

THE A-TO-Z GUIDE to Building a Better Marriage

If you've been married for any length of time, you've undoubtedly realized that some habits help your relationship and others hurt it.

Practicing the following principles until they become second-nature is the best way I know to spell success for you and your spouse. Attend to these areas, and your marriage will do better than survive. It will flourish.



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- A** is for **Acceptance** - Don't try to change your spouse. Work on yourself, instead. Only God can mold either of your hearts into what they are meant to be. (Ezekiel 36:26)
- B** is for **Belief** - You and your spouse are on the same team. It's important that you believe IN each other, believe the best OF each other, and voice that confidence regularly. (Romans 12:10)
- C** is for **Commitment** - Couples fare better when they are entirely devoted to one another — for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. Honor the vows you made to one another and regard them as binding. (Matthew 19:6)
- D** is for **Dreams** - Discuss your hopes and desires for the future with your spouse. Set and work toward goals together and pray God will help you accomplish great things. (Proverbs 29:18)
- E** is for **Encouragement** - Speak words of life to your spouse. Build one another up. Comfort, encourage, and do each other good as long as there is life within you. (Proverbs 31:12)
- F** is for **Forgiveness** - Don't harbor bitterness or resentment toward your spouse. Love keeps no record of wrongs. Forgive each other freely, as God in Christ forgives those who call on His name. (Ephesians 4:31-32; 1 Corinthians 13:5)
- G** is for **Gratitude** - Don't take one another for granted. Express your appreciation to and for your spouse clearly, sincerely, and often. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- H** is for **Humility** - Pride will drive a wedge in your relationship. Humility is the ticket to happiness. "Love doesn't brag and isn't arrogant." (1 Corinthians 13:4)
- I** is for **Intimacy** - A marriage is meant to make two people one: spiritually, physically, and emotionally. It requires an intentional investment in each of these areas, so prioritize your time together. (1 Corinthians 7:4-5)
- J** is for **Joy** - A happy marriage is largely about attitude — not only your attitude toward one another, but your whole outlook on life. Choose joy. (Psalm 68:3)
- K** is for **Kindness** - Marriage is more about what you give than what you get. Be thoughtful and considerate of one another. Put your spouse's needs ahead of your own. (Colossians 3:12)
- L** is for **Love** - Cultivate the kind of unconditional, self-sacrificing love we read about in Scripture: a love that "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things... [and] never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:7-8)

- M** **is for Maturity** – Being mature means having well-established roots and an abundance of ripe, wholesome fruit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22; John 15:4)
- N** **is for Nurture** - A marriage and family needs focused attention to flourish, so invest your time and energy wisely. When these key relationships are neglected, they suffer and love grows cold. (Luke 12:34)
- O** **is for Offspring** - Whether biological or adopted, children bring a certain fullness and joy to marriage that cannot be experienced any other way. (Psalm 127:3)
- P** **is for Prayer** - Pray with and for your spouse daily, asking God to mold your marriage into everything He meant it to be. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- Q** **is for Quiet** - Home should be a haven of peace for every member of the family. You can make it so by speaking only words filled with love and seasoned with grace. (Colossians 4:6)
- R** **is for Respect** - Admire your spouse. Hold one another in highest regard and communicate your respect at every opportunity. (Ephesians 5:33)
- S** **is for Sense of Humor** - Laughter is good medicine, and the ability to laugh at oneself can help reduce stress and tension like no other thing I know. (Proverbs 17:22)
- T** **is for Trust** - Have faith in one another, have faith in God, and never do anything that would undermine your spouse's trust. (1 Timothy 3:11)
- U** **is for Understanding** – Treat your spouse the way you'd want to be treated. Study one another. Learn what makes your mate tick. Listen attentively, with a goal of understanding not only what the other is saying, but why. (James 1:19)
- V** **is for Virtue** – The more virtuous a couple's behavior, the more blessed their marriage will be, so cultivate a pure, good, and upright heart as you live a life of integrity. (2 Peter 1:5)
- W** **is for Wisdom** - If your marriage is to thrive amid life's pressures and problems, you'll need lots of grace and wisdom. Fortunately, God promises to provide an ample supply to anyone who asks. (James 1:52)
- X** **is for X-citement** - Whoever said marriage has to be boring? That's not the picture Scripture paints of the love that should be shared between a husband and wife. It uses words like exhilarated, ravished, delighted, captivated, and continually satisfied. (Proverbs 5:18-19)
- Y** **is for Yieldedness** - Do you want a happy marriage? Don't demand your own way. A willingness to compromise on non-essentials goes a long way toward building good will toward one another. (Philippians 2:3)
- Z** **is for Zest** - Do everything you can to maintain that energy and enthusiasm that led you to marry in the first place. "Don't grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap if we don't give up." (Galatians 6:9)