

Timeless Transformations

Simple Surprises of a Successful Marriage

I wish I could count the number of times that I've been asked about how to have a successful marriage. Celebrating our 33rd wedding anniversary yesterday is a definitive level of attainment. When Kendall wrote on social media that "we are the most amazing couple, and that our relationship and life that we have created is the ultimate guide," my heart pounded with great pride. I believe a compliment like that, especially from our oldest daughter, is the ultimate praise. Had nothing else great happened yesterday, I received the utmost gift of all: approval from my children. So thank you for that and thank you for making my day!

The most common question I get is, "How do you and Scott do it? You make it look so easy." Or, "Tell me your secret to a happy, long-lasting marriage." So today I thought I would center my inspiration on **simple surprises of a successful marriage**. My intention is always to provide you with support to help you live a more fulfilling life. Most of this you know but taking the time to write it down may offer an additional level of support if not now maybe in your future. .

- The first idea is that you have to *believe in marriage*. Marriage is the final commitment. The commitment itself is as important as anything else in the relationship. If both are equally committed, then it comes down to the discipline of commitment – maybe more than love because love fluctuates. If your relationship has taken the final step to get married then the responsibility is on the two to be committed to making the marriage work.
- The main reason a relationship doesn't survive is there is not a willingness to *make a commitment*. It is when "the you and me and the yours and mine never becomes quite the us and ours. A marriage is not a goal in itself but an opportunity to mature. As long as you continue to grow and are willing to change and evolve, there is happiness and fulfillment. A relationship not based on deep commitment ends in misery. Be willing to discover your level of commitment with the other's well-being.
- Before you can build and sustain a relationship with another person, you have to *build a relationship with yourself*. There is a thought that when I find the right relationship, I will be full and fulfilled. Needing another to be fulfilled is a deficiency of the spirit. A reduced relationship doesn't come because you haven't found the right person, it comes because you haven't found yourself. It's not a matter of finding the right person as much as it is of being the right person.
- A healthy relationship starts where both *look within and see no lack*. Marianne Williamson, a favorite author, sums it up when she talks about lack in a relationship. "Experiencing lack in a relationship is when the relationship is based on differences where each one thinks the other has what he or she has not. They come together to complete him or herself and to rob the other. They stay until there is nothing left to steal and then they move on." A marriage is when you join into a relationship with another wholly but remain as a whole yourself, just as you are and continuing to improve.
- *Be love* rather than focused on being loved from the other. Don't expect love to come from somewhere else. When you are love, it comes from yourself. You must project love at all times. It is then when you become lovable and loved.
- *Base your relationship on sharing mutual experiences of growth*. Celebrate what you have without creating unrealistic expectations on the other to make up what you do not have.

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- *Set the foundation of your relationship on enthusiasm for building a life together.* Love each other for what you are not for what you are trying to be or expect the other person to be. It's more difficult to be authentically enthusiastic when there are conditions placed on the relationship. Conditions ruin enthusiasm in the relationship.
- Be willing to give and if you can't, be confident in your limits. The crucial question is, what are you willing to give or give up? There may be some things that you can't give. There are some things you can't give up. You have to know what your limits are. And, you have to know it is OK to have your limits. I believe this is where conflict begins and sometimes that conflict goes unresolved. The key is can the relationship be committed enough to work through the unresolved conflict. Often you have to *agree to disagree and move on*; let it go.
- Desire to *seek the same things*. It is easy for two people to fall in love. Falling in love is a romantic fantasy. Over time, love is not two people looking googly-eyed at each other. It is two people looking out the same window seeing the same thing. Set your vision, your goals, and your values. Let that be the foundation of your relationship and your love for one another.
- *Be friends*. Two people that are friends enjoy each other. They enjoy playing the game of life with each other and work hard to make it fun even in the smallest of ways and on casual days. Happiness in a marriage is two people growing together, maturing along the way, and loving every minute of it.
- *Enjoy the other person*. If there isn't the commitment of working together to bring enjoyment into the relationship, there is no reason to come together and stay in the relationship. Enjoyment comes when you bring more happiness than stress. It's difficult to enjoy anything where there is underlying stress.
- Be willing to *commit yourself to the growth and fulfillment of the other person*. That is the reason for being in a relationship. It is just as important that you support their growth as it is your own. When you honor a commitment, it is 50-50. Be disciplined enough to honor the commitment even if it doesn't serve you 100%. Be willing to support the other 80-20 so they are willing to support you 80-20 when you need it.
- Never lose sight that everything changes. Growth is about changing. In a long-term relationship, *be willing to change*. As you change, realize that you can't change another person unless they want to. Be patient enough and give the other time to change. Sometimes it just takes time and patience.
- A healthy relationship never ends. *The work never ends* because there isn't an end result. There is always a next step. A relationship is about taking a journey with another person and growing along the way, step by step.
- *Manage your own happiness*. It is hard to find happiness with another if you are waiting on them to fill you up with happiness. You can only rely on yourself as a source of inner happiness. You are responsible for taking the time to find it within.

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- *Experience the contrast* of the other person. Differences give rise to change and growth. Just because you are different from the other doesn't mean one or the other is right. Your dad said last night, you are my yin to my yang. We are two halves that come together to complete wholeness. Contrast can be a starting point for change that ends up as a new balance with each other.
- When you do feel needy or insecure, *don't put pressure on the other to make yourself feel better* rather work on your own self-worth. Feeling inherently loved and worthy comes from within not your partner. *Light your own light*. You are the only one that can spark your inner light. Don't expect the other to light your light. They can't do this for you.
- *Set your sight on your image of a perfect relationship*. Only until you have a clear image of what that relationship looks like can you experience a relationship that meets your expectations. This image creates what you experience. Your relationship is a reflection of who you are and it reflects your own personal level of self-love.
- *You are responsible for your life and every decision you make, not the other person*. Your life is your life. You can't expect another person to love you more than you love yourself. You are the most important person in your life. You can't put that responsibility on anyone and certainly not your partner.
- *Eliminate complaining*. Complaining never attracts what you want. It only perpetuates what you are complaining about. Take a simple example. If the other won't do a chore around the house, don't complain about it. It only makes matters worse. Just do it or hire it done. When you do do it, if they see you just say, I really appreciate you doing _____, even though you are doing it yourself. You are sending a positive message regardless. This is hard but it's better than complaining because complaining just doesn't work!
- *Be disciplined in what you say*. Don't say anything you will regret. This takes discipline and self-commitment. Never speak to the other in a disrespectful or derogatory way. Hurting their self-image is harmful in a relationship beyond words. Remember to address the issue rather than attack the other person.
- *Take time to look your best* when you spend time together, as much as you can. If you spend more time getting fixed up for work or for friends, you are sending a message that you care more about how attractive you are with them than when you are with your partner.
- *Spend time together* going on dates and vacations. When you always have company with you as a couple you don't have time to experience each other one on one. Sometimes having others around takes away from getting to know each other and focusing on one another as a priority.
- *Don't risk letting the love die*. It's like a flower. A flower needs water. Without water the flower dies a slow death. We can walk by that flower every day and we can see it start to wilt. You have to add more water so the flower will start to bloom again. You can feel it when your relationship is dying. Be mindful of that and when it starts to wither, step in immediately and give it the attention that it must have. Otherwise, it may be too late where it can't be revived.

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- *Never take your relationship for granted.* There is no sure thing. Why do you think the divorce rate is so high? Even after 33 years, I'm cautious. I'm observant. I double check our relationship over and over in my mind to make sure all is in order.
- *See your relationship as two whole people* coming together to form a union of marriage. An amazing marriage doesn't come from two half-fulfilled people coming together to make one whole, complete life. An amazing marriage comes from two whole people coming together to share and enhance their already full and beautiful lives.

I could continue on but I will stop here. I may add to this in the future. In closing, you three know us well. You know our relationship isn't simple. You have seen us make mistakes in real time just in daily living. You know our marriage has had high points and has had very low sinking spells. That's life and that's relationships. A marriage is hard and it takes a TON of work. It takes more work than I ever imagined. You know this by now because you are in relationships. I do believe that in our very lowest points, the commitment pulled me through. The commitment of changing myself to be better, the commitment of marriage, and the commitment to you three. I have strived this entire marriage to set the best example that I can to serve as an ultimate guide. That is why Kendall, your comment about our anniversary meant so much to me!

The bottom line is that I love your dad more today after 33 years than I did the day I married him. That love coupled with our commitment to one another has created us as an amazing couple. I can only hope your relationships will grow and be all that they can be. I hope you will have the same level of commitment and fortitude to build an amazing marriage to serve as a guide for your children. That is my dream and vision for you three.

I love you more than all of the commitments that I have made in my life with the ultimate one being to your dad and you three – Love Mom