

Relating to each other

After the wedding, just as in the fairy stories, we want to “live happily ever after”, so we have come up with 10 hints to give you the best chance to do just that

Hint one: remember the special things you did when you first met. Now you’re married, they’re still important. So keep doing them.

Hint two: be mindful of the fact you are two individuals in a relationship. Each needs their own friends, interests and goals, as well as your joint interests, and you need couple friends as well.

Hint three: remain aware and informed about what is important in your partner’s life. We are important “witnesses” to each other’s life stories, so we need to share things with the person we love.

Hint four: remember we bring to our relationships rules of behaviour learnt during our upbringing. Every family has different rules and there is no right or wrong. You’ll gradually form your own rules for the household, which will take negotiation.

Hint five: understand that families show love in different ways. Some say loving things, some do practical things for each other. How does your partner say “I love you”? How do you say it?

Hint six: know that personal differences in thinking or behaving often lead to misunderstandings that can strain your relationship. Talking about these differences is important. If you want your partner to listen to you, you must be prepared to listen to them. You don’t have to agree with their perspective, but you have to see it from their side.

Hint seven: if something has upset you, take time to calm your emotions before you talk to your partner about it.

Hint eight: accept that disagreements are normal. Devote energy to sorting out the problems that can be sorted and managing the ones that can’t.

Hint nine: acknowledge that criticism, contempt, defensiveness, aggression and neglect don’t belong in a marriage. We need to treat our partners with tender loving care. If you can’t do this, get professional help.

Hint ten is the most important: keep romance alive in your relationship. Sex is important, but talking, flirting, dancing and doing things together all add to the intimacy and enjoyment of each other.

Survival tips

- **Work and good-will make happy-ever-after marriages. There’s no magic recipe**
- **Build up reserves of good times so you have them to shore up when the going gets tough**
- **If communication seems to be failing, get professional help.**