



A Better Marriage

1. Treat each moment together as though it could be your last.

Rabbi and author Joshua Loth Liebman said it best:

Treasure each other in the recognition that we do not know how long we shall have each other.

2. Pay as much attention to your love as you did when you first met.

Awareness precedes happiness. Listen with your ears and your heart. Notice body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Notice what makes him or her happy and do more of it. Love is giving attention. Fully giving of your attention is the greatest gift you can give someone.

3. Be gentle when offering critique.

Two people who love each other deeply over a lifetime will encounter many situations where constructive criticism is almost necessary. If offered in a gentle way, it can build bridges and enhance understanding and ultimately intimacy. Leave out the *you never* or *you always*. It is not a good way to begin a sensitive conversation. When you're on the receiving end of constructive criticism, know that the other is not intentionally trying to hurt you. Within that wisdom, let yourself stretch a bit so you can improve. Respect the other for sharing difficult sentiments and embrace the words offered.

4. Encourage each other to do one thing that boosts happiness every single day.

Make a list of what makes you happy. Have your partner do the same. Share your lists with each other. Learn and grow. Encourage your partner to do something that makes him or her happy every day. When two independent people are mutually happy, both of their lives are deeply enriched.

5. Begin each encounter with each other (by phone or in person) with a smile.

It takes more muscles to frown. Be mindful of the power of your smile to increase happiness, for you and others.' Wake up and greet your love with your morning smile. It sets the tone immediately to be one of love and peace. When your partner enters the room, look up from whatever you're doing and flash a smile. When you arrive home from work, take an extra two seconds and smile at your loved one.

Smiles lead to kisses. No words can ever truly capture the depth of the love in our hearts. A smile is nonverbal communication that speaks volumes.

6. Know yourself.

Get to know your core identity, what truly matters in your heart. Begin every day with the intention to take care of yourself first so that you may be able to take care of others. If we want to be a light to others, we have to first be the light to ourselves. Once we grow to understand our true self, we can meet others from our heart center to theirs. When we honor our differences, one to another, we're capable of great happiness.

7. Don't discuss your intimacy and secrets with others.

Whenever you talk about your private matters with others, you're violating trust and confidence. Guard your love's sacred trust and heart. When we discuss secrets with others, it's most often disparaging of your partner. Anything negative about one of you reflects badly on you both. Being able to keep your secrets will assure mutual confidence and deepen your love.

8. When you are alone, be together.

Marriage is simply raised consciousness. Put your gadgets away. Schedule time away from the TV. When we value these moments of tender connection, we should aim to be fully present in every encounter. When we show interest in each other without interruptions, we will live with greater harmony. It's that simple.

9. Encourage adventures.

There are places to go, exciting things to see and experience. Encourage adventure ... you'll have more to talk about as you age, fondly remembering the memories you made together.

10. White lies are always dangerous.

White lies diminish our being a dependable, reliable, trusted, loved person. When you both are in the habit of always being true to your word, it attunes you more to each other. You feel connected on a more meaningful level. White lies can often be felt by the other ... Don't cheat them from the truth, and don't cheat yourself from an opportunity to build more intimacy and trust.

11. Give the gift of eye contact.

When someone looks deeply into our eyes, we feel a shared empathy. On the other hand, when someone doesn't take the time to look at you, a connection is lost. Simple eye contact shows respect and acknowledges the presence of the other person.

12. Offer to help.

We feel better when we do something for others. Offer to help with a willing heart. The more we give, the more we receive. We help ourselves by helping out our partner. We help our partner love more by receiving their help. Try asking this

simple question: *What may I do to help you right now?*

13. Stop disappearing.

This can take many forms: You can physically disappear, or you can stonewall by not addressing the pink elephant in the room. Ignoring it and being silent only sends the message that you don't care. You're a couple seeking greater happiness together; there shouldn't be these incidents of disconnection that either worry the other person or make the other person feel abandoned. Work on your communication skills and get comfortable expressing what you need in a gentle manner. At the end of the day, it's our ability to communicate lovingly and effectively that builds intimacy or dissolves it.

14. Stop teasing.

While a remark or two might appear innocent, it can be received as a toxic poke, especially if your partner is sensitive. Teasing keeps relationships insincere and superficial. Keep this to a minimum. Replace it with a loving compliment, and you'll receive much more in return.

15. Sincerely say you are sorry.

It's soothing because it releases the other person from being upset. When we express our regret about something we wish could have been different, we're expressing our compassion and empathy. Until you genuinely apologize, you're withdrawing your love while inflicting pain. In a relationship, it's better to say you're sorry even for a vague misunderstanding where you don't quite know how it happened. Remember what's important: harmony and connection.

16. Don't correct each other in public.

Allow each other to be more playful in social settings and be as supportive as possible of the way your love expresses himself or herself in public. If your partner tells a joke, don't laugh before the punch line, or worse, give it before he or she does. Obviously, there will be some jokes you've heard before. So what? Love each other in public, and it'll build appreciation. Talk each other up in front of others. Show him or her that you are proud of them, and don't be afraid to compliment them in front of others.

17. Set aside time for serious discussions.

There are times in all relationships when you'll have serious conversations during which life changes will transpire. Timing is critical. Once you set a time to discuss, cultivate your mood. Be receptive. When you're both open to new ways to improve your happiness, your relationship and intimacy can soar to new heights. Speak from your heart and be prepared. Write down what you want to address. Be tender with each other as sensitive communication is the wisest way for two lovers to seek and find lasting unity.

18. Say it's okay.

We often make mistakes, and letting our partner off the hook can pay dividends.

There are certainly times where overlooking does more harm than good, but for smaller offenses, try saying, *It's okay* and move on. Rise above the endless little things. It's to OUR advantage to turn the other cheek because when we forgive others, we're happier.

19. Discover and rediscover each other's passions.

Learn to encourage your partner to stretch, grow, and to courageously explore all that piques their interest. Encourage them to be true to the person he or she is NOW, not who they used to be or who they were under their parents' influence. We each need the other's encouragement to become the amazing human being our soul wants us to be.

Open your eyes to what makes your partner happy. Encourage them to do more of it. Learn to join them in their joy and passions. Find things that make you both passionate to enjoy together. When we experience new things together, we grow closer. When we take an interest in the other person's passions, we are momentarily invited into their world to join them in their happiness!

20. Too busy to notice you're too busy?

Then you're going to be too busy to notice your relationships falling apart. Your career may be important work in your lifetime, but I guarantee you that success in your relationship will yield greater long-term, life-infusing joy. Reprioritize your relationship so it's on top of your priority list. Invest time and energy and treat it as something that you need to water and nurture every single day. You'll be glad you did in the long run.