

1. ALWAYS give a hug and kiss before leaving the house. Say "I love you" every single day. Even if they know it, it's great to be reminded. It just might be what sets the tone for a wonderful rest of the day. Sometimes it will turn around a rough start to the morning.

2. Never lie to your spouse. PERIOD. This includes omitting the truth. A single lie discovered is enough to create contagious doubt over every other truth expressed. Trust your partner with everything, even your fears, inadequacies, resentments, self-doubts, etc. Let them in, let them know, let them accept you with all of them, too.

3. If you have to argue, do it lovingly. Don't go to the extremes (always and never ARE extreme statements!) i.e. "fine, you're always right" or "it's all my fault", when you don't mean it. Learn to shush and listen. And by listen, I don't mean sitting quietly because you are waiting for your turn to talk, it's actually hearing what the person has to say.

"Listen to understand, NOT listen to interrupt."

4. Get really good at sex. You've got all the time in the world to get really really good, not just at sex in general, but at having sex with your one particular partner. There are very few (although they can be significant) reasons to hold back, or be embarrassed, or not ask questions, and get everything working properly. There's absolutely no excuse for letting years drag on without becoming fully skilled, compatible, gifted partners for each other. It makes everything so much better. Does talking about this make you uncomfortable? How uncomfortable would it make you to know that your spouse is secretly, silently '**dissatisfied**' or '**just okay**' with your sexual intimacy? COMMUNICATE!

5. Be proud and brag. Let your spouse hear you talking about them in glowing terms to other people. Be silly and sappy. Be obvious. It will mean everything. You can stay married forever if you show this kind of adoration.

6. A 'real man' never stops trying to court his wife. This goes both ways.

7. Stop thinking temporarily. Marriage is not conditional. It's permanent. Your spouse will be with you until you die. That is a given. It sounds obvious, but really making it a given is hard. Don't tend to think in "ifs" and "thens". "If he does this, I won't tolerate it. If I do this, he'll leave me. If I get fat. If I change jobs. If he says mean things. If he doesn't pay more attention." It's natural, especially in the beginning of a marriage, to keep those doubts in your head. But the sooner you can let go of the idea that marriage is temporary, and will end if certain awful conditions are met, or if your expectations aren't met, the sooner you will let go of all kinds of conflict and stress. Yes, you may find yourself in a horrible situation where it's absolutely necessary to get a divorce. But going into it with divorce in the back of your mind, even in the way way way back of your mind, is going to cause a lot of unnecessary angst. Accept that you're going to stay together, and thrive together! Inhabit that and figure out how to make THAT work, instead of living with the "what ifs" and "in case of's"

8. Touch your spouse several times during the day. And I don't necessarily mean it in an intimate way! Just a touch on the arm or back gives you that connection that you need. The power of touch is SO important. **Skin to skin contact releases oxytocin in the brain. (Bonding chemical – think childbirth, skin to skin time). We need oxytocin!**

9. Apologizing does not always mean you are wrong, it just means that you value your relationship more than your ego.

10. Do not put yourself in trouble's way. Leave your exes alone. I'm sure you're trustworthy. Aren't we all? The thing is, there's absolutely no reason to test it. Your partner and your marriage are more valuable than any friendship. Any friendship that troubles the marriage should be over immediately. Protect it with knives and teeth, not because it's fragile but because it's precious. Don't mess around with a "hall pass" or a "harmless flirtation." Adultery isn't an event, it's a process with an event at the end. Don't put your feet on a path that could lead someplace bad.

11. Don't mix bad words/names with a bad mood. You'll have many opportunities to change a mood, but you'll never get the opportunity to replace names called. Take a break in a separate room if you need to be calmer. Use coping skills!

12. The times you feel the furthest apart **are** when you need to get away, just the two of you, to remind you why you fell in love **in the first place. It's still there. Rekindle it. Nurture it. Grow it.**