

## REALLY EASY WAYS TO ENRICH YOUR MARRIAGE

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It is a myth that relationships are bound to succeed as long as you love each other, have a lot in common and get on well. These are important but let's look at a few more things that we can add to increase the chances of a healthy relationship.

### 1. **BE RESPECTFUL**

Familiarity in intimate relationships often allows couples to speak to one another in ways that they would never speak to anyone else, in fact sometimes in ways that would never be accepted by anyone else. A good measure is to develop an observing self i.e. a part of you that remains watchful even when very angry and asks *"would I be saying these things or speaking like this to anyone one else or if I knew anyone else could hear me."*

### 2. **BE MINDFUL**

Keep in your awareness that relationships are fragile. Whatever you say and do accumulates and has an impact in the long term. It is useful to have the analogy of knocking away at your home with a large hammer. Each blow may not show individually but will weaken the walls until eventually they may fall down or cause irreparable damage. Don't be afraid to apologize.

### 3. **BE KIND**

Often we are kind and helpful to others but expect partners and family members to absorb tiredness and irritability at home. It is often very easy to introduce small acts of generosity, to throw away the score card of who has made coffee more times for the other and return to the small unconditional kind things that you did in the beginning of the relationship.

Gary Chapman in his book "The Five Love Languages" writes about the 5 different ways in which people show their love for each other. He writes that we often do not see acts of love and kindness from our partners if they do not mirror the way in which we would do it. Your partner's gestures of love may go unnoticed as you may be too busy looking for it to be expressed in the way that you are expecting it.

### 4. **BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF.**

In his book "The Power of Now", Eckhart Tolle writes that it is easier to see the source of negativity in your partner than to see it in yourself, especially when it manifests in different forms such as - possessiveness jealousy, control, withdrawal and unspoken resentment, the need to be right, emotional demands and manipulation or the urge to criticize, judge, blame or attack.

What he is talking about is projection – where we unconsciously or consciously act towards our partner as if they were carrying some disliked aspect of ourselves or some other person in our past.

It can be useful to list all the things you dislike in your partner and then ruthlessly look at yourself to see if you might own some of those characteristics.

### 5. **BE REALISTIC**

Couples are often saddened and disappointed to find after a while that their feelings have changed. Sometimes one or both will describe that they are no longer "in love" but they just "love" their partner. Since we also love our pets, this can describe many different things to different people, but the main point it captures is the disappointment that the heady, erotic, crazy, mindless, "cant see any fault in you" and "cant stop thinking about you in my spare time when I am not with you" and "cant keep my hands off you" feeling has gone.

In reality the feelings in the first phase of falling in love are not realistic. We do not fall in love with a real person but someone we create. We select the characteristics we want to see and ignore those that we don't like.

It is important to realize that love is dynamic – it changes over time. That doesn't mean that it has to become boring but to expect the delusional phase of the beginning to remain is unrealistic. It is more important to work with what you have.

#### 6. **BE INTERESTED**

Do not assume that relationships are self regulating or maintaining. Work on keeping romance alive, interest between you positive and love growing. Show an interest in what your partner is up to even if it is not something that you enjoy – you can take pleasure in the fact that they are enjoying it. Celebrate their achievements and spend some time doing good things together.

#### 7. **BE COMMUNICATIVE**

Talk about things that go on in your lives.

Clear up misunderstandings.

Deal with conflict but do so constructively.

Often couples become either reactive or defensive when they are hurt, even over small things. Don't be personal or insult each other. Don't resort to long silences or punishing each other but rather find ways to constructively communicate about what has hurt or upset you and find ways to deal with it.

Learn to listen.

Learn to let unimportant things go.

Try and make important decisions together.

Laugh together.

#### 8. **BE TWO INDIVIDUALS THAT MAKE UP A THREESOME**

For a healthy relationship it is important to have some separateness. This refers to maintaining interests for yourself, continuing to develop your personality and having a life where you can be creative and involved in interests that allow this to happen. You then have two developing individuals who are less likely to get bored with each other. Of course these should be appropriate to the marriage. This is the I-ness of the relationship.

The relationship is then the third element i.e. the place where you overlap, join and merge, but are not submerged to the point of having no separate identity. This is the We-ness of the relationship.

#### 9. **BE FAITHFUL**

This is no surprise. Each couple will work out their own rules but unless you are into swinging or some other kind of open relationship that works for you, a third party as an emotional or sexual affair usually damages the relationship irreparably.