

Grow and Maintain

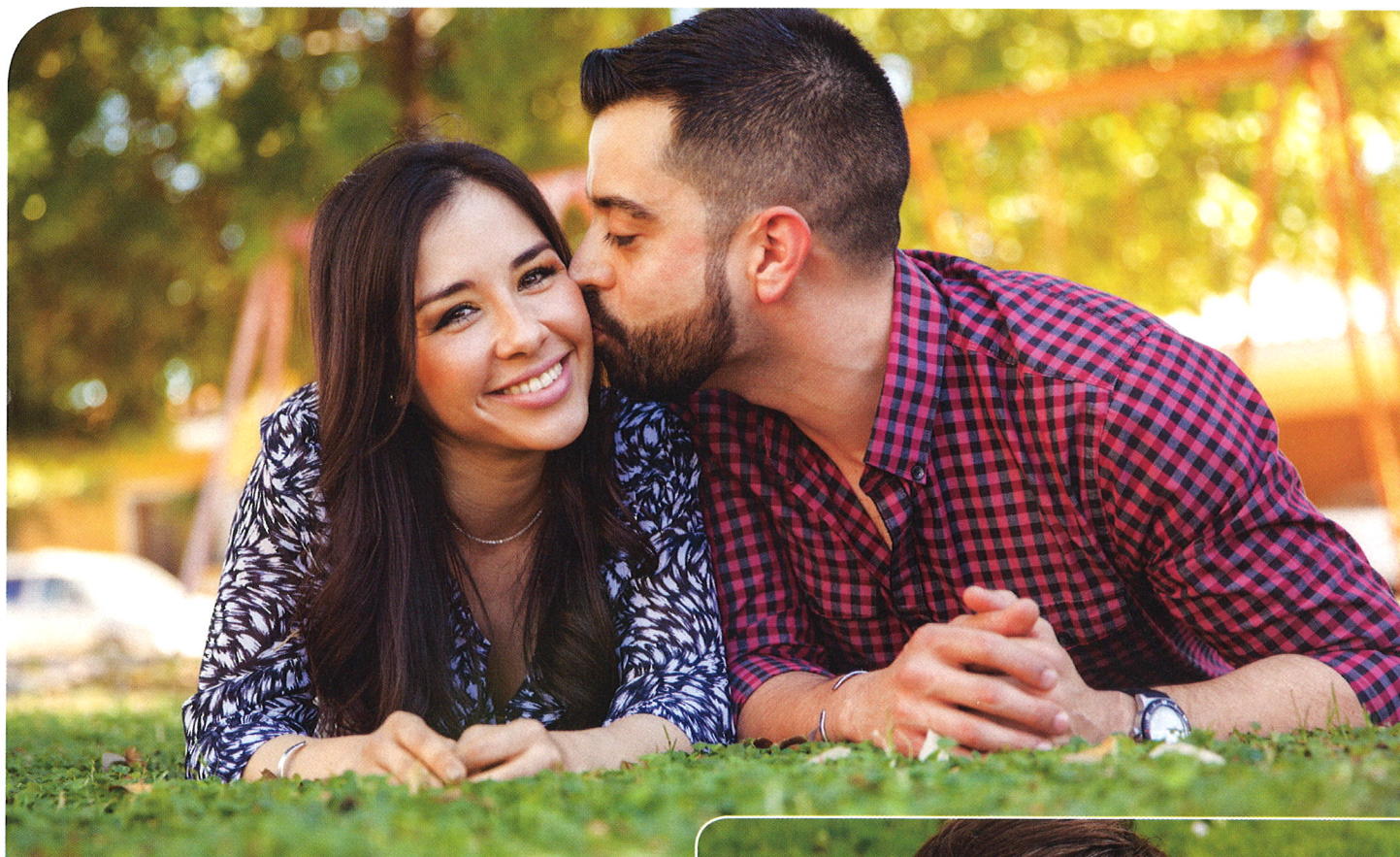


a Healthy Relationship

Great marriages are built on more than a strong attraction, or affection for one another.

There is a need inside each of us to be chosen that often makes life and relationships seem overwhelming. Even as infants we look for someone to respond to us. Watch the “Still Face Experiment” video on YouTube to understand what this looks like.

Problems in our relationships can result from not understanding how we attach to our partners. If we understand what we need from our partner in terms of safety and security, we are more likely to be successful in getting those needs met.



As young children, we begin to develop these attachment styles as a result of our relationships with our families. Each encounter we have strengthens our belief that people we are close to are safe, or not. Unfortunately, for more than half of us, once the newness of a relationship becomes more routine and hormones stabilize, we often begin to wonder whether the person we care so deeply about, really cares about us. We often begin testing them with questions designed to look for one particular response. If we do not get that response, we feel rejected. It is important to understand how our brain, body and emotions are interwoven in each experience we have — and how, despite our best efforts, we cannot separate them. There are several things we can do to grow and maintain a healthy relationship.

1. RECOGNIZE THAT WE COME INTO RELATIONSHIPS WITH A PICTURE IN OUR HEAD OF WHAT THE RELATIONSHIP WILL LOOK LIKE, AND THAT OUR PARTNER'S PICTURE WILL LOOK DIFFERENT. Even if we think that we have shared tons of information with each other, we truly never “know” each other. We are amateurs at best in seeing the world through someone else's eyes. If you are able to accept this, you will be less anxious when you don't see it from their perspective.

2. BE CURIOUS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING YOUR PARTNER'S VIEW OF THE WORLD. You will be more successful if you let your partner teach you about them, instead of assuming that you



know them. It is okay if you like different things. Your partner does not need to share your taste in food, music, or books in order for them to love you.

3. KNOW THAT THIS JOURNEY LASTS A LIFETIME. Keep in mind, there will always be opportunities to learn more about yourself and your partner. Learning new things about your partner can be exciting.

4. WORK ON FIGURING OUT WHAT YOUR NEEDS ARE AND HOW THEY ARE SEPARATE FROM YOUR WANTS. It can be surprising to us that we often are not clear on what we need to feel safe and loved. Get counseling, if needed.

5. REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NOT IN COMPETITION WITH EACH OTHER. We are often trying to prove to our partner in unhealthy and unhelpful ways that convey, "You deserve me, and I am good enough for you."

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6. INSPIRE AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER. The reality of what a healthy relationship can be is better than what you have imagined.

The things we can do to grow and maintain a healthy relationship are extensive. Each couple needs to work to find what works for them. A couple I know comments, "Things aren't always easy. In trying moments, when one of us felt like giving up, the other remained fierce in the promise of our vows."

EDITOR'S NOTE: KEEP YOUR MARRIAGE ALIVE AND ON THE RIGHT TRACK BY LEARNING AND SHARING THINGS YOU BOTH HAVE IN COMMON. SEEK OUT AND READ ABOUT WAYS TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP.

Marriage Matters, and Not Just To You

How do others view your marriage?

By Davida Brown

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From now and hence forth, it's just you and I. Nothing else matters. We all feel that way after we get married. Everyone and everything becomes a distant second. We revel in the love and friendship we share. Then, time marches on. Yes, we still love our spouse, but life happens and we discover marriage is no

Merric and Trese Robinson on their wedding day, January 16, 2015.



crystal stair. It's full of ups and downs, and the downs can be some real whoppers. However, because our marriage matters to us, we buckle down and do whatever it takes to make sure the "ups" far outweigh the "downs."

In doing so, we often fail to understand or appreciate that our marriage matters to others, too; including skeptics. In fact, the way we honor, respect and show commitment to our marriage actually influences the way others view marriage in general, and their own marriage, specifically. Food for thought, right?

I was struck with this reality recently. I was attending a conference and sat next to a young woman who was seemingly only days away from having a baby. After we chatted a bit, she asked me if my husband attended church with me. I responded that he does when he's not working. She went to say that I was lucky, because her husband NEVER attends church with her. She said she felt duped because they used to attend church together before they got married. She went on to say that because she's so sick of him not accompanying her, she asked him for a divorce.

"Whoa," I thought. That was a mouthful. After a brief pause, I responded.

We have expectations of our spouse. When they don't live up to them, especially in areas that are important to most to us, we