

Make Your Marriage Last

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Marriage & Divorce

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Maintain the energy and love needed to make a marriage everlasting with a few simple tips.

It might surprise you to hear that there are more than 62 million married couples in America. And while the marriage rate has been steadily increasing, mostly in step with general population increases, the divorce rate has decreased by almost half since 1990.

Also, since same-sex marriage became legal in June 2015—in the landmark civil rights case, Obergefell vs. Hodges, before the U.S. Supreme Court—many more same-sex couples have decided to marry. Figures released by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2019 suggest that of 980,000 same-sex couple households, 586,110 of the couples are married, and by all accounts, those numbers are on the rise.

With this ring...

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In America, census numbers suggest that on average, men are waiting until they're almost 30 years old to get married, while women marry around age 28. If you're wondering how much that's changed from, say, the 1950s, men back then got married at 22 and their wives had just celebrated their 20th birthdays.

Most popular by state, Utah is the winner with more than 56 percent of the population married, closely followed by Idaho, Wyoming, Nebraska and Iowa. Marriage is least popular in Louisiana with only 43.6 percent of the population married, closely followed by New York and Mississippi. These numbers are from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey of 2017.

It's been suggested that the divorce rate may have risen in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic expediting the process as couples were forced to spend so much time together at home. However, it's also been argued, equally vociferously, that the crisis brought couples closer together, as partners appreciated each other more and deepened their commitment to the relationship.

Meanwhile, a trend over the past decade indicates people with a college education and a higher-paying job might have longer, more successful marriages. Studies show that almost two-thirds of marriages in the top third income bracket are still working, as opposed to only 24 percent still intact among working-class and poor Americans. This trend is known as the "marriage divide" and has been identified as a destructive societal issue that requires more attention than it's currently getting from policymakers and community leaders.

Why choose to marry?

A couple may choose to marry for a lot of different reasons, but a recent survey shows, unsurprisingly, love at the top of the list. In fact, nine in 10 Americans cited love as the main reason to get married. The survey also concluded that 81 percent ranked life commitment as the second-most important reason to marry, and companionship came in third at 76 percent.

Whether you've been together for a few decades or a few months, it's quite easy to get swept up in daily activities. Whether it's work or school, chores or childcare, the day-to-day grind can sometimes overtake the special moments—and the intimate ones—that sparked your relationship in the first place. This can diminish the fire in a relationship.

Keep the romance alive

Love, commitment and companionship reside as the core components of marriage, but those factors may lose some luster after a few years. Check out the following six tips to see if one or more of them can put a little bit of polish on your marriage to make it shine like new, even during a global pandemic.

1. Small gestures go a long way

Everyday gestures that express appreciation, fondness and kindness for your partner are imperative for a vibrant marriage. Sending your partner a loving text message, preparing a cup of tea or favorite snack, and taking time for even quick hugs and kisses could help your partner feel appreciated and loved.

2. Check in with your partner

While you may feel you can anticipate your partner's needs, it's generally not a safe bet to make too many assumptions. It's important to step back and check in with your loved one, especially during stressful times in either of your lives. Simply asking your partner what they need and how you can help them achieve it can function as a reset button.

3. Get physical

Physical intimacy, and not just sex, is essential to maintaining a deep emotional connection and bond with your partner. Some ways to establish and maintain this close personal connection include kissing, handling some indoor activities together, holding hands, going for evening walks and snuggling on the couch when you're watching TV together.

4. Maintain a healthy sex life

As far as what keeps couples married, a 2015 survey revealed that having a sexually satisfying relationship plays a vital role in a marriage's success. Frequent sexual activities in a marriage have rewards, such as strengthening emotional connection, reducing stress and breeding intimacy. Generally, sexual intimacy in a marriage helps spouses find common ground instead of engaging in power struggles.

5. Plan something fun

Romantic and exciting events don't have to cost a fortune or require hundreds of miles of travel. You can simply take a drive around town with your partner, plan a special meal or make a purchase you both enjoy. The most important aspect is to create something to look forward to, no matter how minor.

6. Put in the work

Newness doesn't last. With time, chemistry fades to complacency, and excitement gives way to routine. A sustained relationship has a positive impact on one's happiness, particularly among married couples, but this requires you and your partner to put in effort. The moment you begin getting irritated by how loud your partner chews or their illogical placement of items in the refrigerator, it's time to step back and assess how to correct the course.

Never too late

You can still figure out how to face various challenges together and simultaneously stoke the marriage fire with sparks of spontaneity. Keeping a relationship fresh takes consistent and often continuous work, but it can be key to achieving lasting happiness.

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