

Reboot your Marriage

Building a happy and harmonious marriage is not an easy affair... It's not for the weak and faint-hearted! You should be glad that the person you married is not like you and doesn't think like you. It would be boring if they were. Healthy communication and collaboration are essential in the building of a growing and satisfying marriage.

Marriages do not succeed when one or both of the partners refuse to sacrifice whatever is necessary that is within their control to make it work. Growing marriages are held firm and secure through the making of *covenant*-promises, not *contract*-promises, to love each other 'no-matter-what' throughout the duration of their lives.

Do you know the difference between a *covenant* and *contract* marriage?

Now, don't be surprised whenever you experience relational conflict. Conflict does not mean it is time to pack your bags and 'call it a day'. In every marriage conflict is normal. And the good news is this: When approached the right way, with God's help, conflict resolution becomes the passageway that leads both husband and wife into deeper intimacy with one another! What do you think? Is not this great news... Something rewarding and beautiful that results from your determination to win-over your many differences.

10 Essential Keys to reboot your marriage



1. Show your partner grace

We all have expectations of what marriage should be like, but the reality is our partners can never live-up to all of these expectations. At the same time, our partners have expectations of us that we too may not be able to meet. This is normal. When you demand that your partner meets all your expectations at all times, you set yourself up for disappointment. Get real! Get smart!

Learn to accept the reality that unmet expectations are normal for every human relationship, and you will learn the value of granting your partner *grace*. You and your partner will have different expectations. So, you need to be willing to let-go of some of these. Life will not always look exactly as you expect, but to reboot your marriage, letting-go of unreasonable expectations is worth the healing it will bring to your marriage.

Show your partner grace through self-less patience, tolerance, understanding, and forgiveness. Sadly, grace is rare in most marriages. Grace is only available from God.

2. Don't assume you know what your partner is thinking

An assumption is not a fact. Wrong assumptions can destroy the strongest marriages. When you assume you know what is going on in your partner's mind, you open the door for misunderstanding. For example, if your partner seems agitated, you may jump to a wrong conclusion that they are upset or angry with you, leading you to react in a way that sparks an unintended conflict.

To reboot your marriage, instead of assuming the worst, ask your partner for clarification and confirmation that you may have the right understanding. By asking for clarity instead of assuming you will avert conflict.

3. Make time to affirm your partner

Offering positive affirmations is a key way to strengthen your relationship and marriage. When a marriage begins to fail, it is often consumed by negativity. Instead of criticising your partner, be intentional about expressing praise and gratitude. Thank your wife for the effort she makes in caring for the children and managing the home, or tell your husband you appreciate his thoughtfulness in helping you in practical ways that ensures you stay on-top of all that needs to be done to keep the family afloat.

Do not be a fault-finder. Be a builder... focus on the good in your spouse Make a habit of regularly complimenting your spouse-- Leave handwritten notes of appreciation around the house.

4. Grow deeper in your relationship with your partner

There are things you loved about your spouse at the beginning of the relationship, but you have noticed how he or she has evolved as the years have passed. Everyday challenges of life will influence changes in you and your spouse, for better or worse. Take time to get to know *who* your partner is now. At the start, you may have fallen in love with their adventurous nature, but who are they now? Who are you now? Do not expect you and your spouse to remain the same--living life together will change you both. You can celebrate change!

Share each other's hopes and deepest desires. Do some back tracking in time to explore the past for anything that may hinder or inspire the growth of your marriage. Do some friendly investigation to know the person you are married to.

5. Make a list of your disagreements

Disagreements are normal in every marriage. Make disagreements a 'pause' and not a 'stop' to the growth of your relationship. Honest and open disclosures will help to overcome disagreements. Aim for win-win outcomes.

Make a list of each area of disagreement. Prioritise them from 'most' important to 'least' important. Commencing at the most important subject of the disagreement may help to eliminate several less important ones. If you are unable to reach a mutually agreeable outcome, seeking objective advice from a trusted, wise person is advised. Deal with disagreements as soon as possible. Do not let them age.

6. Work on yourself

It is easy to blame your spouse for everything wrong with the relationship, but the reality is... it takes two people to build a marriage. Take your judgemental eyes off your partner and turn them on to yourself. Like your partner, you are far from being perfect. There is a lot to discover about yourself that deserves your full attention. Do this and your partner will follow your lead. Remember, hands-off your partner! You cannot change them, but God can. Changing people is God's business, not yours!

7. Stop criticising – Listen, understand d, and love

If you are stuck in a cycle of belittling and criticising your partner, your marriage is in trouble. An endless cycle of caustic remarks is a sure way to kill your marriage. If this is the present state of your marriage, realise this; you are not building with a hammer, you are wrecking with a sledgehammer! Stop it before it is too late!

You and your spouse must remain open to learning how to approach conflict and differences of opinion calmly and constructively. If you feel yourself escalating to anger, take a break from the conversation before you say something hurtful that you will later regret. Do not let your emotions drive your thinking and actions.

When you are ready to discuss disagreements, show sensitivity toward your spouse's feelings. Remain respectful by beginning the conversation with, "I feel that..." or, "My concern is..." This keeps the conversation safe, honest, open, and flowing. Never, never criticise or blame your spouse for anything! Do you hear me? Words can kill!

8. Regular positive interactions



One of the top ways of energising your marriage is to be intentional about positive interactions. Relationship expert John Gottman says that for every *negative* interaction, couples need to compensate with five *positive* interactions.

Make boasting about your spouse and hugging them in private and public settings a regular feature of your relationship, especially if you have children. NEVER argue... BE patient... ALWAYS listen... and ALWAYS express a sincere 'thank you' for their input, whether or not you agree with the view expressed.

9. Be careful when reflecting upon your parents' marriage

Quite naturally, our first experience with love and marriage comes from what we learn from observing our parents. Whatever you witnessed growing-up provides you with a framework for what to expect from relationships. Be careful of subconsciously behaving the same way as your parents, in their marriage. If this is the case, take time to assess the pros and cons of your parents' habits. Then decide what is right for your relationship.

Your marriage is unique and must not be a carbon copy of your parent's marriage. Discover and adopt what works best in *your* marriage.

10. Agree to a 'zero tolerance' of affairs, addictions, and anger

If your marriage contains any of these traits, stop it! Affairs, addictions of any kind, and anger, are destructive practices. You may need to reach out for support from close friends and experienced, competent specialists.

Final thoughts

All marriages have their ups and downs. There is no conflict that cannot be resolved. The thought of divorce never needs to be entertained. There are guaranteed, proven ways of how to heal and strengthen a marriage in distress. When (not if) you hit a rough patch, you and your spouse can confidently move forward by remembering and acting upon the ten suggestions above. Positive communication produces positive outcomes!

Time is a most valuable gift you can give to each other. You need time to discover the person you have promised to love and share your life with. During such times, offer positive affirmations. Affirmations is top-grade relational fertiliser. Remember: The best way to build yourself up is through first building-up your spouse.

God is the 'Designer of Marriage'. He detailed the blueprint of a healthy, growing, satisfying marriage. This blueprint is stored within the pages of the Bible... waiting to be discovered and applied by you.

In addition to the blueprint, God offers His Holy Spirit to any couple who are serious about wanting to succeed in the building of a most loving, satisfying, and invincible marriage.

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