

3 Tips for Building a Better Marriage

Dr. Dave Schramm

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Jenny and Michael have been married for 10 years. While they love spending time with each other, the couple has become distracted from their marriage. Jenny and Michael live hectic lives; they both work, care for their children, and rarely spend time together. The couple find themselves drifting apart and would love to build their marriage back to the strength of their early years.

Take a few minutes and reflect on your own marriage. Is it flourishing? Do you feel disconnected? Has your life become so busy that your relationship has hit the back burner? Maybe you and your spouse are struggling due to unfulfilled expectations? **If you have been struggling with your marital relationship, or if you would like to improve the quality of your relationship, you are not alone.**

Just as Jenny and Michael want to strengthen their marriage, you can too! Research has provided evidence of key characteristics that help build better marriages.

3 tips for building a better marriage starting today

1. Friendship



Friendship is one of the most important characteristics of strong marriages. If partners start their marriage with a weak friendship, they may find difficulty in remaining close over time. Couples who don't see themselves as great friends may be less polite to each other, or they could lose respect for one another. **Overall, couples who have been friends throughout their marriages have been happier and more satisfied with their marriages.** Here are some ways to work on your friendship with your spouse:

- **Make time for each other.** Making time to be with your spouse will help keep the relationship alive. It will help both of you to connect and reconnect often. Schedule time each week specifically for quality time. This could include going on a date, talking, leisure time, or anything the two of you enjoy doing together.
- **Laugh often and create memories.** Sharing enjoyable times with each other will prevent boredom from creeping into your relationship. It can also help you feel refreshed when life seems hard or hectic. Mark Twain is quoted as saying, "Humor is mankind's greatest blessing." Humor can lighten the mood when conflicts arise, give comfort during trials, and create fondness for one another. This is a way to keep the relationship joyful and exciting.
- **Engage in friendship behaviors.** Just because a couple moves from dating one day to being married the next, does not mean they should stop working on their friendship. Friendship behaviors include: talking about each other's day, going for a walk, playing a game, listening to music, dancing, working on a project together, saying "thank you" to simple acts, and so on. Continuing these actions after marriage will help to strengthen friendship and marriage.

2. Empathy



When you exercise empathy in your relationship, you and your partner are more likely to be on the same page. True empathy is putting yourself in someone else's shoes and having the ability to see different perspectives. Some research shows that empathy is more important in a relationship than satisfaction.

Partners are more content with their relationships if they know their spouse understands what they are feeling and expresses empathy towards them.

Understand your partner and their emotions/actions. What is your spouse feeling? Why are they feeling that way? How would you feel if you were in that situation? These are all questions you could ask yourself to show empathy in your relationship.

- **Show care and concern for your partner.** When your partner expresses themselves to you, it is important to help them feel validated. Validating your partner allows them to feel your empathy for them.
- **Take time to listen.** When your partner comes to you with conflict, or just needs to talk, it is important to take time to listen. Focus on your partner and how they are feeling rather than what your reply will be, solving the problem, or any other number of things that could be running through your mind. Reflecting what you hear your partner is saying can clarify whether you truly see things from your partner's perspective. Re-examining the situation and trying to see it from your partner's angle will help you use empathy.

3. Create Couple Rituals and Traditions

Creating couple rituals and traditions is a wonderful way to build a strong marriage. Rituals and traditions give couples meaning and predictability. Rituals can help couples recharge from their everyday stresses and increase intimacy in their relationship. There are many ways to incorporate traditions and rituals into your relationship. Some ideas include:

- **Having a talk with your spouse at the end of each day to discuss what happened in the day**
- **Have a weekly date night – no talking about work, children or money!**
- **Kiss each other when you depart in the morning and return home each day**
- **Create specials traditions to do on holidays, such as anniversaries and Valentine's day**

Keeping marriages strong takes time and effort.

These tips can help strengthen your relationship. Take the first step by talking with your spouse about these tips and apply them in your life! Friendship, empathy, and creating couple rituals and traditions will help you have a strong and happy marriage.