

A HAPPY MARRIAGE

Too often we think marriage will be like the ones we see on TV. Couples dance romantically before the fireplace to soft music, money is not a problem, there are never any bills to pay, and the kids magically change their own diapers. Our expectations are to get married and live happily ever after.

Then reality sets in. He leaves dirty socks in the middle of the floor and burps after he drinks a pop (he never burped before we were married!) She gets up looking like death-warmed-over and ties up the bathroom for an hour-and-a-half every morning, so he has to leave for work frustrated and looking less than his best. They find themselves fighting.

Since marriage is a life-long commitment, adjustments to each other must be made. Marriage has the potential to be the best it has ever been, a partnership of equals who complement each other and boost each other up to the best they can be.

All good marriages have the same necessary components: (List each component on the board and ask students to discuss the whys and hows of each.)

1. **Marriage is #1**

You must put your mate first, think of his/her needs first, tell him/her your news first, do not compare her/him to anyone else or look for shortcomings. The two of you together are more important than either of you is alone. Also, your marriage relationship is the most important relationship in your life. Put it above your job, your friends, your mother, even your kids--one of the best things you can ever give your kids is the happy marriage of their parents.

2. **Fidelity**

Fidelity allows trust and a sense of security to develop and grow. It is a major part of your sexual responsibility to your mate. Nothing destroys a marriage faster than violating this trust; security vanishes, self-esteem plummets.

3. **Commitment**

How many of you believe that if it does not work out, you will get a divorce? Go into a marriage totally and unconditionally without thoughts of divorce.

4. **Unselfishness**

Marriage is not a 50-50 proposition. Be prepared to give more than half the time. Sometimes it will feel like you are doing it all, but there is no other way to make a marriage work.

5. **Put time into your relationship**

Do not be apart too much: out-of-town business, late nights at work, shift work that is opposite each other, too much church and volunteer work. Do not make home a rest stop. Develop interests together; a new sport or craft you both may enjoy, a class, a political action, a volunteer job.

6. Talk and listen

Talk about important things, not just what TV show to watch or what the baby said. Tell each other your thoughts, feelings, concerns. Listen with your eyes, your undivided attention. Say, "I love you."

7. Touching

Touching communicates caring. Hold hands, kiss, sit together. The nonsexual kind of touching is often the most communicative.

8. Be positive about your mate and marriage

Refuse to think about or dwell on your mate's faults; focusing on negatives destroys relationships. Do not ever criticize your mate to others; when they join in and help you criticize, it becomes even harder to feel good about your mate.