fairness and balance in the relationship.

As a practical note: Be aware that each partner brings different skills and life experiences to the relationship. Whichever partner has greater knowledge and experience, should take care of that facet or dimension of the relationship. For example: which partner is better at money management; which partner is better organized for the family calendar and activities, etc.? Same idea holds true with regard to the delegation and acceptance of household chores and other domestic responsibilities.

And yes, while people do indeed bring different gifts and skills to a relationship, and should probably be the LEAD person, if such is

one's forte in that department, it is very dangerous to allocate or assume all responsibilities for tasks based on skill. There are two main reasons:

First, no one likes to be taken for granted, and that's what tends to happen if person A is ALWAYS doing the cooking, and/or the finance and/or the gardening, and/or making decisions about where we'll eat tonight or vacation. And especially when one person is doing all (or most) of the above. It is VITAL that we see relationships as a place where we learn to "fill out" our own areas of less skill by learning from our partners. Learning from each other, and sharing our skills, is a great relationship builder, as well as great modeling for any kids around. It also goes a long way towards avoiding one partner being the "child" in a relationship, and the other consistently being the adult. If, during the courtship reflections, person A realizes that they might love person B but the other will be bringing virtually nothing to build the day-to-day operation of the relationship, then that's important information.

Secondly, as we age we are less likely to learn. After the death (or divorce) of a spouse, the surviving partner may be LOST because the person does not know how to cook, do finances (like pay bills, bank passwords for online systems, etc.), or regulate the irrigation system for the yard. The individual can't even decide where to get the car serviced, let alone go on vacation when they are ready.

Another important factor in maintaining a healthy marriage is **empathy**. Empathy involves putting yourself in your partner's shoes and seeing things from their perspective. It means being able to understand and validate their feelings, even if you don't necessarily agree with them. This can help build trust, respect, and a deeper sense of connection in your relationship.

**Forgiveness is also key to maintaining a healthy marriage.**

Everyone makes mistakes, and it's important to be able to forgive your partner when they do. Holding onto grudges or resentments can erode the trust and respect in your relationship, and can ultimately lead to the breakdown of the marriage. It's critical, crucial and essential to work through any hurt or anger you may feel, and to communicate with your partner about how you can move forward and rebuild trust.

Finally, **intimacy**, **romance**, and **fun** are essential for keeping a marriage strong. Intimacy involves more than just physical touch; it's about feeling emotionally connected and close to your partner. Romance can help keep the spark alive in your relationship, and fun activities can help you and your partner stay connected and enjoy each other's company. Prioritizing making time for these things in your marriage, even when life gets busy, is a healthy choice.

Marriage is a complex and rewarding journey that requires continuous effort and understanding from both partners. In this book, we draw upon the insights of relationship experts (*c.f.* **Resources** at the conclusion of this text) and their extensive research to offer practical guidance for building a lasting and fulfilling relationship with your partner, not only for yourself but also for your children.

We recommend examining the five love languages, which are the different ways that people give and receive love, as outlined in Gary Chapman's book, *Understanding Your Partner's Love Language*, can help you communicate your love effectively, thereby strengthening your bond.

Next, please explore John Gottman's seven principles in his *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, which include building a strong friendship, managing conflict constructively, and maintaining a positive perspective. By following these principles, couples can

create a deep and meaningful connection that will endure through the years.

Eli Finkel's book, *The All-or-Nothing Marriage: How the Best Marriages Work*, offers insight into how modern marriages have evolved and how couples can adapt to these changes to create what he calls an "all-or-nothing marriage," a relationship that fulfills both partners' needs for love, support, and personal growth.

We also strongly suggest Daphne de Marneffe's book, *The Rough Patch: Marriage and the Art of Living Together*, offers advice for navigating the rough patches that inevitably arise in any marriage. By understanding the dynamics at play during difficult times, couples can emerge from these periods with a stronger and more resilient relationship.

Bruce Feiler's book, *The First Love Story: Adam, Eve, and Us*, takes a look at the history of the first love story between Adam and Eve and offers insights into the nature of love, commitment, and intimacy. Understanding the origins of these concepts can help couples build a more meaningful and lasting relationship.

Steven Reiss's book, *Who Am I? The 16 Basic Desires That Motivate Our Actions and Define Our Personalities*, explores the 16 basic desires that motivate our actions and define our personalities. By understanding these desires, couples can better understand each other's needs and work to meet them in the context of their relationship.

Dan Savage's book, *The Commitment: Love, Sex, Marriage, and My Family*, offers a personal account of commitment and marriage, highlighting the challenges and rewards that come with building a life with someone. By sharing his own experiences, Savage offers valuable insights into the importance of communication, compromise, and mutual support.

Finally, Shaunti Smith's book, *The Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages: The Little Things That Make a Big Difference*, reveals the surprising secrets of highly happy marriages, including the small but meaningful actions that couples can take to keep their relationship strong and happy over time.

By drawing upon the wisdom of these experts, a strong and enduring bond can be cultivated that benefits both partners and ***your children***. And remember:

In any relationship, when we fight, we are *creating* a situation or context to fight if we THINK we are NOT getting the:

**ATTENTION  
ACCEPTANCE  
APPRECIATION and/or  
UNDERSTANDING**

we THINK we want, need, desire or deserve.

The above 4 thought-feeling constructs have nothing to do with "friend-foe" "husband-wife" issues and everything to do with "parent-child" issues ... how often does the adolescent cry out: *You're not paying attention to me! You do not understand me! etc.?*

Consciously breathe to clear your perceptual field to experience more clearly your beloved as he/she is rather than as you would like him/her to be. (The 4x4 breathing technique works!<sup>8</sup>)

***Acceptance. Love.***

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<sup>8</sup> <https://thejoywithin.org/breath-exercises/square-breathing>



## **Chapter 6: Parenting and Marriage**

### ***The Impact of Children on the Marriage***

Children can bring a great deal of joy and fulfillment to a marriage, but they can also bring stress and strain to the relationship. It's important for couples to understand that having children will change the dynamics of the marriage permanently and in many ways. For example, couples may have less time alone together, less time for hobbies and interests, and less time for intimacy. Additionally, parenting can be very demanding and exhausting, which can take a toll on the marriage if not managed properly.

One needs to understand that after a child is born, the mother, especially, becomes a mommy first and being the “wife” is relegated to the second, inconsequential part. The first priority becomes the child. Now one is not a couple, but a parent, which has starkly different demands from the married relationship, compared to where one started off.

### ***The Benefits of a Strong Co-Parenting Partnership***

To manage the demands of parenting, it's vital for couples to work together as a team. This means developing a strong co-parenting partnership that is based on shared values, goals, and expectations. A strong co-parenting partnership involves clear communication, shared responsibilities, and mutual support. When both parents are on the same page, it can make the challenges of parenting more manageable and the joys of parenting more rewarding.

### ***How to Build a Strong Co-Parenting Partnership***

To build a strong co-parenting partnership, couples should start by discussing their values, goals, and expectations for parenting. This means talking about issues such as discipline, education, and family traditions. Couples should also discuss their individual strengths and

weaknesses as parents, and how they can work together to support each other.

Communication is key in building a strong co-parenting partnership. Couples should make an effort to communicate regularly about parenting issues, and to be open and honest with each other about their feelings and concerns. It's also important to listen actively and to be respectful of each other's opinions. Please remember to resolve any fears of showing affection and support in front of the children to serve as an example of healthy modeling for their future partnerships.

### ***The Importance of Prioritizing the Marriage***

While parenting is an important part of the marriage, it's also valuable and crucial for couples to prioritize their relationship with each other. This means finding a balance between parenting and the relationship, and making time for each other despite the demands of parenting. Couples should make an effort to maintain intimacy and romance, and to have fun together as a family.

One way to prioritize the marriage is to make time for date nights or other activities that allow couples to reconnect and focus on each other. It's also important to show appreciation for each other, and to express love and affection regularly.

### ***Conclusion***

Parenting can be a rewarding and challenging experience, and it's important for couples to be prepared for the impact it can have on the marriage. Building a strong co-parenting partnership and finding a balance between parenting and the relationship can help couples navigate the challenges of parenting while maintaining a strong and healthy marriage. There is no straight jacket formula. For example, a cautious rider may wear all protective gear while riding, accede to all traffic rule and conditions, but still face a situation which he is unable

to manage, despite all precautions. So agility and flexibility is the key to a fruitful ride. Might *Practice* be mentioned again?

## Chapter 7: Navigating Challenges and Conflict

Every relationship has its ups and downs, ins and outs. Whether or not a relationship continues or ends usually rests on the intent of the people involved. Steven Covey has remarked: *The most important ingredient we put into any relationship is not what we say or what we do, **but what we are**. And if our words and our actions come from superficial human relations techniques (the Personality Ethic) rather than from our own inner core (the Character Ethic), others will sense that duplicity. We simply won't be able to create and sustain the foundation necessary for effective interdependence. (Covey, p. 208)*

What we are is what we intend, consciously or not. What do you consciously intend to be each and every day? Write out your personal mantra and say it each morning. If nothing else, then write "Maintaining a Peaceful Environment".

Notably, marriage and any relationship is not always easy, and conflicts and challenges are bound to arise at some point. How you handle these situations can make all the difference in the health and longevity of your marriage. In this chapter, we'll explore the different types of conflicts that can arise in a marriage, how to effectively resolve them, and the importance of managing stress and seeking support when needed.

### Types of Conflicts in Marriage

01. **Communication conflicts:** These arise when partners have different communication styles or struggle to express themselves effectively. One – or both partners may feel misunderstood as a result which can serve as another source of conflict.
02. **Financial conflicts:** Money is a common source of conflict in marriage, particularly when partners have different financial values or habits.

03. **Parenting conflicts:** Differences in parenting styles, decisions, and expectations can lead to conflict in a marriage, particularly when children are involved.
04. **Household conflicts:** Chores, responsibilities, and expectations around household duties can also cause tension in a marriage.
05. **Emotional conflicts:** Emotions can run high in marriage, and conflicts can arise when partners feel neglected, unappreciated, or unsupported.
06. **Ego conflicts:** Why can't one parent go out with friends while the other babysits?, the right to socialise must be equal and mutual, notwithstanding the fact the child is the priority at all times. (Essentially, this is just a fact of life in a nuclear scheme of things.)

### ***Managing Stress and Seeking Support***

Stress can be a major factor in conflicts and challenges in marriage. It's important to manage stress effectively and seek support when needed. Here are some tips for managing stress and seeking support:

01. **Take care of yourself:** Practicing self-care can help you manage stress and prevent conflicts in marriage. This can include activities like exercise, meditation, or hobbies.
02. **Seek professional help if needed:** If conflicts in your marriage are causing significant stress and impacting your mental health, it may be time to seek professional help from a therapist or counselor.
03. **Lean on your support network:** Friends, family, and support groups can also be a valuable source of support and help you navigate challenges in your marriage.... sometimes this is easier

said than done. Here the choice of friends, family, and support groups, is equally challenging. It may be it is the same set of people who are wanting their “Me Time” with you, at the cost of your “Family Time”, at your cost and peril. Be wise, make the right choices, seek help, seek intervention, or seek a “second opinion” of a “stable/balanced” third party/marriage counsellor.)

**04. Seek compromise:** *Compromise is essential in marriage, and finding solutions that work for both partners is key to resolving conflicts.* (Compromise essentially means “letting go” for the overall peace and tranquilly of marriage/family/friendship.)

**05. Take a break if needed:** If emotions are running high, it can be helpful to take a break from the conflict and revisit it when you're both feeling calmer. Most of the time, “take a break” also becomes a huge challenge. What if your partner needs your company at that very time? Let go of your ego. Enjoy the family life and bonding, because, after marriage, your peace of mind and also the peace of the family, is of utmost importance and priority. Remember **MARRIAGE is a COMPROMISE.**

Ignoring or avoiding conflicts in marriage can be dangerous and lead to larger problems down the line. By learning to navigate conflicts effectively and managing stress, you can build a stronger and healthier marriage.

In the maturing of a marriage, says Dr. Frank Pittman, author of *Private Lies: Infidelity and Betrayal of Intimacy*, there are inevitable developmental stages at which the couple must adapt and grow if the marriage is to endure. A couple may handle nine of these smoothly, says Pittman, but the likelihood of getting through all 10 without a hitch is low.

**01. Falling in Love.** Two people meet – they're ready for the fantasy of falling in love. The first crisis occurs if the other person – often

it's the man – panics and retreats.

02. ***Prenuptial Panic.*** Before they get engaged or sometimes right before the wedding, the man pulls back – he's afraid he'll lose himself. For the woman, preparing for the wedding is a high point of her life; in his, it's often a lesser event.
03. ***The End of the Romance.*** After six months to a year, love is no longer blind. The spell is broken, and the partners must learn to deal with each other's shortcomings and irritating quirks. Women tend to be more "in love with love."
04. ***Enter The Family.*** Men and women have similar, often rude, awakenings when they begin to deal with each other's families. Gender clashes – and rivalries – can develop if she's "too close" to her father, or he to his mother. Increasingly, ex-spouses and children of earlier marriages complicate the picture.
05. ***The First Baby.*** Becoming a parent requires husbands and wives to see each other as parents, as well as spouses. It's a clear call to grow up.
06. ***Changes in Sexual Behavior.*** Sex inevitably begins to drop with a family partner. Typically, the man experiences sexual decline, and she thinks it's her fault.
07. ***Reaching the Summit.*** One person's career zooms ahead; the other person lags or perhaps has no career – and the gap between them widens. This is the time some often have affairs, or, if one has moved up the corporate ladder, they might trade in the old partner for a new model.
08. ***The Facts of Life.*** You're both getting older, fatter, balder. Of course, that's easier to see in the other person. Accepting who you are can be terrifying for many people. Also, this period is

usually hardest on women, because so many these days are summoned to care for an elderly parent – his or hers.

09. **Empty Nest.** Children provide a couple with distractions that help them not look at their relationship, which, in turn, retards the process of maturing. Husband and wife now deal with each other when the child/ren leave the home. If the wife's identity has been invested in being a mother, she may now turn to her husband for emotional fulfillment. Or she may start a career, which can plunge him into a funk.
10. **Facing Old Age.** This stage can be especially traumatic when two people age at different rates or the wife dies first. Let's hope we'll all find ourselves *On Golden Pond* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lelsblcDX44>) and in relationships like the one portrayed by Hepburn and Fonda.



## Chapter 8: Recognizing When to Seek Help

Marriage can be challenging, and it's natural to experience ups and downs over time. However, when problems persist and the relationship is in trouble, it's important to recognize the signs and seek professional help if needed.

As a failsafe, please seek-out a marriage counselor. Go back and see that person for a couple of sessions every year, like a doctor's check-up. That way you both can build a relationship with a professional so that when "questions" arise, you have someone who already knows you and something of your journey. For example, what happens in 10 years' time, when you have a couple of kids and one of you gets a great promotion offer but it means moving to a new state, and the other one of you really wants to go back to school? And of course the kids don't want to leave their friends, or their grandparents nearby. None of these possibilities are "bad," but you cannot have all three at the same time. The good news is that a counselor, especially one who knows you and your journey, can help you talk through your feelings, questions, fears and resentments, and come to a collaborative decision.

Underlying reality: We have not taken the circumstance just as it is. We have turned the circumstance into a situation. We have taken "it" personally! Life is not a personal event in the life-drama of the **Great Trinity: My, Myself, and I**. It is just life, is it not?

### ***Signs that Your Marriage May Be in Trouble***

There are many signs that your marriage may be in trouble, including:

01. ***Lack of communication:*** If you and your partner are not communicating effectively or are avoiding each other altogether, it can be a sign that there are underlying issues in the relationship.

02. **Constant fighting:** While it's normal to have disagreements in a marriage, constant fighting and arguments can be a sign of deeper issues. The circumstance might be constant nagging by one, not even retaliated by the other. Amicable communication can be the answer, if the other person is open to appreciate it. Otherwise, compromise or let go and move on, keeping your Purpose glued in your head. Avoid turning the circumstance into a situation by taking it personally (which is an ego thing).
03. **Loss of intimacy:** If you and your partner have stopped being intimate or are no longer physically affectionate with each other, it can be a sign that there are problems in the relationship. (In legal terms, this is known as “desertion”, which can happen even under the same roof. Set aside your ego. Copulation/physical intimacy is an uncompromisable tenet of marriage... this is a lawyer’s input.)
04. **Dishonesty:** If one or both partners are being dishonest with each other, it can create a rift in the relationship and lead to a breakdown of trust.
05. **Lack of support:** If one partner is not supporting the other emotionally, or one or both are not interested in each other's goals and aspirations, it can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation.

### ***How to Find a Good Therapist***

Finding a good therapist is an important part of seeking help for your marriage. Some tips for finding a good therapist include:

01. **Ask for referrals:** Ask friends, family members, or your primary care physician for referrals to a therapist.
02. **Check credentials:** Look for a therapist who is licensed and has experience working with couples.

03. **Research online:** Read reviews and research therapists online to find one who specializes in the issues you and your partner are experiencing.

04. **Schedule a consultation:** Many therapists offer a free consultation to determine if they are a good fit for you and your partner.

### ***Importance of Addressing Problems Early***

It's important to address problems in your marriage early on before they become too big to overcome. The longer you wait to seek help, the more difficult it may be to resolve the issues. Seeking help early can also help prevent further damage to the relationship and improve the chances of a positive outcome.

A therapist can open the door to a better understanding of each other: A therapist can help you and your partner understand each other's perspectives and work on building empathy and understanding. You can learn to demonstrate your emotions/care/camaraderie/compassion/ empathy, towards the other, however possible. **Love is nothing but care.** Try to rekindle your initial "lust" for each other, even if it seems far-fetched. Togetherness, through all emotional ups and downs, is the answer to all events/situations/ misunderstandings.

Do not to let your emotions/empathy diminish. Keep reminding yourself of the positives of the person. List them out in writing. Understand the psyche of the other. Be alive to your own actions vis-à-vis the other. Go the extra mile, do that extra bit which you know the other might love/appreciate.

### ***Conclusion***

Recognizing when to seek help in a marriage is an important step in building a strong and healthy relationship. If you are experiencing

any of the signs mentioned above, it may be time to consider therapy or counseling. A good therapist can help you and your partner improve communication, increase intimacy, and better understand each other. Remember, it's important to address problems early and seek help before they become too big to overcome.

Don't ever think of 'owning' the other in a relationship. The other is as equal a human as you are. If you have ego, allow the other to also have the same, for his/her thoughts. Let go... keep the Purpose in mind: **Nothing better than a peaceful environment.** You never thought of your life any other way: live it, love it and manage it, with positive determination, for yourself and your children, even if you have to mentally come to terms/compromise, for the other's happiness. Put your Best Foot Forward, as if it was the first day of your relationship.)

## Epilogue

We encourage you to continue learning and growing in your relationship(s), and to always make time for love, laughter, and fun. Remember that there is no stress as such. There is your interpretation of events and your perceived demands upon you which you might label as stress. There need not be stress in a relationship if you but remember that what you experience is your creation. Whether you are just starting out on your journey as a couple or have been married for many years, remember that building a lasting relationship takes patience, dedication, and a whole lot of love.

And the benefits and advantages in long-term relationships?

**Emotional support:** In a long and healthy marriage, both partners provide each other with emotional support and companionship. They become a source of comfort, understanding, and encouragement, which can help navigate the ups and downs of life.

**Increased happiness and life satisfaction:** Research consistently shows that married individuals tend to report higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction compared to those who are single or divorced. A loving and stable relationship can contribute to overall well-being and contentment.

**Physical health benefits:** Studies have found that being in a long-term, committed relationship is associated with improved physical health. Married individuals tend to have lower rates of heart disease, stroke, and other health conditions. They are also more likely to seek medical attention and follow healthier lifestyle habits.

**Financial stability:** Being in a long, healthy marriage often leads to greater financial stability. Sharing expenses, pooling resources, and

working together toward common financial goals can contribute to a stronger financial foundation for both partners.

**Social support network:** A long marriage provides an extended network of family and friends. This broader support system can offer assistance, advice, and a sense of belonging, which is beneficial during challenging times or major life transitions.

**Mutual personal growth:** Over the years, a healthy marriage allows both partners to grow and develop individually and as a couple. The relationship becomes a platform for personal growth, learning, and self-improvement.

**Shared memories and experiences:** Being in a long, healthy marriage means creating a wealth of shared memories, experiences, and traditions. These shared moments can bring joy, nostalgia, and a sense of fulfillment, fostering a deeper connection between partners.

**Parenting and family life:** If the couple decides to have children, a long and healthy marriage provides a stable and nurturing environment for raising a family. It offers a solid foundation for children's well-being and development.

**Emotional and physical intimacy:** A long, healthy marriage allows couples to build deep emotional and physical intimacy over time. The bond and trust that develop can lead to a fulfilling and satisfying romantic life.

**Long-term support during challenging times:** Life presents its share of challenges, such as illness, loss, or career setbacks. In a long and healthy marriage, partners can rely on each other for unwavering support, strength, and resilience during these difficult periods.

And please note that while a long and healthy marriage can have these benefits, every relationship is unique. Individuals may experience different outcomes based on their circumstances and dynamics within the marriage. Communication, respect, and commitment are vital for maintaining a fulfilling and lasting partnership.

And the benefits and advantages of healthy relationships in general?

**Improved mental health:** Positive relationships can have a profound impact on mental health. Engaging in meaningful connections, experiencing companionship, and having people who genuinely care can reduce feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

**Increased self-esteem:** Healthy relationships foster a sense of belonging and acceptance, which can boost self-esteem and self-worth. Feeling valued and appreciated by others contributes to a more positive self-perception.

**Personal growth and self-awareness:** Relationships provide opportunities for personal growth and self-reflection. Interacting with others exposes individuals to different perspectives, experiences, and challenges, facilitating personal development and increasing self-awareness.

**Enhanced social skills:** Engaging in healthy relationships helps individuals develop and refine their social skills. Communication, empathy, active listening, conflict resolution, and cooperation are among the essential skills that can be honed through interactions with others.

**Networking and professional opportunities:** Cultivating positive relationships at work and with acquaintances can open doors to networking and professional opportunities. These connections can

provide valuable information, referrals, mentorship, and potential collaborations, contributing to career growth.

**Support during challenging times:** Life inevitably brings challenges, and healthy relationships can provide a crucial support system during difficult times. Having someone to lean on, seek advice from, or share the burden can help individuals navigate through tough situations more effectively.

**Personal happiness and life satisfaction:** Healthy relationships are a significant source of happiness and life satisfaction. Sharing positive experiences, creating memories, and experiencing a sense of connection and belonging contribute to an overall sense of fulfillment.

**Opportunities for personal and cultural enrichment:** Engaging with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives through relationships can broaden one's horizons and enrich personal and cultural experiences. Learning from others' unique perspectives can expand knowledge, promote understanding, and foster empathy.

It's important to note that healthy relationships require effort, mutual respect, and effective communication from all parties involved. Building and maintaining strong connections takes time and investment, but the benefits are well worth it.

**Love long and prosper!!**



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