



# World Marriage Day

February 8, 2009



## How Do You Spell Marital

### *Happiness?*

When you can't be

anything else, you can still be kind. No matter how you're feeling, or what you want to communicate to your spouse, there is always the option to say things kindly and treat him/her kindly. Here's a simple tool for remembering what marital kindness is all about:

**K - KEEP a soft heart.** If your heart is hardening toward your partner, examine the way you're choosing to think about his/her faults and weaknesses.

**I - INDULGE him/her every once in a while.** Let go of needing to be right or having your own way.

**N - NOTICE what's going on in his/her life.** Be attentive and supportive.

**D - DECIDE to be kind,** even when you don't feel like it. Kindness is like a spa treatment for your marriage, it soothes and calms. It can also improve your friendship with your spouse. Learn how to become (and stay) best friends.

www.iMom.com

**What does marriage mean to you?** For many people, it's all about the wedding day. But marriage isn't a single life event. It's an eventful life that unfolds a day at a time—a series of circumstances and seasons: for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. Knowing that you and your spouse rely on one another for love and support through it all—the good and the bad—is what makes marriage strong. Getting married... that's easy. Staying married... now that's an achievement—and it happens one day at a time.



www.FamilyFirst.net

## Far-sighted Marriage



I confess: I had an argument with my wife today. While the argument hasn't been resolved yet, we did agree on a couple of things. First, it won't be our last disagreement. Second, we have the rest of our lives to work through our arguments.

That's because we've decided that we're committed to each other—for better or worse—for life. We have a long-term, far-sighted perspective on our relationship.

So, are you near-sighted or far-sighted as a couple? If you're near-sighted, all you see is the present pain of your disagreement. **But when you're far-sighted in marriage, you see the hope and joy that life together ultimately brings.**

Mark Merrill on www.FamilyFirst.net



## Whose Job Is It?

Most people have been raised to expect that certain jobs are done primarily by one sex or the other. Despite these stereotypes, job assignments aren't written in stone. **Many couples shift their roles and responsibilities several times throughout the years of their marriage.** Is it time for some job reclassification in your marriage?

The issue may be more serious than you think. **One of the main causes of domestic problems is domestic – as in, housework.** Who picks up the used newspapers? Who takes out the trash? Who will empty the dishwasher? Who walks the dog? Sound familiar? Neil Chethik polled 300 husbands across the age spectrum for his book, *VoiceMale: What Husbands Really Think About Their Marriages, Their Wives, Sex, Housework and Commitment* (Simon and Schuster, 2006). "Housework showed up right after money as the top issue of discord," he said. "It was higher on the list than sex, higher than raising the children, ahead of every other issue you can name." In other words, couples can build a happier marriage by finding better ways to share the mundane tasks of their life together.

Sometimes a wife clings to more than her share of the housework out of a need to meet the expectations – real or imagined – of her mother or friends. Even if her husband is willing, the quality of his help leaves something to be desired, in her mind. Or if a man prides himself in a spotless car, the way his dad always did, he may be loath to let his wife take on that task.

Blending our two worlds and creating a partnership of life and love sometimes comes down to changing how we wash the dishes, make the bed, or store the groceries. We can let go of our idea of perfection in order to accept the help of our spouse. **Sharing tasks means more time at the end of the day for us to appreciate each other. It is about making our relationship a priority.**

Lauri Przybysz on www.ForYourMarriage.org



## Gottman's Marriage Tips 101

Since 1973, Dr. John Gottman has studied what he calls the "masters and disasters" of marriage. Ordinary people from the general public took part in long-term studies, and Dr. Gottman learned what makes marriages fail, what makes them succeed, and what can make marriages a source of great meaning. By examining partners' heart rates, facial expressions, and how they talk about their relationship to each other and to other people, Dr. Gottman is able to predict with more than 90% accuracy which couples will make it, and which will not. What advice does Dr. Gottman have to offer? Here are some of his top suggestions for how to keep your marriage strong:

**Seek help early.** The average couple waits six years before seeking help for marital problems (and keep in mind, half of all marriages that end do so in the first seven years). This means the average couple lives with unhappiness for far too long.

**Edit yourself.** Couples who avoid saying every critical thought when discussing touchy topics are consistently the happiest.

**Soften your "start up."** Arguments first "start up" because a spouse sometimes escalates the conflict from the get-go by making a critical or contemptuous remark in a confrontational tone. Bring up problems gently and without blame.

**Accept influence.** A marriage succeeds to the extent that the husband can accept influence from his wife. If a woman says, "Do you have to work Thursday night? My mother is coming that weekend, and I need your help getting ready," and her husband replies, "My plans are set, and I'm not changing them." This guy is in a shaky marriage. A husband's ability to be influenced by his wife (rather than vice-versa) is crucial because research shows women are already well practiced at accepting influence from men, and a true partnership only occurs when a husband can do so as well.

**Have high standards.** Happy couples have high standards for each other even as newlyweds. The most successful couples are those who, even as newlyweds, refused to accept hurtful behavior from one another. The lower the level of tolerance for bad behavior in the beginning of a relationship, the happier the couple is down the road.

**Learn to repair and exit the argument.** Successful couples know how to exit an argument. Happy couples know how to repair the situation before an argument gets completely out of control. Successful repair attempts include: changing the topic to something completely unrelated; using humor; stroking your partner with a caring remark ("I understand that this is hard for you"); making it clear you're on common ground ("This is our problem"); backing down (in marriage, as in the martial art Aikido, you have to yield to win); and, in general, offering signs of appreciation for your partner and his or her feelings along the way ("I really appreciate and want to thank you for..."). If an argument gets too heated, take a 20-minute break, and agree to approach the topic again when you are both calm.

**Focus on the bright side.** In a happy marriage, while discussing problems, couples make at least five times as many positive statements to and about each other and their relationship as negative ones. For example, "We laugh a lot;" not, "We never have any fun." A good marriage must have a rich climate of positivity. Make deposits to your emotional bank account.

[www.Gottman.com](http://www.Gottman.com)

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at the United States Catholic Bishops' website

[www.ForYourMarriage.org](http://www.ForYourMarriage.org)

FOR YOUR  
MARRIAGE

*What have you done for your marriage today?*

An enduring marriage  
is more than simply endurance.  
It is a process of growth  
into an intimate friendship  
and deepening peace.

- "Follow the Way of Love," United States Conference of Catholic Bishops