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Small but powerful ways to improve your marriage Feb 2, 2013 Getty Images Everyone knows successful marriages take a job, but wouldn't it be great if we could reveal a secret formula for marital bliss? It turned out that the researchers did just that! Read on to discover small but powerful ways to improve your marriage. 1 out of 8 your story how-we-met talking volumes. The next time someone at dinner asked: How did you meet? attention to how you reacted. Your answer can predict whether your marriage will succeed, says John Gottman, PhD, psychologist at the University of Washington, Seattle Family Research Laboratory (a also like The Love Lab). Gottman has taken an oral history of 52 couples married for an average of five years, analyzed their stories and physiological responses, and checked back with the couples for three years. Their story predicts with 94 percent accuracy that couples will stay together. (The figure is 88% in a separate study in which Gottman newlyweds.) The happy couples spoke with laughter and even when we remember difficult moments. Unhappy partners, on the other hand, remembered things more negatively. If you or your husband tell the story of your romance using sarcastic or critical words, it may be time to find out what is behind these emotions. 2 out of 8 Keep fighting, but choose your words carefully. You can say a lot about the future of marriage when a couple is arguing, Gottman says. It identifies four negative emotions used in arguments that have proved particularly toxic to the relationship: criticism, contempt, defensiveness and masonry. Conversely, happy and secure couples use positive behaviors to dispel tension, such as humor, affection and recognition of their partner's point of view. Safe couples used five times more positive behavior in their arguments than negative ones. Gottman concluded that all married couples can benefit from building and maintaining friendship with each other so that they can take the best out of their partner when the weather is difficult. It also encourages spouses to realize that words can accumulate or spoil marriage. Next time you get on with tiff, you might want to think twice about winning the battle. 3 out of 8 When marital bliss fades, seek novelty. You'll give up if you buy a myth that marriage will make you happy. A typical happiness experience from newlyweds fades after roughly two years, according to Sonia Lyubomirski, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside; and author of The Myths of Happiness: What Should Make You Happy, but Not, What Should Not Make You Happy, but Does. Fortunately, Lyubomirski also found that couples can adapt, increase long-term satisfaction and beat marriage boredom. First, deepen your gratitude for the positive changes in your life, including your spouse and marriage, because gratitude nourishes happiness and prevents you from taking it (or it) for granted. Then, building diversity in your marriage, for science shows that experiencing new and exciting things as a couple increases relationship satisfaction and passionate love. We don't have to bungee jumping, Says Lyubomirski. We can meet new people, go dancing, learn a foreign language or train together – everything you don't usually do brings that boost. 4 out of 8 Your generosity will reap tremendous rewards. Generosity is one of the main predictors of marriage success and a top divorce averter, according to the University of Virginia's National Poaching Project. The researchers found that husbands and wives who were high on the generosity scale, defined as the virtue of giving good things freely and abundantly, were also happier in their marriages. Those who received above-average generosity, there are more than three so likely to report that they are very happy in their marriage compared to those who have not been generous. But before you spend money on this cashmere sweater or NBA tickets your spouse has been looking at, consider that the survey's view of generosity covers everything from performing small acts of service for your partner (making coffee in the morning) to expressing affection and forgiving freely. In other words, frequent acts of generosity cost much more than you will ever pay for them. Five out of eight turns out you're marrying the whole family. Research confirms that your relationship with your relatives affects family health and longevity. Couples have a 20 percent less chance of divorce if spouses report having a very close relationship with their relatives, says Terry Orbuch, a professor at the University of Michigan Institute of Social Research. However, when wives feel that way, the opposite holds true: couples have a 20 percent higher risk of divorce. Orbuch believes these findings point to the female relational nature. When a husband says: Your family is important to me, feels supported and established. On the other hand, a woman seeking acceptance from her husband's family may have a harder time adjusting healthy boundaries with her relatives, which can lead to stress of marriage. Orbuch reminds couples to set realistic expectations when it comes to in-house. Do not share information about your marriage with them. And remember that when your in-house says something critical, it says a lot about them and very little about you. 6 out of 8 Take the time to get in touch. Spouses who intimately know and understand their partners are happier married, says Orbuch, who has studied 343 couple over 26. In annual interviews, 98% of happily married spouses say they intimately know their partner, meaning they know their best friends, dreams, worries and internal conflicts. Fifty per cent of happy spouses say they reveal intimate details to their partners often, compared to 19 per cent of unhappy spouses. When partners know and have a deep understanding of their spouses, this couple is more likely to stay together over time, Orbuch says. She suggests practicing the 10-minute rule: At least 10 minutes a day, talk to your partner about something other than work, family, duties or relationship. Some couples think they communicate when they just talk about household support. 7 out of 8 A shared faith strengthens your relationship. Couples who follow the usual spiritual practices are happier in their marriages and less likely to separate, according to the National Marriage Project survey of 1,630 couples. Those who shared a religious presence were three per cent more likely to describe themselves as very happy in marriage and three per cent more likely to split up or divorced. This rose to 26% and 6% for couples who said God was at the center of our marriage. The results place spirituality among the highest predictor of marital stability and happiness, especially for spouses. W. Bradley Wilcox, director of the National Marriage Project, noted in his 2011 State of the Union report that sharing religious practices gives a couple a transcendental meaning and support to a community of family and friends who take their marriage seriously. 8 out of 8 Marriage gets better with age (at least for wives). Psychologists from the University of California, Berkeley's Institute of Personality and Social Research tracked the marital satisfaction of approximately 100 women over 18 years, from their 40s in the early 1960s. Satisfaction increased for all women while they were adults, although those who remained empty nests reported the greatest satisfaction. Even more interestingly, the empty nests did not spend more time with their partners, but said its quality had improved. The researchers concluded that women in the heartbeats of parenthood may need to hang out there when marriages are stressful and be sure to justify a few times as much time as possible through date nights and weekends away. Don't wait until your children leave home to plan quality time with their partner, says Oliver John, co-author of the professor of paper and psychology at UC Berkeley. As for spouses, exploring the male perspective on aging and marriage is currently at work. Revive your sexual energy advertising – Continue to read Below This content was created and supported by a third party and imported on this page to help users provide their email addresses. 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