

Attributes of a Successful Marriage

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What makes a marriage work? For many years I have been across the room as a marriage therapist directing interactions between married couples. The following attributes are central to a well functioning marriage. Developing these attributes takes time. It takes courage to look at these and then take an honest look to see if these are genuinely in your marriage.

It is not the failure to implement these skills/commitments that hurts marriage; it is the failure to commitment to continue to work toward these attributes.

1. A willingness to keep going through to the other side of difficulties. This means not going around the issue, but through it even if it takes time.
2. Each person finding a way to look at themselves as an individual honestly (rather than their marital partner.)
3. For the individual in a marriage to be able to say what reality is like for them, separate that reality from what the other person believes to be true; and then to honor both concepts of what is being said. Doing these things without contempt or mocking, very nearly guarantees a successful marriage.
4. Being willing to admit wrong and to apologize when wrong has been done.
5. Being respectful
6. Understanding that God loves each one equally
7. Believing that Jesus has come to heal the broken hearted, comfort those that mourn, and bring beauty from ashes. Really believing it.
8. Say what you mean and mean what you say.
9. Rehearsing the good of the other in your mind rather than the bad.
10. Respect boundaries, time schedules, and small contracts between one another.
11. Respect that each other's needs will be different when it comes to PMS; that is power, money and sex.
12. A willingness to see differences as a process, not something that has to be settled at a specific time and place.
13. Knowledge that certain things about you and the other person may not ever change. After this knowledge, work to accept that fact.
14. An understanding and commitment that each of you may try again tomorrow afresh and anew.
15. A true intention/habit of forgiveness.

One way to make this list a tool in your own life, mark along-side each of the fifteen attributes, whether you and/or you and your mate do these things:

*Always, *Sometimes, *Never.

Do this for yourself. If you think you and your mate might be able to discuss these things, ask him/her to do this individually as well. If you are able to discuss this list in a positive way, make a time to discuss how your lists are the same and how they are different. Come to the discussion thinking about ways YOU can contribute to making the Sometimes or Never attributes better. Notice I said ways that YOU can contribute. Avoid instructing your mate on how he/she "should change" to make these things happen.

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