

Marriage Tips



This tip sheet is intended for people who are in healthy, loving, reciprocal and respectful marriages.

Having a connected, happy and long-lasting marriage requires your continual willingness to work on yourself while courageously showing your vulnerability.

It is important to remember all the reasons you fell in love in the first place. Think of all the silly things you liked about your partner at the start. All the eye-contact. The laughing! The admiration. It is important to keep all that up.

A marriage that keeps building the friendship has a higher chance of surviving the ups and downs it will inevitably experience.

The following areas are what our relationship counsellors considered the most important.

Communication

- Be clear about what you want from the very start of your committed relationship.
- Practice thinking aloud in front of your partner. Partners tend to assume what the other is thinking – share information, create more opportunities for understanding.
- Take a curious stance, rather than a predictive stance. This is the key to not becoming stuck in patterns of mind reading.
- Negotiate everything, even the roles you will each play in the relationship, e.g. will there be a main breadwinner, who will take out the rubbish, how will cooking duties be distributed etc.
- Talk about the hard stuff when things are going well.
- Learn how to recognise and understand your own emotions.
- Get to know each other's communication strengths and weaknesses.

Intimacy

- Set regular time aside for sexual intimacy – it is so easy for family and work commitments to take over.
- Talk about sex out of the bedroom – what excites you, makes you want to etc.

- When spending time together, avoid talking about the kids or your daily struggles.
- Be intimate with yourself, too! Find out what you like.
- Remember to have fun!

'Every positive thing you do in your relationship is foreplay'

– John Gottman

Conflict

Some tension needs to be present in relationships, but if it breaks the balance and destabilises it, the longevity of the marriage could be in danger.

Avoiding conflict is also the avoidance of intimacy - it is important to find the right balance for you as a couple.

De-escalate conflict by turning towards the relationship during and after by using the following strategies:

- Learn how to calm yourself down.
- Learn to give in, be aware of what is important and what is not.
- If you feel like stonewalling and looking away – face your partner instead, even if it is to just let them know you will need a moment to gather your thoughts.
- Practice self-soothing. We all want to influence our partner, but the best influencer is one who works and changes themselves.

- Repair during and after conflict is essential, this includes awareness of one's own emotions, and a genuine interest in defusing the conflict.
- Give the other time to form ideas while we listen. Feeling heard is sometimes enough!

'Staying vulnerable is a risk we have to take if we want to experience connection'

– Brene Brown

Rituals

Have rituals for your marriage, rituals that create space for connection.

Marriages can be hard work, but also an amazing opportunity to learn about yourself, while having the courage to show your vulnerability to your partner.



About Relationships Australia

Relationships Australia is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation with no religious affiliations.

For over 70 years, we have been supporting children, adults, families and communities.

As a federation of Relationships Australia organisations in each state and territory, we have over 118 service locations across the country, with our National Office based in Canberra.

We provide a broad range of services including counselling, family dispute resolution and mediation, family violence prevention, support and recovery services, and mental health services.

Our services are for all members of the community, regardless of religious belief, age, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle choice, cultural background or economic circumstances.

Relationships Australia receives funding from the Commonwealth Government, as well as state and territory governments, and other sources.

Next steps

For more information on our services and how they can support you, or to find your nearest centre:

Call 1300 364 277

Visit www.relationships.org.au

If you experience any of the following:

- Feeling scared, or worried about your safety.
- Feeling worried about being able to say your opinion.
- Isolating yourself.
- Being put down by your partner.
- Having finances restricted from you.

These are early signs of domestic and family violence, which need to be addressed straight away - if you notice them in your relationship, please seek support.