



# Marriage Matters

## The Honeymoon is Over, Now What?

**W**ho is this person I married? Who am I becoming in this relationship? Is marriage supposed to be this hard? If you find yourself asking these questions, most likely you're not alone. All married couples go through periods of adjustment and readjustment.

Many refer to the few months after the wedding as the "honeymoon phase." This period of optimism soon gives way to the reality that you have married an imperfect person. (That's OK, your spouse did too!) If your knight in shining armor seems to have lost his shine or your fair maiden has been less than fair, don't lose heart. Life's daily challenges require regular adjustments. Couples that remain committed to building a strong marriage have a realistic view of what it takes to be successful.

Strong marriages do not happen quickly or easily. Building a strong marriage takes time, effort, and commitment. There are several strategies you can exercise in building your marriage.

- ♥ **Commitment.** A sense of commitment brings vitality to the marriage relationship. If either spouse entertains the idea of escaping the marriage through divorce, the marriage is in jeopardy. Commitment is the foundation a couple needs to overcome obstacles.
- ♥ **Trust.** Trust is built by mutual respect and acceptance of differences. This takes time to develop. It is closely tied to integrity. Follow through with what you say you will do.
- ♥ **Communication.** The more that couples are willing to share their innermost thoughts and feelings, the more satisfied they will be with their marriage. Set aside some time each day for meaningful conversation. Learn to listen—what is your partner *really* saying?
- ♥ **Conflict.** Conflict is a normal and healthy part of every marriage, working through conflict may bring a new understanding and more satisfaction to a marriage. The key is learning to forgive one another.
- ♥ **Caring.** Part of loving your spouse involves caring for his or her needs. Spouses must care for each other's needs as well as for the marriage relationship itself.

- ♥ **Affection.** Demonstrating affection for one another can positively impact the quality of the marital relationship. It is important that couples discuss with each other their ideas on sexual relations and showing affection to one another.
- ♥ **Expectations.** Set realistic expectations. Your spouse cannot possibly provide for every need that you have. Discuss what you expect and need from each other.
- ♥ **Priority.** No relationship can grow without time and effort. Be willing to work together to develop a mutually satisfying relationship. Set aside time to work on your marriage, whether it involves communicating, taking a vacation, or participating in a marriage enrichment class. Be proactive in balancing your time demands so that you give your marriage your best instead of your "left-over" time.

A happy, healthy marriage takes the commitment of both spouses. Change and growth are part of a healthy marriage. Always search for additional ways to renew and enrich your relationship. Your marriage depends on it!

## ACTIVITY



**Sit down with your spouse** and make a list of some things you would like to do together. This can include:

- ♥ Places you want to go.
- ♥ Foods you want to try.
- ♥ Events you would like to go to.
- ♥ Movies you want to see.
- ♥ Activities you would like to try.
- ♥ Date night ideas.

Make sure they are all things you can do as a couple. Plan a couple times a month to check things off that list. When one partner comes up with another idea, add it to the list and use it as a reference for ways to spend time together.



This resource supports the following principles of healthy relationships:



Care for self



Choose



Know



Care



Share



Manage



Connect



For more resources, visit [www.gafamilies.org](http://www.gafamilies.org) and [www.nermen.org](http://www.nermen.org).