



3 Healthy habits

OF SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS

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Three Healthy Habits of Successful Relationships

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INTRO

HAPPILY EVER AFTER ISN'T A FAIRYTALE, IT'S A CHOICE.

We think every couple has a dream when they walk down the aisle to live happily ever after. The excitement, the fascination with each other, the dreams, celebrating life as a family- it's all so thrilling. Yet as time passes, and seemingly without knowing it, distractions like the overly involved in-law, demanding workloads, financial pressures, and the over-crowded schedule, move us off track and we can lose sight of what's important.

Before you know it, you've become roommates with the one you were once madly in love with.

The fairytale is a lot less sparkly than we expected. And maybe that's where we derail- our expectations. We expect love to come so easy with emotional surges that bring some never ending bliss. It did during courtship. But after the wedding is over and you begin unpacking after the honeymoon, the cold harsh reality of bills, dishes, and laundry sets in, which can lead to a big let down. Good feelings- gone.

You made a choice at the altar to speak your vows; to love, honor, and cherish, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, for as long as you both shall live. No one forced you up there, you gladly did it. It was a beautiful moment that was carefully choreographed. Yet it seems like we've done more planning for the wedding itself, but not for the marriage to follow.

Life after your wedding comes down to living out your vows.

Great marriage don't happen by accident, but rather they are created through daily actions that prove your love. Maybe your story was like ours. We dated, loved to make out, go out on dates, dreamed about our potential future, and spoke our vows of undying love at our wedding. But the next day... well, we had no idea what to do with each other.



We got way off track starting from the beginning of our marriage. Small arguments became screaming matches. We masked pain with overspending and blaming each other for not being who we said we were. We quickly became more like roommates than lovers. And

by year three, we were about to throw in the towel. No one would have blamed us since everyone else was calling it quits.

No way I'm going to be divorced at age 25.

We got mentors and began the process of educating ourselves on the habits of successful marriages. Somewhere along the way, we picked up other couples and began coaching them what we learned. Then we created Marriage365 as a messaging board to our friends, which has grown way beyond our expectations. Today we are excited to think about all the lives that have been impacted through discovering these healthy habits.

With that, we want to share with you some of the best practices that we've implemented in our marriage that took it from toxic to thriving. Put these into practice and you too can rediscover the magic of adventuring through life with your best friend. You don't have to just survive marriage... you can thrive.

IT'S NOT JUST FOR THE LUCKY, IT'S FOR EVERYONE.

Habit ONE

THE 60 SECOND BLESSING

Your words have the power to give life or take it away.

There is nothing that can change the atmosphere of a room faster than a word of encouragement, a word spoken in love, and a word that brings comfort. You can fill your wife with the security she seeks by speaking fondly of her beauty. You can build confidence and motivation in your husband by telling him how proud you are of all his hard work. With a few short sentences, you can shape the way your spouse views themselves and the world around them. Believe it or not, what you say has incredible power.



One of the turning points in our relationship was when we learned to leverage the power of speaking words of encouragement over each other. It was so dramatic for us that we still keep this habit. We call it the *60 Second Blessing* and here's how it works:

You begin by speaking 60 seconds of encouragement to your spouse. Once you're finished, your spouse spends the next 60 seconds sharing what they love about you. It's that simple!

Here's how it sounds in our marriage:

CASEY | Babe, I love you for everything that you are. You are patient with me, forgiving of my faults, and so unconditional in your love. I love how you stay fit and eat healthy and encourage me to do the same. I really appreciate my to-do lists. I promise to change the lightbulb, tomorrow, really. I enjoyed our weekend as a family and making memories, simply staying at home and taking a family walk. You are so creative. I love that we get to work on building a dream together. You are an amazing mother.



MEYGAN | I love how hard you work to provide for this family. Even though I know you are tired from working all day, I love how when you come home you wrestle with the kids, cook dinner, help with bedtime, and manage enough energy to play Yahtzee with me. Thank you for showing me so much grace when I mess up and being quick to forgive. Thank you for always finding ways to make me laugh. I'm grateful for your authenticity and kindness you show me and so many other people.

We are still amazed at the impact that these 2 minutes have on our relationship. It's 2 minutes! Who doesn't have time to invest 2 minutes in their marriage? We challenge you to put this into practice for one week. It will literally change the atmosphere in your house. If you do this, we'd love to hear how it went. Email Casey at casey@marriage365.org

ACTION PLAN

1. Spend time alone and jot down 10 positive qualities about your spouse. Post them somewhere you can go back to often.
2. Take the 7 Day Affirmation Challenge: practice the 60 second blessing for the next 7 days in a row and make it an appointment in your calendar.

Habit TWO

CLEAR THE DECK

Highly successful couples learn to “clear the deck” often, by checking in with each other and asking if there is anything they need to apologize for. It’s a way to clear out any building resentment and often opens up for healthy dialogue for managing expectations that might have been missed by life moving at warp speed. We typically do this once a week.

Early in our marriage, in order to keep the peace, Casey would have a knee jerk response anytime Meygan would bring up an issue to cover everything with saying, *I’m sorry*. That’s not an apology, that’s avoiding conflict.



Here's a little bit about a proper apology.

You've made a mistake. You're human. You said the wrong thing and acted inappropriately. The right thing to say is, *I'm sorry*. It's a powerful statement that shows there is some regretful acknowledgment of an offense. It speaks to your humility and the sorrow you feel over the hurt you caused. Saying sorry conveys that you want to be on the same team and you're willing to work on making things right, but it has to be sincere.

Where we can get into trouble is when we stop being polite to each other and either not say it all, or on the other hand, be so quick to say it, without any action to back it up, that it becomes cheap talk.

When it's not said with the right attitude – one of regret and repentance, the *I'm sorry* can be just as much of a problem as the issue preceding it. **You need to clarify the apology with the specific action you took that caused hurt.** For instance, saying *I'm sorry for responding with anger and using harsh words with you* is better than *I'm sorry* by itself in response to your spouse. Be absolutely clear about taking ownership of what you might have done to cause hurt.

I'm sorry is the start, not the end to an apology; it's the communication starter.

SAY IT IN LOVE

But it better be in love. Without love, your words will bounce off your spouse and fall straight to the floor. It is love that opens the door for both of you to begin the healing process. It's a heart that wants to dig deeper into finding a way to make it right, because words are not enough. **Without love, an apology is meaningless.**

If this is done in a spirit of love, everything will slow down, emotions will cool, and you'll provide a safe environment to actually connect with one another and dig deeper into what triggered the reaction. Understanding *why* your spouse could feel a certain way is crucial for growth in the relationship. **You do not have to agree with your spouses opinion, but you must understand and sympathize with their feelings.**



Without action, an apology is pointless. We've discovered that in thriving relationships, true apologies seek a path to make the other person whole. If you've spoken a word of criticism, you'll need to find a way to affirm the other person. If you've lied about something, you need to come completely clean with the truth. If you've stolen from someone (emotionally, physically, financially), you find a way to restore the whole value. It is insanity to say sorry and just walk away from the situation without taking some sort of action.

Certainly there will be times when you are misinterpreted or read wrong. A heart of love would still acknowledge and validate that this person feels hurt. And even after that, before you seek to give your explanation of your view of how things went down, dig deeper into understanding before being understood; get curious, and find out why your spouse was hurt.

So why is it so hard for us to apologize? Could it be a matter of pride, that we don't want to admit we are wrong, that we want to save face?



Choosing love means choosing your relationship over pride

or self. We know it's hard to say *I'm sorry*, but you have to be courageous. Saying *I'm sorry* and meaning it by your actions and words is no laughing matter. Doing it right – choosing to address the problem rather than sweeping it under the rug with roses or a blanket *I'm sorry* – will strengthen your relationship. It will also help avoid fighting over the same thing repeatedly. And that is always good for your marriage.

**ACTION PLAN**

1. The next time your spouse hurts you, extend forgiveness before they even ask.
2. Look at the situation and decide whether it is what we call a deal breaker (i.e., is it worthy of a fight if you can't resolve it immediately). If the answer is no, you may want to forgive and let it go. If it's repetitive or is big (money, faithfulness, respectfulness, abuse) then an apology and a discussion (if not more) is a minimum.

Habit THREE

DATE YOUR MATE

We fight when we don't spend quality time together. We are at each others throats, easily irritated and constantly nit picking each other for days on end. We thrive when we are together, in a place where we can connect and be intimate. It took us years to learn this about our marriage and now that we know, we protect our date nights with everything we have.

We've said it once, we've said it a thousand times... **MAKE DATE NIGHTS A PRIORITY!** Spending time together keeps things fresh and fun in your relationship. Having a time with no distractions where you can connect is too important to ignore.



If you're lacking ideas on what to do, here are a **25 date ideas** for you to try.

1. A remembering night where you pull out old pictures, the wedding video and mementos from when you dated
2. Have a Naked Dinner. Yep...we discuss this in length in our eBook *Naked Dinners*
3. Get sweaty together at a local gym class. Most places have deals for first time customers
4. Go to a flea market and choose the most meaningful, but least expensive gift you can find for each other
5. Bake cookies together
6. The \$20 date and the goal is not to spend more than \$20
7. Go for a drive with no agenda
8. Relive your first date
9. Get dressed up and go somewhere fancy
10. Take dance lessons (ballroom was our favorite)
11. Hire a photographer and do a romantic photo shoot
12. Create your own private blackout by forbidding the use of all electricity

13. Go to a coffee shop and bring a deck of cards or some dice
14. Go to Target and fill your cart with something beginning with every letter of the alphabet. Then put it all away.
15. Volunteer together at a soup kitchen, animal shelter or a local convalescent home
16. Cook dinner together at home and save some room for dessert and sex
17. Test drive your dream car (men will always say yes to this one)
18. Take turns reading a chapter to each other of our eBook *Communication that Connects*
19. Go for a bike ride and stop off for frozen yogurt
20. Make a fire and enjoy some s'mores
21. Rent the movie *The Story of Us* and enjoy some cuddling
22. Go fly a kite together
23. Laugh like a kid again at the latest G or PG-rated movie
24. Sip some fine wine at your local wine or liquor stores. Most stores host tasting nights.
25. Have a gourmet picnic. Cruise the aisles of your supermarket and load your cart with whatever epicurean delights you can find: lobster salad, good quality chocolate, wine or fizzy grape juice, gourmet crackers, gooey cheeses, and so on. Now head for the most romantic spot in town.

Here's your bonus: Some of us have a hard time knowing what to talk about on a date night. **Here are some conversation starters for you:**

Who do we know that has the kind of marriage that we want?

What need of yours have I not been able to satisfy?

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?

If you could meet one celebrity, who would it be?

What is one of your greatest fears?

What kind of physical touch best says, "I love you?"

What is your favorite way to spend an evening?

What is one of your favorite ways to be soothed?



What is your favorite sex position/foreplay?

What would you consider your ideal job?

What are my greatest strengths?

What are your deepest desires, hopes and dreams?

What is the most adventurous thing you've done?

How can we make our sex life better?

If I didn't have to worry about making a living, what would I most likely do for the rest of my life?

What is your favorite memory from our wedding day?

Ask each other your hi and your low from the day!

ACTION PLAN

1. Pull your calendar out and schedule your next date night.
2. Make your own list of 20 date nights that you want to go on this year and post them on your fridge.

OUTRO

YOU ARE EITHER FIGHTING FOR YOUR MARRIAGE OR LOSING IT.

It's not enough to read this book and do nothing. It's time to make our action plans your action plans. We've given you 3 healthy habits of successful relationships that are easy to put into practice, no matter what state your marriage may be in.

Too many couples have sat across from us on our couch who didn't put in any effort in their marriage and didn't get the help they needed for their relationship until it was too late. We are pleading with you... care for your marriage! The joys, the satisfaction, and the elation are too good not to experience! Trust us, we've been on both sides. Our marriage has gone from nearly divorcing at year three to absolutely thriving at year 12.

If you are reading this and have given up all hope for your marriage... will you go on ours for a bit longer? We think you are incredibly valuable as a person of impact to your world — as a

spouse, a parent, a friend, a co-worker, and a neighbor. You may not feel like your marriage matters, but trust us.... it does.

If you are finding yourself stuck and need some more help, we would be more than happy to schedule a private skype coaching session.



We'd love to hear from you. Please email us your thoughts, to casey@marriage365.org

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