



Enriching Lives

THE SECRETS TO CREATING AN EMOTIONALLY SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

The powerful covenant that we seal with the phrase “Till death do us part” is a challenging task for countless married couples. Oftentimes, newlywed couples enter the covenant with an unsustainable, idealistic perception of marriage, one that is analogous to a fairytale and is incongruous with reality. Emotional intelligence is a prerequisite to the establishment of rewarding, sustainable marriages. In this article we will explore seven premises that were demonstrated to be effective in improving emotional intelligence in marriage (Gottman and Silver).

- The first premise is “Enhancing your love maps.” Emotionally intelligent couples are very familiar with each other’s worlds, what Gottman (48) calls ‘love maps.’ These couples are cognizant of their partner’s joys, worries, likes, dislikes, hopes and dreams. For instance, purchasing your spouse’s favorite ice-cream expresses your knowledge and thoughtfulness to your loved one. Updating your intimate other daily on the changing aspects of one’s life helps you stay connected. An example of enhancing your love map is, “Honey, work was so stressful today. Would you please hold me for a moment?”
- Principle two: Nurturing your fondness and admiration is paramount in creating an emotionally intelligent marriage. Remembering to respect and enjoy your partner’s positive attributes sustains a rewarding and romantic marriage. For a moment, vividly visualize the beginning of your relationship. Thinking about the characteristics in your partner that you fell in love with can awaken positive images, thoughts and feelings. Sharing these verbally builds intimacy. For example, “I remember when I first saw you and I couldn’t help but stare into your beautiful blue eyes” or “The way you look lovingly at me makes me feel like we are dating again.”
- Turning toward each other is principle three. This concept suggests that keeping each another attuned to the small details of life fosters a strong connection. Couples who frequently inform their spouse that they are valued, appreciated, respected and loved exemplify this principle. For example, “Your responsibility in providing for the family makes me feel safe and cared for.” Cultivating positive interactions and validating one another’s experiences nurtures the marriage. Noticing the difficulties your spouse is encountering and inquiring as to how assistance can be offered is very therapeutic. For instance, “Love, I’ve notice that something is wrong. Is there anything that I can do to help?” Empathy creates emotionally attuned marriages.
- The fourth principle asserts that influence needs to be bi-directional. The happiest marriages are those that are reported to share power and jointly make decisions. Inviting your spouse to share their views sends the message that their insight is valued and respected. You can try something similar to, “I value your input; what are your thoughts in purchasing a new car?”

ASSOCIATION FOR COMPASSIONATE TRANSFORMATION

12526 High Bluff Drive, Suite 1-300 / San Diego, CA 92130
Phone: 858 792 3541 / Fax: 858 792 3542 / www.a4ct.com

- Solving solvable problems is the fifth principle. Construct a firm foundation for resolving differences by respecting each other's views. It is suggested that a marital couple should soften their approach in discussing a sensitive topic. Taking a deep breath, focusing on the presenting issue and remembering to be gentle are effective skills to utilize in an important conversation. For instance, "I've been thinking a lot about the argument we had the other day. Could we discuss alternative ways of handling the situation?"
- Avoid blaming and identify the problem as separate from the individual. Maintain ownership of what is being discussed by employing "I" statements. As a replacement for, "You are not listening to me," start with, "I would like it if you would listen to me." As an alternative to blaming, describe what is being observed. Be clear in communicating your needs. For instance, "I'd appreciate it if you would help me wash the dishes tonight." Exhibit your gratitude by mentioning a positive behavior that your partner engaged in and the profound effect it had. For example, "Thank you for washing the dishes yesterday. I felt like you really made an effort to help."
- Learning to make and receive "repair attempts" is essential to a successful marriage. The analogy of driving a car may clarify this postulate. While driving, frequently it is crucial to stop to prevent an accident. The same skill is necessary in a marriage. The intent in using the brakes in a marriage is to de-escalate a possible blowup. For instance, a partner can communicate, "Dear, can we wait to discuss this until I have calmed down?" The repair attempt allows couples to take accountability in soothing oneself, each other and the relationship.
- Principle six is phrased by Gottman and Silver (217) as overcoming gridlock. Spouses can learn to discuss delicate topics without hurting one another and remaining respectful of each other's differences. When hopes, dreams and aspirations are respected by and communicated to your significant other, gridlock can be defeated. For example, "Would you be willing to hear my ideas about starting a new business?" Assisting your spouse in accomplishing their dreams and/or goals will bring closeness, a sense of shared meaning and purpose.
- Lastly, principle seven instructs marital couples to create shared meaning. Implementing a spiritual dimension can make an enormous difference in producing a gratifying relationship. Develop a spiritual connection and nurture it with rituals. Devoting time to rituals that honor, cherish and care for your sacred marriage can help secure your marriage. Your ritual can consist of having a romantic candlelight dinner every Friday night or kissing before bedtime. The joint meanings created by a couple functions as 'emotional glue' that seals two individuals in an emotional bond.

The goal of marriage is to produce a safe atmosphere that encourages the partners to speak candidly about their innermost vulnerable thoughts and feelings. Striving to improve your marriage on multiple levels of connection will enhance your marital life and replenish your whole being. Practicing these seven premises will help sustain the idealistic perceptions that made the newly wed years so exciting and satisfying and will help develop the emotional intelligence skills that are needed to ensure that the covenant “Until death do us part” is a covenant filled with emotional and spiritual rewards.

For more information, please contact Dr. Drecun at Dr.Drecun@a4ct.com or (858) 792-3541.