

5 Keys to a Fulfilling Marriage Checklist

By OutstandingPersonalRelationships.com

***Disclaimer:** This list is by no means exhaustive however it is our intention to provide you with what we consider the 'Top 5 Best Practices' from our personal experiences in addition to working with married spouses for almost two decades.*

Each item we list can increase marriage satisfaction alone however when utilized in addition to the other areas, it can provide a synergy of marriage happiness and fulfillment seldomly experienced.

Key Number 5: Recognizing each person's individuality as part of the team

The first team we are ever a part of is the one we were born into, called our family. Our first title what that of a son or daughter and we were expected to play that role. It doesn't matter how functional or dysfunctional our family may have been, we've likely learned behaviors and habits from what we've experienced or witnessed.

Whether or not we choose to engage in similar behavior, whether good or bad, with the families we develop is up to us. It is vitally important for our own health and the health of our marriages that we recognize and respect our partner's personal individuality and identity.

There's an old saying about attention that applies to all humans, it says, "Attention: Babies cry for it, men die for it." It basically means that we all want recognition. A wife asking her husband if he likes the meal is a subtle hint for him to recognize the love and care she put into preparing the meal and honor of feeding him. A husband asking his wife to take a look at something he fixed around the house is also another opportunity to recognize and uplift each other and satisfy our need for attention.



We all have innate talents and interests. Some people pursue their talents and interests with an undying passion while others, not so much. Many times we find that when couples marry, they have lofty goals and look forward to building a future together. Life happens and sometimes things are put on the proverbial back burner or abandoned in pursuit of other things in the name of taking care of more important matters or responsibilities.

Sometimes a spouse may forego what they want in order to better serve the marriage whether it's pursuing further education and instead caring for a child or otherwise. We've noticed that when this happens, far too frequently it can inadvertently plant a seed of resentment against the spouse who hasn't been perceived as sacrificing as much. When this happens, one of the first things we notice is that a spouse may wrap themselves up in the identity born of the circumstance. So a wife who was went to school for engineering and is talented may forego her employment ambitions to instead stay and raise the couple's child, at least for the first few years until he or she begins school. Or the father who is a talented barber who abandons his entrepreneurial pursuit of opening his own barbershop in order to work a corporate job to bring in more money for the budding family.

Each of us has reasons why we do things and there may be no clear right or wrong in the specific situation or circumstance however what does put strain on a marriage is failing to recognize the sacrifices made by each other for the success of the family. Indeed most couples aren't in it to lose, they want to win together and a man wants to be more than enough for his wife or wives and a wife wants to be the beat of his heart. He wants to be her King and she desires to be his Queen.

Each of us play a part and each of us has a title that denotes many responsibilities. By appreciating the uniqueness of your spouse(s), you let them you know are aware of their concern and love for the family unit and thank them for that. This can be accomplished easily and needs to be cultivated from time to time.

Ex: A husband buying flowers (if she likes flowers) for no reason other than to have flowers in the home as a sign of your wife's beauty and what she brings to the family is one way to accomplish that appreciation. By putting in the card that he knows what she has sacrificed or invests in the family and you appreciate that goes a long way. Or if she's a mani-pedi or facial type, schedule it and surprise her with it, again, goes a long way. If your funds are tight, something like preparing breakfast, dinner, or leaving love notes around the house all help show appreciation.

Ex: A wife preparing her husband's favorite meal or providing him with a neck or foot massage can accomplish the same. Leaving special notes around the house or on his food dish stating that it is made with love also works. Goes without saying that Hallmark, Mahogany, or my favorite, Papyrus sell cards for these special appreciation occasions which you can write in what you wish for the person you love

All of us are unique and one of the most challenging things is to operate in a world where people have stripped you of your identity and expect you to fulfill roles that have been

assigned to you without appreciating who you are and what you enjoy. Be that breath of fresh air and appreciate your spouse as a unique individual whom you have been blessed to marry and who is one of the main players on Team Family.

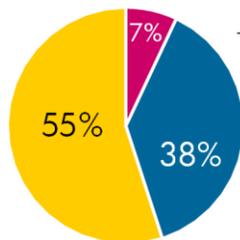
Key Number 4: Good Communication

Communication is both an art and a science. Humans use this powerful medium as a form of artful eloquence, brutal honesty, crushing deception and many other ways. We want to discuss breathing life and love with yours instead of suffocating pain.

We all have previous experiences with how we either felt joy or pain based on how someone communicated with us. First let's discuss that communication means far more than simply the words you speak.

A personal communication study conducted at UCLA dealt with the relative importance of verbal and nonverbal messages when communicating. The study suggests that we overwhelmingly deduce our feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about what someone says not by the actual words spoken, but by the speaker's body language and tone of voice.

Prof. Mehrabian quantified this tendency: words equal 7%, tone of voice 38%, and body language 55% respectively account for 100% of personal communication. Considering that, it would be of great importance that what we say



Dr. Albert Mehrabian's 7-38-55% Rule

Elements of Personal Communication

- 7% spoken words and how we say it is congruent with how we feel AND in the best interests of our marriage. Emotions and feelings can be fleeting yet the words uttered can have a deeply negative impact if they escape past the tongue.
- 38% voice, tone
- 55% body language

A couple of things to consider for better communication;

- Ask yourself do you love this person and want the best for them? If yes, exercise self-control and choose to speak life versus death
- Ask yourself if what you have to say would be important if you just received news that they were in a bad accident and are now in the hospital? i.e. is it that serious
- Remember to take three deep breaths to give your brain more oxygen since most of the population doesn't breath properly and by simply doing so can release relaxing hormones and clear your mind

The number one reason why couple's don't make it in marriage comes down to one thing. The feeling of being disrespected. There are many ways a person may feel disrespected but the main one is negative communication, a sharp uncaring tongue can do untold damage. The above three

bullet points were focused on slowing down negative communication, The following are ways to enhance your positive communication

- Notice and verbally express your appreciation and concern for your spouse. The world is quick to point out flaws and wrongs, let's be the voice that builds up instead of destroys. Even if you're having a difficult time finding something, work on doing this several times per week. Something as simple as 'you smell good' or 'I like your lips' does wonders. Most importantly, be genuine and you won't have to worry about being congruent with your body language.
- If you are not good at verbally expressing your emotions, feelings, or compliments, then consider writing it via letter, email or in a way that you can express your thoughts positively without interruption or barrier.
- Apologize quickly. There are few things more pathetic than adults not apologizing to each other when they both want what's best and the situation is small. Even if you are not the one 'wrong' in the situation and instead did or said something that made your spouse feel disrespected during the argument or discussion about whatever situation, now you may both be wrong. The wise person will apologize even if he/she isn't wrong, for sake of the marriage and not causing further harm. This is not a one size fits all either. *Apologizing for something that is harmful and often can put you in a position to be a victim and if you are being abused physically, verbally, emotionally, sexually or otherwise, help must be pursued right away, not simply being apologetic.*

Key Number 3: Knowing Each Others Core Values

Core values are the fundamental beliefs of a person or organization. These guiding principles dictate behavior and can help people understand the difference between right and wrong. Core values vary according to the subject or relationship. When dealing with intimate relationships, specifically marriage, we want to examine how to find your core values in a relationship with your spouse(s).

When we work with couples we like to ask, "what is the No. 1 core value you desire to be present in your intimate relationship?" There are many responses and in our experience, the thing they list hardly survives past the second round of an exercise we complete together.

Here's a way to find out your core values in a nutshell (*be sure you're subscribed to our [website](#) because we have a video demonstrating the exercise and provide a download for*



your use). Grab a sheet of paper and list 20 characteristics vertically, one characteristic per line, of things you feel are essential to a happy intimate relationship.

So for example, you may feel that trust, love, honesty, fun, attractiveness, adventure, loyalty, sense of humor, etc... are important characteristics. List 20 of them even if it seems difficult! Once you complete that, the next step is to pit each category against the characteristic below it. If we take from the above characteristics, I'd ask what is more important, even if 51% to 49%, trust or love? If you say love, then write love next to it, it won this round, just like a tournament. You continue to do this until you are down to the No. 1 Characteristic. This would be your main Core Value in an intimate relationship.

Once you know your highest core value, if this thing core value is violated, the entire relationship risks failure. The key is to know yours and also learn your spouse's because you will know what the deal breakers are and what is valued. Of course the same goes for your spouse, share yours so that he/she knows what buttons not to push or what to cultivate for more connection.

Key Number 2: Knowing Spouse's Personality Type

There are lots of personality type tests and we like some and dislike others. Humans are complex and we grow over time and can change answers which can get a different result for any test.

Many tests are designed for specific purposes and we've come to like the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator or MBTI Personality Test. We advise you to take it and see how closely your result relates to your life. You can take the short test for free at humanmetrics.com or 16personalities.com and Google the results when it comes to relationships. The test is a bit complex and many companies use it to assess the best way to put teams together at their companies.



Once you get the 4 letters at the end of your test, consider looking to see what types of jobs, businesses, parenting styles, and of course compatible partners your personality type seem to fit best. Again, there are no certainties or a one size fits all type of assessment but we've found that the MBTI has been dead on for just over 80% of the people we work with. Check it out and learn more about yourself and share the results with your spouse(s) and see what they think. It may be that they see what you may not and they have the ability to see how accurate or inaccurate the test is for you.

Key Number 1: Commitment to Personal Growth

This is the main indicator of a successful and fulfilling marriage. We many times don't lack the knowledge we need to make progress, but instead we fail to act on the knowledge which leaves us stuck. What use is having the key if you are unwilling to use it to unlock or secure what is valuable?

We all like to hear stories of personal growth and how someone may have overcome obstacles and failures to eventually become a smashing success, however success may be defined. Let's talk specifically about personal growth. Grade school desks are rather small and the reason why is that we don't expect, nor should we, that a child is going to be in grade school a long time. How many years do we expect before a child moves from 1st to 2nd grade? Most people would say 1 year and they'd be correct. Of course there are exceptions to the rule, but let's focus on the rule.

Schools have curriculums and they are willing to provide it to you as a student and let you know what is expected of you. They inform you of the books you'll be studying from, the quizzes you'll take, testing days, progress reports, semester dates and everything you need to know before you get your report card. When examined more closely, the school is goal setting FOR you, setting expectations FOR you, making deadlines FOR you so that you can accomplish things in an easier and more structured fashion. But let me ask a question, once you are done with school, who does the above FOR you now? Think about it, I'll wait...



We know the answer, no one does it for us. The reason no one does it for you is because it's time to start adulting and doing the above for yourself. Sadly we lack at proactive learning and intentional direction especially in our personal relationships. Many times life gets in the way, it's what life does. However the winds of change, pain, sadness, joy, recession, abundance fall on everyone at one time or another and for shorter or longer times for yet others. Our challenge is not to change how life works but instead how we work in life. We must be willing to set our sails and navigate using the winds to get us to the destination we desire.

For example: Let's say you have graduated high school and you've been out of school for 6 years in the workforce or running your own business. Chances are that you, like about 95% of the population have not taken an intentional study of success in relationships or personal development. It's not that the books aren't written or that they are expensive, how much are

library books again? It's simply that we haven't been intentional in the designing of our lives and we're just trying to figure things out.

Imagine if a person who has been out of high school for 5 years read one book per month for those 5 years on the subject of relationships, or his profession, or leadership, or something other than a novel. That would make 60 books on a particular topic. Would you think that person would be more knowledgeable on the particular subject? Would they have more resources, ideas, and strategies with which to tackle issues that arise? Of course the answer is yes. What would happen if that person continues reading on book per month for another 5 years? What if he/she switches up topics and focuses on being cultured, healthy, confident, or financially astute? Would you think they'd be better off or worse? The answer is obvious.

Imagine if you and your spouse(s) focused on continual growth, how would your life be different? Would you see yourself growing closer with your spouse by cultivating the growth with each other? Many times people complain of drifting apart when they made no effort to go in the same direction. Drifting doesn't happen quickly, it is the result of not working intentionally on going in the same direction together.

Our relationships are very similar to gardens. You don't need to do anything in order for weeds to grow. Negative thoughts and situations from stress and trauma will easily override your garden if you don't prune it. It is our job to cultivate our loving relationships with water, sunshine, and rich soil by committing to personal growth.

One recipe is to read a non-fiction personal development book 30 min per day. Listen to a personal development audio/video 30 min per day. You may feel you don't have the time and we are encouraging you to rethink that. We all have 24 hours in a day and priorities dictate what gets our attention. Cheat some time away from Netflix or stream a YouTube video in your car as you drive. You'll be amazed at how things will begin to look brighter and how quickly the ideas and positive thoughts and strategies begin to flow. It takes only a few minutes of daily intention to design a life with your spouse(s) that most only see in a movie.

Choose to grow in the same direction, choose to go deeper with each other, choose to do more, and become more. We have programs designed for those who are committed to being better at OutstandingPersonalRelationships.com and hope we get to workshop with you at one of our events or online. Remember that a WISH changes NOTHING but a DECISION changes EVERYTHING! Decide to be Outstanding and live in the light.