



HOW TO RESOLVE

CONFLICT

IN YOUR MARRIAGE

Workbook

THE REALITY OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is work. It is compromising and adjusting and working at being lovable and loving.

Too often we see marriage through rose-colored glasses. We don't want to see beyond moonlight and roses to the mundane reality of dirty diapers and the demands of every day life. This can especially be the case for women, who may try to simultaneously manage a career, motherhood, and domestic duties.

This blind idealism leads to disillusionment with the institution of marriage as well as one's partner. So how do we bring back that loving feeling? One way is to remember the things you loved about your spouse initially and realize that they're still the same person.

Make a list of your spouse's wonderful, unique traits that you found so appealing in the beginning:

THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIP

Sexual passion might fade some after the first few years of marriage, but genuine friendship doesn't. Enduring love depends on friendship. Good friends help each other grow into better human beings and aren't afraid of being firm with each other when required.

Are you and your spouse good friends? What are the ways in which you support each other's emotional, creative and spiritual growth? How do you support each other's dreams and goals?

SOME TIPS TO KEEP YOUR MARRIAGE INVIGORATED

There are ways to reignite the passion in your relationship. You can do something new sexually, go on a romantic vacation, or talk to each other about your challenges. You can recreate the romance by doing the things you used to enjoy doing together. It could be going to the park or the movies, or just taking time to have a heartfelt talk.

Take care of your appearance. Nobody wants to be greeted by someone who is unkempt or wearing ratty PJs when they get back from a hard day at work.

Have you paid attention to the way you look? Have you done any of the things you used to enjoy doing together? List the things you've done to keep your marriage fresh. What are some more ideas you'd like to try?

STRATEGIES THAT DON'T WORK

All of us get into a pattern of behavior that can be detrimental to our relationships. Perhaps you're used to acting needy or blaming your partner for their mistakes, even exaggerating them. Maybe you keep lecturing them about their lack of morals. Or you could be trying to pressure them into changing by enlisting the support of your friends or your children.

Remember that none of these strategies will help to resolve conflict.

Have you attempted to break away from negative ways of behaving with your husband? If yes, in what ways? If not, why not? Make a note of your thoughts.

8 WAYS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

Tolerance is an asset in marriage. So is patience. Make allowances for your partner's occasional emotional outbursts. Allow them to have contradictory views and encourage them to avoid repressing their feelings. Repression leads to unpleasant outcomes.

If they react in an aggressive way, try to probe into their real feelings without being aggressive yourself. It may be that they've been hurt in some way and are trying to cover it up.

There are times when you're not responsible for your partner's unhappiness, so let go of that burden. Instead of imagining that your marriage is in crisis, ask

your spouse what is making them unhappy. And remember to let down your defenses. Marriage isn't a battle. Neither should you use the threat of divorce unless you're serious.

Have you looked through these 8 ways to resolve conflict and tried any of them? Which ones and with what results?

MARRIAGE COUNSELING

Most people can benefit from marriage counseling if both partners are willing to attend sessions, and both genuinely want their marriage to work. For counseling to be successful, you also need to find the right counselor for you. If both of you share similar spiritual beliefs, the advice of a spiritual mentor may be your best option.

Have you determined whether you need marriage counseling? If yes, what area of your relationship needs help? Is it money issues, sex, time management, child rearing practices or the strain from extended family? Is it a combination of these? Make a note below.
