

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work

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Based on decades of research at the "Love Lab," Dr. Gottman can predict divorce with 91% accuracy. These seven principles form the foundation of an emotionally intelligent marriage.

1. Enhance Your Love Maps Know your partner's inner world deeply - their dreams, fears, hopes, and history. Couples who maintain detailed knowledge of each other's lives stay connected through life's changes.	2. Nurture Fondness & Admiration Express appreciation and respect regularly. These are the antidotes to contempt. Remind yourself of your partner's positive qualities and verbalize your affection.
3. Turn Toward Each Other Respond positively to your partner's bids for connection - small moments of reaching out. These everyday interactions build the emotional bank account that sustains you through conflict.	4. Let Your Partner Influence You Share power and decision-making. When partners respect each other's opinions and feelings, they search for common ground rather than insisting on getting their way.
5. Solve Your Solvable Problems Use soft startup, make repair attempts, soothe yourself and each other, compromise, and be tolerant of faults. Treat your partner with the respect you'd show a guest.	6. Overcome Gridlock Move from gridlock to dialogue on perpetual problems by uncovering the hidden dreams beneath positions. The goal is understanding, not solving - learn to live with differences.
7. Create Shared Meaning Build a shared sense of purpose through family rituals, roles, goals, and symbols. A marriage flourishes when partners support each other's life dreams and build a rich inner life together.	

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Warning Signs)

1. Criticism Attacking your partner's character rather than their behavior. <i>Antidote: Complain without blame using "I" statements.</i>	2. Contempt Disrespect through sarcasm, cynicism, eye-rolling, or mockery. <i>Antidote: Build a culture of appreciation and respect.</i>
3. Defensiveness Self-protection through excuses or counter-attacks. <i>Antidote: Accept responsibility, even if only for part of the problem.</i>	4. Stonewalling Withdrawing from interaction, shutting down. <i>Antidote: Take a break to self-soothe, then re-engage.</i>

Key Insights from the Research

- Happy couples have a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions
- Repair attempts (efforts to de-escalate tension) are the secret weapon of emotionally intelligent couples
- Happily married couples live 4 years longer on average than those who aren't
- 69% of marital conflicts are perpetual and unsolvable - the goal is dialogue, not resolution
- How a conversation starts determines how it ends 96% of the time - use soft startup
- Friendship is the foundation - happy couples genuinely like each other and know each other deeply