

# 10 Relationship-Saving Truths about Marriage



Would you like to turn the marriage you have into the one you want?

These ten truths about marriage, by Harville Hendrix and Helen LaKelly from their book 'Making Marriage Simple' will help you do just that, and build a strong, healthy marriage:

- Ninety percent of the frustrations your partner has with you are really about their issues from childhood. That means, only ten percent is about each of you right now:** Romantic love delivers us into the passionate arms of someone who will ultimately trigger the same frustrations we had with our parents or other caregivers from our childhood, but for the best possible reason! Doing so brings our childhood wounds to the surface so they can be healed. As a child, you were helpless. As an adult, you have power. You can work with your partner so that each of you gets your needs met.
- Incompatibility is not only grounds for marriage, it's an opportunity to create a great marriage:** Although our incompatibility is largely what draws us to our partner (unconsciously, of course), ironically, both partners need to learn how to be more like each other. And, this includes those parts they find most annoying! In addition, these newly cultivated skills help each of you become better human beings. Working with this incompatibility also helps us heal each other's childhood wounds. Giving our partner what they need grows new qualities within ourselves, which helps us build psychological and emotional strength.
- By stretching to give your partner what they need, you grow new skills:** Many people feel that romantic love fades far too fast and, for some, the conflict of power struggles that occur in marriage last way too long. Remember, there is a purpose to this struggle. To move through it you have to recognise the real message behind the conflict. It's time for both you and your partner to stretch so you can reclaim new parts of yourself. Using conflict as a catalyst enables you to truly become the partner each one of you needs, and also develop fully into all of who you are. Conflict is growth trying to happen!
- Being present for each other heals the past:** Become a steady, loving presence through the good and bad times in your partner's life. When the 'space between' you and your partner is loving, you and your partner will feel safe and accepted by each other. Every word, tone of voice, every glance affects this 'space between'. And, criticism, blame and shame are like toxins corroding the connection with your partner. Your goal is to make the 'space between' you and your partner safe. This means loving and empathising with each other through it all.
- It's not WHAT you say, it's HOW you say it:** Before we can take on all this healing, we need to learn a new way to talk to each other. What's the old way? It's called monologue: where one person at a time is talking, but no one is really listening. When couples do it, it's called parallel monologue. Two people talking and no one listening. Every interaction we have is an opportunity to bring dialogue into our lives. In dialogue, agreement isn't the goal. The goal is to take turns and really listen to each other.



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- Negativity is invisible abuse:** Negativity is a wish in disguise: Behind every negative thought is an unmet desire or a wish. Frustrated by your partner's behaviour, you want them to change - but that's only going to happen if they want to change. Their willingness to change will hinge on HOW you bring up issues. Here are some pointers for speaking in a way that increases the likelihood that your partner will listen to your request: 1. Use 'I' statements ('I feel lonely) not 'you' statements ('You' are never home). 'You' statements feel like judgements, because they are! 'I' statements invite your partner into how you're feeling. 2. Be brief and clear. 3. You want your partner to respond, so choose only one frustration at a time. 4. Approach your partner when you're feeling calm. 5. Finally, never criticise, blame, shame or analyse your partner.
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- Your brain has a mind of its own:** Our brain is a wonder. It is the seat of our emotions and thoughts. It determines why we feel the way we feel, and why we think the thoughts we think. So what does brain science have to do with marriage? Simply that you have the power to rewire your brain, change your brain chemistry and create new neural pathways by focusing on love. We can't control others. The only thing we have control over is ourselves - our thoughts, responses, actions and reactions. Understanding this keeps us focused on what we CAN change: ourselves. And stops us from focusing on what we can't change: our partner.
- A couple's wisdom about using humour and joy is critical to their happiness together:** Let's face it, even the best relationships have deeply serious issues. Treating the issues seriously, however, is not the solution and knowing when to be lighthearted is an art form. Many couples find themselves working so hard on their relationship, that they forget to actually have fun together. Joy is our essential nature, so be aware of that and bring as much joy, laughter and lightness into your relationship as you can.
- Your marriage is the best life insurance plan:** Over the last fifty years, scientists have been documenting what has come to be called the "marriage advantage". Why is it called this? Because married people, on average, are healthier, live longer, enjoy higher incomes and raise healthier families. And this is true for most marriages, whether they are "happy" or not. If just being married offers great benefits, imagine what a healthy marriage can accomplish. What a great incentive for honing the skills to help make your marriage soar, while creating the partnership of your dreams.

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