

# Key Factors

## 8 Common Elements For Happy and Long Marriages

If you are reading this article, most likely you are getting married. Congratulations!!! You are filled with excitement, joy and moments of sentimentality. On the flip side, you are getting bouts of apprehension, frustration, and exhaustion from the planning. No wonder you feel this way, because preparing for a wedding is the trial run for the marriage. Yes, symbolically, the wedding planning is literally the rehearsal for your marriage.

All of the negotiating, communicating, decision-making and compromising are part of the process. Surprisingly enough, those arguments over the invitations were actually meaningful and not superficial. This is a ritual for your family and friends to switch their roles and move into the background as you and partner emerge into the foreground. They will become supporters of you and your future spouse. This is also a forum for you and your partner to create the foundation of behavior for your marriage. Now this statement might instantly shake you with fear, since planning the wedding is not always the perfect and idyllic process you set out to have. Welcome to reality. You will have times of bliss, bombs and boredom. It will be real, extraordinary, profound, and wonderful. Of course it will, because it will be partly created by you!

Even so, it would be nice if we had some simple key factors that couples could hold onto as reassurances for a happy long-term marriage. Well, many researchers have devoted time to this plea and have found some answers. As a Marital and Family Therapist, I know that each marriage is as unique as the individuals that make up each couple. But even though this is true, there are some common elements found in happy long-term marriages. Here are eight areas to consider:

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**Friendship** It is easy to say that your partner is your best friend when you are newlyweds. But to make your partner your best friend for life takes effort and commitment. All friendships have moments of pure elation and moments of sheer disappointment. A friendship in marriage is no different. One has to work to keep the friendship vital and meaningful.

**Sex** Now this is an activity that is usually on the priority list during dating. Unfortunately, during marriage, spouses often feel the time and effort dedicated to sex should be pushed aside to meet other

demands. Instead, sex should be seen as a protective factor. Couples should make sex a priority. Sex re-connects and re-energizes the couple. Symbolically, it reminds them that together they are a "we", not two individual "me's."

### Acceptance of Disagreement

Couples who know that they will have disagreements and believe that they can successfully resolve conflict are more likely to resolve conflicts when they arise. Those couples who are afraid of conflict and believe they cannot solve the conflict will create a self-fulfilling prophecy. They will often have negative outcomes in disagreement. Therefore, one's belief often determines the outcome.

**Time** Happy couples spend more time together. They make each other a priority. They share interests. Also, they share their social circle. These activities and people reaffirm their pledge to one another. Humor, fun, leisure, comfort and a history often get

created in these moments.

**Initiation of Reconciliation** In moments of disagreement, a spouse from a happy marriage will initiate connection. They will use affection and/or humor to discharge the negative energy. This will unite them in their current separation. The goal is to remain together, not to win the argument. Both partners need to make these attempts. Additionally, they must respect the other's gestures when they are offered.



Moments In Time Photography

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**Appreciation** Happy couples communicate their appreciation for one another. They make their spouse feel important, they recognize what their spouse gives to them, and they share their gratitude about it. This strengthens the marriage.

**Respecting Individuality and Differences** Spouses accept that they are different from their partner. Happy couples assume that there will be areas where these differences clash. Happy couples will encourage and support each other in their differences and in their individual pursuits.

**Commitment** Happy couples are cognizant that they need to make their relationship a priority. From long-term dreams to every day choices, a spouse makes the decision to be married. Self-interest is always reviewed on how it would affect their partner and their marriage. Each makes the union sacred by being loyal to it.

These eight factors provide you with a safety net for a loving, long-lasting, happy marriage. Remember love is felt and experienced in action. It does not exist by magic and chemistry alone. You have all the ingredients inside of you to keep it active and alive. When you make a mistake, just work to fix it. Enjoy your marriage, it will be your dearest accomplishment. **PBC**