

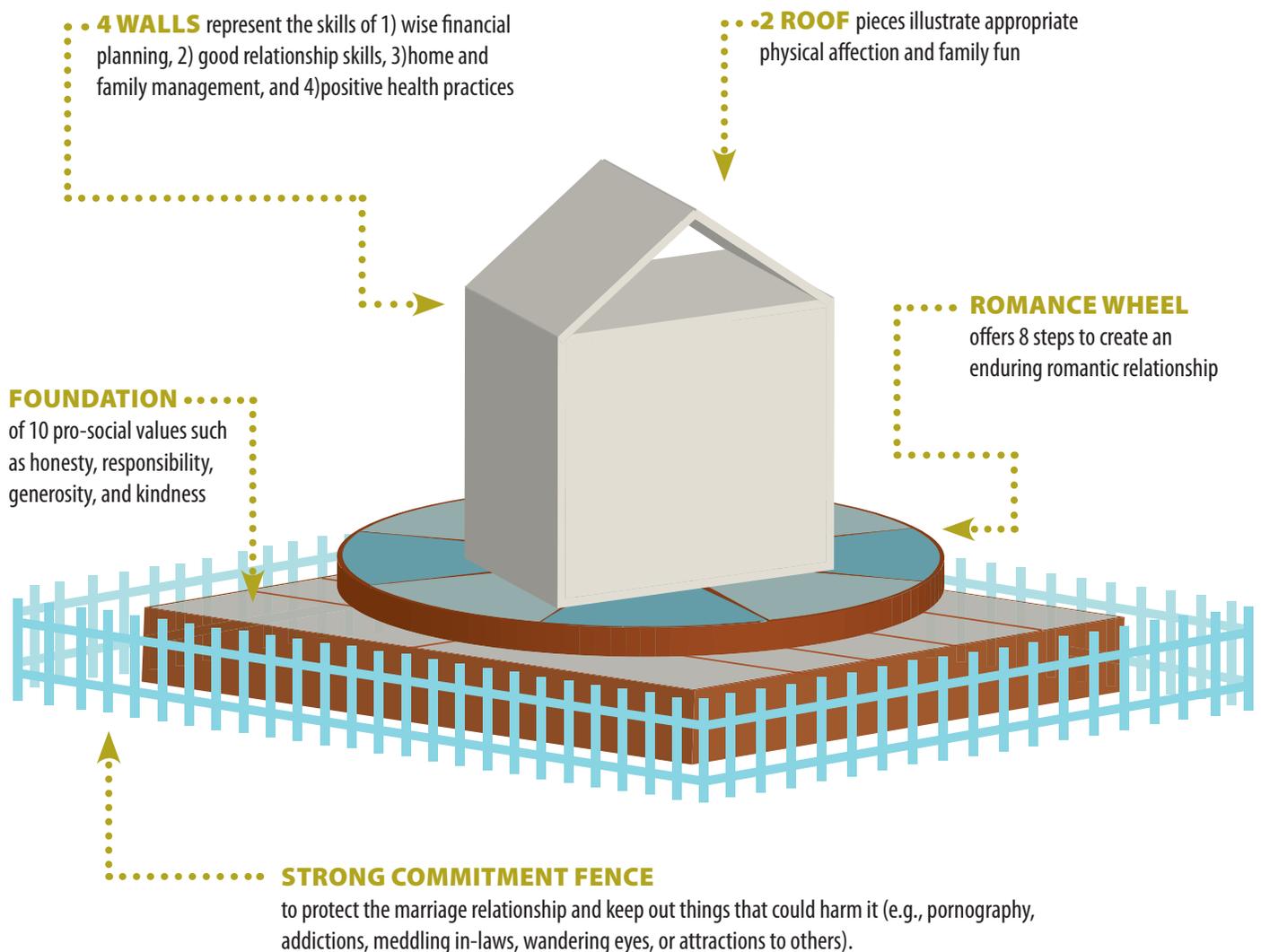
# Creating Stable Families (part 1)

## Society's future depends on learning how to create stable families



As teens mature, some of the best things parents can teach them are the attitudes and skills to create loving, stable families of their own. These include 1) skills to develop an enduring romantic relationship, 2) skills to create a happy, stable home-life, 3) a commitment to honor, support, and protect each other and the relationship, and 4) pro-social values that foster loving family relationships. This includes the value of socially-responsible sex (i.e., sex that bonds a couple in a loving, stable relationship, and doesn't spread disease, exploit women or children, or produce children outside of stable family relationships).

This visual can help you teach these preparing-for-marriage skills: a foundation of good values; a "romance wheel" to create loving relationships; a sturdy house of personal skills built of four walls and a roof; and a strong commitment "fence" to surround and protect the marriage relationship.



# Creating Stable Families (part 2)

## Foundation, romance wheel, and fence



### Foundation of 10 Pro-Social Values

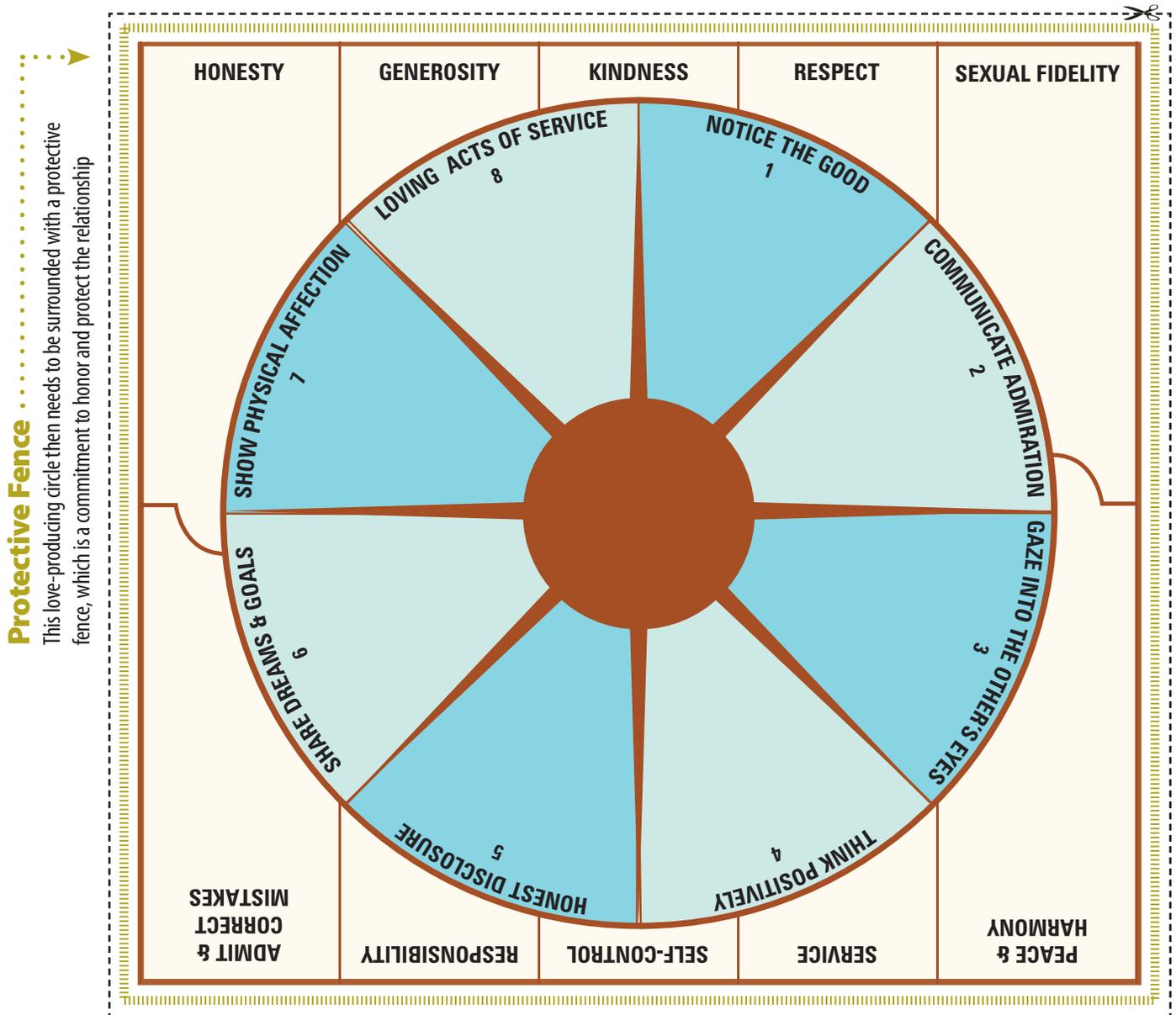
“Pro-social values” are personal beliefs on how to behave and treat others. They are like interlocking blocks that serve as a firm foundation for a marriage relationship. When you include these 10 fundamental beliefs in your value system, love can flourish:

- |                    |                                     |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Honesty         | 6. Peace & Harmony                  |
| 2. Generosity      | 7. Service                          |
| 3. Kindness        | 8. Self-control                     |
| 4. Respect         | 9. Responsibility                   |
| 5. Sexual Fidelity | 10. Admitting & Correcting Mistakes |

### 8 Steps to Create an Enduring Romantic Relationship

These are shown as a wheel because once you go through steps 1-8, you begin number 1 again, this time at a deeper level and continue in these steps all the rest of your married life.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Notice the good in each other                            | 5. Have honest disclosure              |
| 2. Communicate admiration                                   | 6. Share life's dreams and goals       |
| 3. Gaze into each other's eyes                              | 7. Show loving physical affection      |
| 4. Think positively (about the person and the relationship) | 8. Be kind and perform acts of service |



# Creating Stable Families (part 3)

## House with walls and roof



Building a marriage is like building a home: it needs four strong walls and a good roof.

### WALL 1: WISE FINANCIAL PLANNING

- 1) Get a good education with marketable skills.
- 2) Find a good job and work hard to provide for your family's needs.
- 3) Establish financial goals and write them down.
- 4) Make a reasonable budget to meet those goals. Track your spending; review weekly as a couple. Avoid impulse purchases and buying to impress others. Plan ways to share with those who are less fortunate.
- 5) Save for the future.

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### WALL 2: GOOD RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- 1) Notice and compliment the good in others; accept and appreciate differences.
  - 2) Use effective communication skills including LUV-Listening and respectful, assertive I-Messages. Avoid Communication Boulders).
  - 3) Treat others with kindness, unselfishness, and affection. Express love often; notice needs and give service.
  - 4) Practice good problem solving and negotiation skills.
  - 5) Use good anger management and conflict resolution skills.
- \*Evaluate your behavior often: "Are my attitudes or actions helping or harming family relationships? What do I need to change?"

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### WALL 3: HOME & FAMILY MANAGEMENT

- 1) Plan and use time wisely to accomplish the things that are most important to a stable family life.
- 2) Work to have an orderly and well-functioning home where each member has responsibilities and contributes.
- 3) Make chore charts. Establish a set cleaning time. Reward compliance.
- 4) Have set places for each person's belongings. Put back the things you use.
- 5) Set up positive routines with set times to pay bills, clean house, do homework, have family meetings, and have family fun.

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### WALL 4: POSITIVE HEALTH PRACTICES

- 1) Appreciate your body. Cultivate a positive mental attitude and avoid all addicting substances.
- 2) Plan and eat nutritious meals with whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and low-fat protein.
- 3) Maintain a healthy weight: eat normal portion sizes, healthy foods, mindfully enjoy each bite, and stop when you begin to feel full.
- 4) Get physical exercise five days a week. Include aerobic, strength-building, and stretching exercises.
- 5) Try to get 8 hours of sleep each night. Maintain a consistent bedtime.

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### ROOF 1: APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL AFFECTION

Appropriate physical affection (including touching, hugging, caressing, kissing, and massaging) triggers "feel-good" chemicals in the brain that make family feel loved and emotionally bonded.

(Appropriate physical affection includes the duty to protect children from sexual abuse.)

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### ROOF 2: FAMILY FUN

Plan and make time to laugh, play, and have weekly fun activities as a family. Family fun contributes to healthy family bonding and is good for children's brain health.

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# Couple's Time: Questions to Reconnect

## Communication that increases love, understanding, and appreciation



**WHAT:** Once a month, plan a quiet time alone when kids are put to bed early and parents have “Couple’s Time” where you can talk undisturbed for an hour about 1) your positive memories, thoughts and feelings for each other; and 2) your needs to help your relationship flourish. It can be during a quiet dinner or sitting together in a favorite quiet spot.

**HOW:** Decide on the time and place ahead of time. Set the mood by playing soft music that you enjoyed during courtship, lighting a scented candle, or by taking a few minutes to do a “Loving-Kindness Meditation” exercise directing positive thoughts towards yourself and your spouse (See Handout 1-9).

Begin by reading The Love Pledge and then bring to mind a happy memory you shared together, before you were married, where you felt loved. Savor the feeling the memory created. Touch hands and look into each other’s eyes for a minute or two. Then take turns choosing a few positive expressions to complete from the first category (below). Then share ideas or needs from the second category while your spouse LUV Listens. End Couple’s Time by expressing your love and sharing physical affection.

### The Love Pledge

I care deeply about you and desire to understand your thoughts and feelings. I pledge to create a loving and emotionally safe environment for you to tell me about the things you think, feel, and need. I will “LUV-Listen” with respect, and promise not to get angry about the things you share.

#### Expressions of Appreciation

*(Adapted from JoAnn Larsen, DSW)*

- “The thing I love most about you is...”
- “I am especially proud of you when...”
- “The thing that attracted me to you was...”
- “One of the happiest times of my life was...”
- “Something good that I learned from you is...”
- “One of your best assets is...”
- “I like it when you...”
- “A peak experience in our relationship is...”
- “One of the needs you satisfy in me is...”
- “A song that reminds me of you is...”
- “The things I most like to do with you are...”
- “You are most helpful when ...”
- “The things that hold us together are...”
- “One way I try to show I love you is...”
- “What I like most about our relationship is...”
- “What I would miss most about you is...”
- “The gift I would like most to give you is...”

#### Expressions to Increase Understanding and Help Our Relationship Flourish

- “A feeling I have trouble with is...”
- “When I can’t express something to you, I...”
- “One thing I am afraid of is...”
- “A habit I have that bothers me the most is...”
- “I need you most when...”
- “I wish you would let me know when...”
- “Something I need most from you is...”
- “It hurts me when...”
- “A pattern I see in our relationship is...”
- “I would like our relationship to...”
- “I wish you would let me know when I...”
- “When we fight, I...”
- “I tend to not tell you about...”
- “I think you avoid me when...”
- “An important issue between us is...”
- “A question I’ve wanted to ask you is...”
- “To keep from being hurt, I...”

# Making Happy Marriages (part 1)

## Proven skills and attitudes to create the marriage you've dreamed of

(Print two worksheets per couple)



A happy, secure marriage—where spouses are best friends; who love, support, and nurture each other; and who enjoy mutual sexual pleasure—is one of life's greatest joys. Research shows that most marriages can be made joyful, caring, and romantic by adjusting partners' attitudes and developing specific skills to change behaviors and build a close marital friendship.

It is worth the effort to make these mental adjustments and learn these new skills because a happy, secure marriage improves mental and physical health; contributes to economic prosperity; and helps you have a happier, more fulfilling life. A happy marriage is also the foundation of a stable society, because children will be more emotionally stable and grow up to be thoughtful, law-abiding, responsible adults who contribute to the well-being of society.

Below are attitudes and skills that either help a marriage become joyful and satisfying or that harm it. Each of the harmful ways of interacting are "learned behaviors" that can be corrected by learning and practicing new attitudes and skills.

Put a check mark by the ones you engage in, and ask your spouse to grade you as well. Then, using the form on page 10-12, have a pleasant personal conference where you lay aside defensiveness, refrain from blame, and take honest note of your skill deficiencies and attitude errors. Make a plan to correct the negatives by choosing to learn, embrace, and live the positive opposite of each deficiency. Practice Loving-Kindness Meditation towards your spouse daily. Track your behavior. With honest soul-searching and effort, you can change your attitudes and learn skills to create the joyful marriage you've always dreamed of.

### Attitudes and Skills to Create a Happy Marriage

- Respects and has positive regard for spouse, despite differences
- Values spouse's friendship; makes time to play, talk
- Notices and appreciates spouse's good qualities; expresses it daily
- Affectionate: seeks to touch, kiss, have eye contact, hold hands
- Daily expresses love, devotion, and positive feelings for spouse
- Polite and courteous; mindful of how harsh words can harm
- Expresses own needs; airs differences; discusses hard subjects
- Looks for positive intentions; gives spouse the benefit of the doubt
- Kind; looks for ways to be thoughtful, give service, fulfill needs
- Unselfish, generous; lets spouse have his/her way 50% of the time
- Doesn't blame; uses Positive Criticism and assertive complaints
- Accepts Positive Criticism; looks for ways to improve self
- Forgives freely
- Apologizes; offers to make amends for wrongs or hurts caused
- Interested in spouse's thoughts and ideas; empathetic at hardships
- Respectful in disagreements; doesn't let it sour other parts of life
- Committed to spouse; refuses to think or get involved with others
- Resists any pornography
- Totally honest; doesn't lie, cheat, steal, or attempt to deceive
- Doesn't use illegal drugs or abuse prescriptions; limits alcohol
- Desires financial stability; budgets and spends money wisely
- Shares meaningful sexual intimacy that fulfills spouse's emotional and physical needs; respects spouse's sexual boundaries
- Hard working and dependable
- Tries to be healthy and attractive to his/her spouse

### Attitude Errors, Skill Deficiencies, and Toxic Behaviors that Destroy Marriages

- Lacks respect for spouse; feels superior; has little positive regard
- Fails to take time to nurture friendship, play
- Fails to notice the good in spouse or express appreciation
- Stingy with affection; withholds touch, caressing, or kissing
- Fails to express love and positive feelings
- Impolite, disrespectful, uses cross tones of voice and sarcastic humor
- Fails to express own needs and desires; harbors resentment
- Takes offense easily; assumes negative intention; reacts negatively
- Unkind, self-centered, disagreeable, demanding, cross, or mean
- Selfish, stingy, puts own needs first; insists on having own way
- Critical; makes hurtful comments instead of specific suggestions
- Stonewalls: refuses to acknowledge concerns; denies responsibility
- Withdraws; is distant; emotionally "checks out"
- Harbors grudges; remembers offenses; fails to forgive
- Fails to apologize and make amends for wrongs and hurts
- Hostile in disagreements; lets it spill over and sour other parts of life
- Wandering eyes: lets thoughts and affection wander to others
- Views pornography; triggers pleasure from images, instead of spouse
- Dishonest, lies, manipulates facts, or fails to keep commitments
- Alcohol or drug addiction (including prescription drugs)
- Poor money management; over-spends and puts family at risk
- Demands or spitefully withholds sex; coercive, demeaning, or insensitive to spouse's sexual wants or needs
- Lazy or undependable; messy
- Neglects health and appearance

# Making Happy Marriages (part 2)

## A plan for increasing love & correcting attitude errors or skill deficiencies

(Print two worksheets per couple)



1. **Set a goal.** Decide what you want your marriage to be and feel like and write it below:

---

2. **Set up protocols:** Decide on respectful protocols (set ways of doing or discussing things) to handle difficult aspects of marriage. Remind each other to follow them.

a) How we will handle disagreements: \_\_\_\_\_

b) How we will handle money/budgeting issues: \_\_\_\_\_

c) How we will handle concerns about sex: \_\_\_\_\_

d) How we will handle differences in parenting: \_\_\_\_\_

e) How we will protect our relationship from intruders: \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Take inventory; discard anti-social behaviors:** Look at the attitude errors and skill deficiencies you marked on the previous page. Recognize that they are anti-social behaviors and that they harm your ability to have the loving marriage you want. Desire to rid yourself of them. With the help of your spouse, choose three things that are most harmful to your relationship. Decide that you will permanently abandon those negative things and **adopt the positive opposite** of each behavior or attitude.

4. **Write the 3 positive behaviors you will begin doing here.** (List any skills you need to learn to put the behaviors into practice.)

a) \_\_\_\_\_ SKILL: \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_ SKILL: \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_ SKILL: \_\_\_\_\_

**Contract:** Write out a Contract for Change on each new behavior. Do Positive Practice and track your behavior. Apologize when you make a mistake and keep trying.

5. **Give a gift of self to your spouse** by asking: "What is one thing you would like me to do differently to make you feel more loved?" (List it as a positive behavior—something you want him or her to DO, not STOP doing.) Write it here: \_\_\_\_\_

6. **Develop emotional intimacy:** Learn the skills required to develop emotional intimacy and put them into practice. This will help emotionally heal a spouse who is burdened with "attachment anxiety/avoidance" caused by poor nurturing or abuse as a child. It will provide a more peaceful, happy marriage.

### Tips to Develop Emotional Intimacy in Marriage

- |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <p><b>1)</b> Emotional intimacy begins with trust in the love, deep commitment, and kind intentions of a spouse. This is coupled with a secure sense of knowing you are respected as an equal and you feel totally safe, both emotionally and physically.</p> | <p><b>2)</b> Emotional intimacy requires communication skills that foster love, peace, and understanding, which enable openness and honesty in sharing private thoughts and feelings, knowing they will be valued and protected.</p> | <p><b>3)</b> Emotional intimacy requires basic generosity of heart, noticing and complementing the good in each other, sharing, wanting the best for each other, and giving each other the benefit of the doubt.</p> | <p><b>4)</b> Emotional intimacy requires the skills of resolving concerns and conflicts in a fair, respectful way; forgiving and letting go of past hurts; and not holding grudges. It also requires eliminating angry, unkind, or revengeful outbursts.</p> | <p><b>5)</b> Emotional intimacy requires willingness to learn the touches that please and arouse your spouse; appreciating the natural differences between men and women; and finding enjoyment in fulfilling each other's sexual needs.</p> |
|---|--|--|--|--|

DAILY	WEEKLY	MONTHLY
<input type="checkbox"/> Kiss; say "I love you;" touch; hug; make eye contact <input type="checkbox"/> Do a kind deed; say what you like about each other; express gratitude; laugh	<input type="checkbox"/> Go on a fun date <input type="checkbox"/> Build your friendship <input type="checkbox"/> Have happy, tender sex	<input type="checkbox"/> Hold a family meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss goals, children, finances; make plans <input type="checkbox"/> Take a relationship inventory <input type="checkbox"/> Review and set goals to build relationship <input type="checkbox"/> Express needs; air differences

# Making Happy Marriages (part 3)

## Tips to deal with toxic behavior in those we love



“Toxic” people yell, swear, use sarcasm, use angry or derogatory voice tones, or become manipulative or violent when they don’t like what is happening or get their way. People engage in angry, manipulative behavior for a variety of reasons. These toxic behaviors may stem from some of the causes listed below:

- 1) **Neglect or abuse as children:** This can lead a child to develop attachment anxiety, which translates into attachment avoidance as an adult, which prevents bonding and causes him or her to misinterpret other people’s intentions, see harm where none was intended, and respond badly.
- 2) **Parents who gave in to their rages** as children, which rewarded and reinforced bad behavior.
- 3) **Immature moral reasoning skills:** they don’t understand that it is wrong to treat people badly in order to get what they want.
- 4) **Mental illness; poor brain health** from genetic factors; or increased irritability due to **inadequate brain nutrition.** (These may be helped by counseling, medication, neuro-feedback, and changing diet to consume adequate fish oil, vitamins, and protein.)

Regardless of the cause, people can improve brain health and learn new behaviors and skills if someone kindly confronts them; expresses love; requests that they change their behavior; praises good behavior; and ignores them when they become abusive or manipulative.

### How to Deal with Toxic Behavior

*The following steps will help you deal with toxic behavior from those you love. However, the situation may get worse before it gets better as the toxic person goes through stages of shock, denial, anger, depression, and upping his or her toxic behaviors to see if you will give in to his or her demands. Eventually the person will accept the need to change. If these steps don’t help, ask a counselor or trusted friend to talk to the toxic person with you.*

1. Recognize that it is not in the best interest of the toxic person to remain abusive.
2. Believe that, despite your weaknesses, you deserve to be treated with respect as a human being.
3. Document each abusive occurrence in writing. List the date and time of what triggers the abusive behavior. Make two copies—one to use, and one to keep in a safe place.
4. Decide what behaviors you want the toxic person to do **instead**; write it down. List the skills the person needs to handle irritating situations in positive, constructive ways. **Be sure to learn and use those same skills yourself.**
5. Prepare yourself for a frank, but loving, conversation by learning and practicing the skills of positive criticism, delivering difficult feedback, and motivational interviewing from Lesson 7.
6. Ask the toxic person for a pleasant personal conference at a time you both agree on.
7. At your personal conference, present the evidence of his or her toxic behaviors that you’ve kept track of. Explain how it has affected you and how you would like him or her to behave instead. Ask him or her for a commitment to change the toxic behaviors. Use the Contract for Change handout in Lesson 7. Ask what help he or she needs.
8. Explain what you will do if the toxic behavior occurs again:
  - a) **Call it to his or her attention.** (“Just now when I disagreed with you, you began yelling. That is anti-social behavior.”)
  - b) **Say what you need.** (“What I need is for you to speak politely. When we are both calm, we can talk.”)
  - c) **Then IGNORE him or her** and walk away until he or she is willing to discuss things politely using LUV-Listening and assertive I-Messages.
9. Praise every attempt at good behavior.

### Are You Toxic?

#### CORRECT YOUR ATTITUDE ERRORS:

1. Acknowledge other people’s rights to see, feel, and choose differently than you.
2. Have empathy and respect for other people’s points of view. Admit that you could be wrong.
3. Be generous—recognize that other people have the right to win in disagreements too. Let your spouse have his or her own way at least 51 percent of the time.
4. Be happy for other people’s successes.
5. Find joy in giving service to others.

#### LEARN AND PRACTICE NEW SKILLS:

1. Practice positive communication:
  - a. Use LUV-Listening and I-Messages.
  - b. Be assertive instead of aggressive.
  - c. Give kind, respectful responses.
  - d. Let go and accept “no” graciously.
2. Notice and compliment the good in others daily.
3. Use good problem-solving and Win-Win Negotiation skills.
4. Practice Mindfulness and Loving-Kindness Meditation from the Intro Lesson.
5. Apologize for your mistakes. Ask forgiveness and offer to make amends.