

Ten ways to increase happiness in marriage!

The young and excited bride-and-groom-to-be; ecstatic about the upcoming wedding and marriage and the joy that it will bring. Three to six months later, reality has set in and both spouses realize that marriage is no easy task, but one that takes a great deal of effort and patience. The following are tips for both wives and husbands, to help make the task a little less daunting, and to increase the many rewards that are possible in such a marvelous and complex relationship.

Enter the Marriage with the Right Intention and Renew this Often

Both spouses should enter the marriage with the pure intention of pleasing Allah, subhanahu wa ta'ala, in order to receive His grace and blessings. The marriage itself then becomes an act of worship and one for which both spouses will be rewarded. Allah will be pleased with them and this will be the most critical element in ensuring peace, stability and happiness throughout the marital life. It is also important to realize that when an act of worship is continued over a long period of time, it becomes necessary to renew one's intention often to remain on the correct path and to obtain the most benefit.

Remember that Your Spouse is also Your Brother or Sister in Islam

Too often Muslims treat other people outside the home with kindness and sincerity, but then behave in a very different manner when it comes to their own spouses. Muslims should always remember that one's spouse is also another brother or sister in Islam and that the rights and duties that apply to the general brotherhood (sisterhood) of Islam, should also form the basis of the marital relationship. Obviously, a spouse has rights beyond these, but there should be a clear understanding of the rights of brotherhood (sisterhood) and adherence to these principles.

Do Not Hold Unrealistic Expectations

Before marriage, people often have unrealistic ideas about their spouse-to-be, expecting perfection in all aspects. This rarely, if ever, plays out in reality and can lead to unnecessary problems and concerns. We should recall that Allah, subhanahu wa ta'ala, created humans as imperfect beings, which means that many mistakes will be made throughout a lifetime. By turning the table and expecting imperfection, we will be pleasantly surprised and pleased when our spouse is much more than we ever hoped for. This, in turn, will lead to contentment within the marriage.

Emphasize the Best in Your Spouse

Since no one is endowed with all of the best qualities, emphasis should be placed on the positive qualities that a spouse possesses. Encouragement, praise, and gratitude should be expressed on a regular basis, which will strengthen these qualities and be beneficial in developing others. An attempt should be made to overlook or ignore negative characteristics, as the Prophet, sallallahu alayhe wa sallam, said, "A believing man should not have any malice against a believing woman. He may dislike one characteristic in her, but may find another in her which is pleasing." (Muslim)

Be Your Mate's Best Friend

Try to think of what a best friend means and be one to your spouse. This may mean sharing interests, experiences, dreams, failures and upsets. It may involve understanding a spouse's likes and dislikes and attempting to please him or her in any way possible. A best friend is also usually someone that can be confided to trusted, and relied upon. A spouse should be the kind of friend that one would want to keep throughout life.

Spend Quality Time Together

It is not enough to share meals, chores and small talk together. Spouses should also find time to focus on strengthening the relationship. Often couples get busy with their own separate tasks and forget about working on one of the most important elements in life. Quality time may be anything from having a quiet, profound conversation to going for a nice long nature walk, to sharing a special hobby or project. Both spouses should enjoy the particular option chosen and distractions should be kept to a minimum.

Express Feelings Often

This is probably a very "Western" concept and one that some people may have difficulty fulfilling, but it is important to be open and honest about one's feelings, both positive and negative. The lines of communication should always be open and any concerns should be brought to the attention of the other spouse as soon as they arise. The rationale of this is that what begins as a simple concern may grow into a major problem if it is not addressed quickly and properly. The "silent treatment" has never been the remedy for anything.

Admit to Mistakes and ask for Forgiveness

Just as we ask Allah to forgive us when we make mistakes, we should also do the same with our spouses. The stronger person is the one who can admit when he or she is wrong, request pardon from the other, and work hard to improve his/her aspects that are in need of change. When a person is unwilling to do this, there will be little growth and development in the marriage.

Never Bring up Mistakes of the Past

It can be very hurting for another person to be reminded of past mistakes. In Islam, it is generally not recommended to dwell on the past. One may remember errors that were made so that they are not repeated, but this should not be done excessively. Certainly, as humans, we are not in the position to judge another person. Advice may be given, but not in a harmful manner.

Surprise Each Other at Times

This may entail bringing home a small gift or flowers, preparing a special meal, dressing up and beautifying oneself (this is not only for women), or sending a secret note in a lunchbox. A little imagination will go a long way here. The idea is to spice up the marriage and avoid getting

into a dull routine that may negatively affect the marriage.

Have a Sense of Humor

This particular aspect can go a long way in preventing arguments and brightening the atmosphere of the home. Life is a constant stream of challenges and tests, and to approach it in a light-hearted manner will help to make the journey smoother and more enjoyable. You may also find that your spouse enjoys this characteristic and looks forward to spending time with you because of it.

Quick Tips for Discussions and Disagreements:

Begin with the intention to resolve the issue. If both spouses have this intention and plan to consult together, it is more likely that there will be a successful resolution.

Remember that it takes two to quarrel. If only one person chooses not to argue, there will be no argument. Generally, the one who is wrong does most of the talking.

Both spouses should not be angry at the same time. If one of the spouses becomes upset, it is best if the other tries to remain calm and collected.

Never yell at each other unless the house is on fire. Of course, house fires do not occur very frequently; yelling should occur at about the same rate.

Never go to sleep with an argument unsettled. This is one of the worst things that can happen in a marriage and should be avoided as much as possible. This allows hurt feelings and thoughts to linger and generally exacerbates the problem.

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Thursday, 04 August 2011 09:01

If one spouse needs to win, let it be your mate. Do not focus on winning yourself; this is the main reason that discussions tend to become heated.