

seven principles of making marriage work

Seven Principles of Making Marriage Work is a topic that resonates with many couples seeking to strengthen their union. While marriage can be a beautiful journey, it often comes with challenges that require intentional effort and commitment. Renowned psychologist John Gottman, through years of research, has identified seven principles that are fundamental to fostering a healthy and lasting marriage. This article will explore these principles in detail, offering insights and practical advice for couples looking to enhance their relationship.

1. Enhance Your Love Maps

The first principle emphasizes the importance of knowing your partner deeply. Love maps involve understanding your partner's world, including their dreams, goals, fears, and daily experiences. When you have a well-developed love map, it fosters intimacy and connection.

- **Know Your Partner's History:** Be aware of your partner's background, including significant life events that have shaped them.
- **Share Daily Experiences:** Regularly check in with each other about your day, sharing both mundane and meaningful details.
- **Discuss Future Aspirations:** Talk about your dreams and goals, whether they're personal or shared as a couple.

By enhancing your love maps, you create a solid foundation for your relationship where both partners feel valued and understood.

2. Nurture Fondness and Admiration

A healthy marriage is built on a foundation of respect and admiration. Couples should consciously nurture positive feelings for one another, focusing on the attributes that drew them together in the first place.

1. **Reflect on Positive Memories:** Regularly revisit fond memories that remind you of why you fell in love.

2. **Express Appreciation:** Make it a habit to express gratitude for even the small things your partner does.
3. **Compliment Regularly:** Compliments reinforce positive feelings and strengthen the emotional connection.

By fostering an environment of appreciation, couples can combat negativity and create a more supportive and loving atmosphere.

3. Turn Towards Each Other Instead of Away

In the hustle and bustle of daily life, it can be easy to overlook small gestures of connection. Gottman emphasizes the importance of turning towards your partner's bids for attention and support.

- **Recognize Bids for Connection:** Be attentive to your partner's attempts to engage with you, whether they are verbal or non-verbal.
- **Respond Positively:** Aim to respond to these bids with warmth and interest, showing that you value and respect their need for connection.
- **Prioritize Quality Time:** Set aside time for activities that you both enjoy to strengthen your bond.

By turning towards each other, couples can build a strong emotional foundation that enhances intimacy and trust.

4. Let Your Partner Influence You

Mutual respect and understanding are crucial in a marriage. This principle stresses the importance of allowing your partner to have a say in decisions and respecting their opinions.

1. **Practice Active Listening:** Give your partner your full attention when they share their thoughts and feelings.
2. **Be Open to Compromise:** Be willing to negotiate and find solutions that work for both partners.
3. **Encourage Input:** Create an environment where both partners feel comfortable sharing their opinions.

When both partners feel valued and respected, it creates a more harmonious and balanced relationship.

5. Solve Your Solvable Problems

Every couple encounters conflicts, but the way they handle these disagreements can make a significant difference. Gottman suggests that couples learn to identify and solve solvable problems constructively.

- **Identify the Issue:** Clearly define the problem you want to address without placing blame.
- **Remain Calm:** Approach the discussion when both partners are calm to avoid escalating the conflict.
- **Use "I" Statements:** Express your feelings using "I" statements to avoid sounding accusatory.

By tackling solvable problems with a collaborative mindset, couples can build stronger conflict resolution skills and deepen their relationship.

6. Overcome Gridlock

Gridlock occurs when couples face perpetual problems that seem insurmountable. Gottman suggests that understanding the underlying dreams and values behind these issues can lead to resolution.

1. **Identify the Dream:** Explore the deeper meaning behind the issue and what it represents for both partners.
2. **Discuss the Impact:** Talk about how the issue affects your relationship and emotional well-being.
3. **Create a Shared Vision:** Work together to find ways to honor each other's dreams, even if they seem incompatible.

By addressing the root of gridlock, couples can move towards a more fulfilling partnership.

7. Create Shared Meaning

The final principle focuses on building a shared sense of purpose and meaning within the marriage. This involves creating rituals, shared goals, and a strong family culture.

- **Establish Rituals of Connection:** Create traditions or routines that bring you closer together, such as family dinners or weekend outings.
- **Set Common Goals:** Work together to set goals that reflect your shared values and aspirations.
- **Encourage Open Communication:** Regularly discuss your shared values and how they influence your life together.

By cultivating shared meaning, couples can foster a deep sense of partnership that enhances their bond.

Conclusion

The seven principles of making marriage work offer valuable insights for couples seeking to strengthen their relationship. By enhancing love maps, nurturing fondness and admiration, turning towards each other, allowing mutual influence, solving solvable problems, overcoming gridlock, and creating shared meaning, couples can build a resilient and fulfilling partnership.

Marriage is a continuous journey that requires effort, understanding, and dedication. By applying these principles, couples can navigate challenges and celebrate their love, ensuring a lasting and happy union. Whether you're newlyweds or have been together for decades, it's never too late to invest in your marriage and apply these principles to create a thriving relationship.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the seven principles of making marriage work?

The seven principles are: 1) Enhance your love maps, 2) Nurture your fondness and admiration, 3) Turn towards each other instead of away, 4) Let your partner influence you, 5) Solve your solvable problems, 6) Overcome gridlock, and 7) Create shared meaning.

How do love maps contribute to a successful marriage?

Love maps refer to the detailed knowledge of your partner's world, including their dreams, fears, and life history. Enhancing your love maps helps partners understand and support each other better, fostering intimacy.

What does it mean to nurture fondness and admiration in a relationship?

Nurturing fondness and admiration involves recognizing and appreciating your partner's positive qualities, which strengthens your emotional connection and builds a foundation of respect and love.

Why is turning towards each other important in a marriage?

Turning towards each other means responding positively to your partner's bids for attention, affection, and support. This practice helps build trust and emotional connection, promoting a strong partnership.

How can couples let their partner influence them?

Letting your partner influence you involves being open to their opinions and feelings, making compromises, and valuing their perspectives, which fosters equality and mutual respect in the relationship.

What strategies can couples use to solve their solvable problems?

Couples can solve solvable problems by using effective communication skills, focusing on specific issues, practicing active listening, and working together to find mutually agreeable solutions.

What does overcoming gridlock entail in a marriage?

Overcoming gridlock involves addressing perpetual issues that cause conflict by understanding the deeper dreams and values at play, and finding ways to honor each partner's needs without trying to 'win' the argument.

How can couples create shared meaning in their marriage?

Creating shared meaning involves developing shared goals, values, rituals, and symbols that reflect both partners' identities, fostering a sense of unity and purpose in the relationship.

What role does communication play in the seven principles of making marriage work?

Communication is crucial as it underpins all seven principles, helping partners express their needs, understand each other, resolve conflicts, and deepen their emotional connection.

How can couples apply the seven principles in their daily lives?

Couples can apply the seven principles by regularly checking in with each other, engaging in meaningful conversations, practicing gratitude, and setting aside time for shared activities that reinforce their bond.

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