**Building Strong Marriages**



Successful marriage takes definite work. Effort begins when differences abound. Each individual brings both positive and negative attributes to a marriage. Success builds when a couple can celebrate and preserve the positive and at the same time respectfully work through the negative in a manner that brings out wisdom and increased strength.

Life today makes great demands on all of us. An increasing number of people report feeling overwhelmed as a direct result of the busyness of marriage and family life. People with a stronger, more stress-resilient marriage focus on the following marriage builders:

1. Commitment—Stronger, more resilient couples hold their commitment and value to the marriage as an extremely high priority, treating the marriage itself as something precious that needs to be preserved.
2. Intimacy—A strong focus is placed on knowing each other’s most personal self. Couples pursue a journey of seeking moments of clarity in understanding each other, many times through frustration and confession. These same couples place great importance on knowing the little, everyday things that bring love and comfort to each other, attention paid to favorite music, a favorite [ ], or even a favorite quiet time or place. This also includes knowing the passions of each other and attending to and supporting them.
3. Intentional acts of love—Important salve is placed on how each spouse enjoys being loved, either through touch, words, gifts, acts of kindness, etc. Time and effort is given to nourishing the marriage with loving acts, knowing that it is one of the most powerful stress relievers and marriage-builders. Couples come to [ ] being together in simple, still ways vs. doing so much busyness together.
4. Honor and respect—Marriage partners consult with each other, whether it is about work, children, financial decisions, etc. In fact, they consult with each other more than wit h anyone else outside of their marriage. They are able to ask the difficult questions and voice the difficult feelings and opinions with faith that they will be respected. Abilities strengthen over time to influence each other in positive ways as each is allowed their own perspective.
5. Resolution of conflict—A high valve value is placed on resolve itself. The couple understands and seeks the profits of “smaller changes.” An unwritten agreement and belief that solving problems is necessary and healthy brings strength and a “success record” that the couple can draw from vs. evidence of problems which reinforces gaps in the relationship.
6. Forgiveness—Forgiveness is at the heart of resolve and builds tremendous strengths while resentments become toxic over time. Giving each other the benefit of the doubt creates a relationship based on faith in each other as opposed to the relationship based on self-centeredness.
7. Values and meaning—Couples talk intentionally about their priorities and values. God is placed above all, then usually family, etc. Building significant meaningful relationships and experiences inside and outside of the family gives purpose to the relationships. This is usually accomplished by extending themselves in caring and helpful ways vs. being preoccupied with censoring.

These efforts are usually through communicating values and setting limits on unnecessary activities that drains tire, energy, and money. The couple seeks balance in their lives together by seeking time to renew and reflect, time to slow down and let go, and ultimately seeking time to heal and grow together. Successful couples realize that it cannot be accomplished through busyness; it can only be accomplished in stillness together.