

Enhance Your Marriage

by Jamie Palmer

People stare at me in disbelief when I tell them that my husband and I have never had an argument. Honestly, never. So for all you disbelievers, here are the secrets of our success.

1. Prioritize the important things in our lives:

First comes our faith, next comes our spouse, then our children, followed by ourselves, our extended family, friends, our world, and our jobs... after that comes all the other stuff and clutter of life. This doesn't pertain to how much time we spend in each of these areas, rather how much emotional energy and commitment we allot.

2. Cherish each other. Because we love each other, we don't yell or say bad things to one another. We build each other up instead. That way our marriage is lived without regrets.

3. Don't think badly of one another. I won't allow a negative thought to enter my mind about my spouse. Once it gets in there, it stays there and causes trouble later on. Keep the slate clear. Our goal is to accumulate positive thoughts and feelings for one another. Positive thoughts lead to positive actions.

4. Be aware of your physical needs. We don't discuss anything controversial or "heavy" when we're hungry, crabby, or sleepy. Those physical needs get in the way of effective communication.

5. Stay on topic. We will only discuss one thing at a time. The person who brought up the issue "has the floor" until that issue has reached a satisfactory conclusion. We do not stray off topic. We enter into discussions with an attitude of helping the other person. Whether we are seeking a solution to a problem or just someone to hear us vent, we listen and comment with compassion for the other person. A healthy discussion improves the quality of our relationship.

6. Don't make assumptions. We ask instead of assuming. We don't want to believe something that isn't correct. We're best friends, as well as spouses. If we can't ask something of our spouse, then whom can we ask?

7. Don't turn off the lights on your relationship. We don't go to sleep if we're upset with each other. And because we don't discuss issues when we're tired, we have to know that we're upset about something and get it worked on earlier in the day. If you "sleep on it," you store it. If you store it, your slate isn't clear. If your slate isn't clear, you are building resentments that will crop up later. That's not healthy.

8. Take the pulse of your relationship every day. We try to be aware of each other's moods and encourage the other to talk about their day or feelings. That way, if something is brewing, we can catch it and help to resolve the issue before it develops into a bigger problem.

9. Admit your mistakes. We are open and trusting of one another. If we messed up, we admit it and say we're sorry. Saying those simple words has a positive impact not only on the person receiving the apology, but also on the person giving it.

10. Don't take things personally. We all mess up once in a while and something comes out the wrong way. That's natural. If it happens to us, we just stop and ask the question 'did you mean to say that that way?' We allow the other person the chance to say they're sorry and re-phrase their statement. Our responses to our loved one should always be compassionate.

Our marriage should be our best work of art. Like the artist, we should use all of the finest techniques we have about love, honor, respect, and cherishing one another to create our marriage masterpiece.

To your health and happiness,

Jamie Palmer

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