

# Dr. Laura's Ultimate Guide to Marriage



## **How to Create a Relationship that Withstands the Test of Time**

### **What Makes a Marriage Successful?**

Are you wondering what the most important qualities of a good marriage are? Do you know the signs of a happy marriage or what makes a marriage successful? Are you a frazzled, sleep-deprived new parent who needs to reconnect with your husband or wife? Do you want to bring the passion back to your marriage so you can fall in love with your spouse again? Or are you wondering if your marriage can be saved after an infidelity?

I've counseled countless couples for more than forty years in both private practice and on my radio show, The Dr. Laura Program. While most people who call me to talk about their marriage are experiencing some sort of problem, I do also get calls, emails and social media messages about beautiful success stories like these featured in our ["Silver Love" series](#) on DrLaura.com.

### A Husband's Secret to Success

**Dr Laura**   
about a year ago

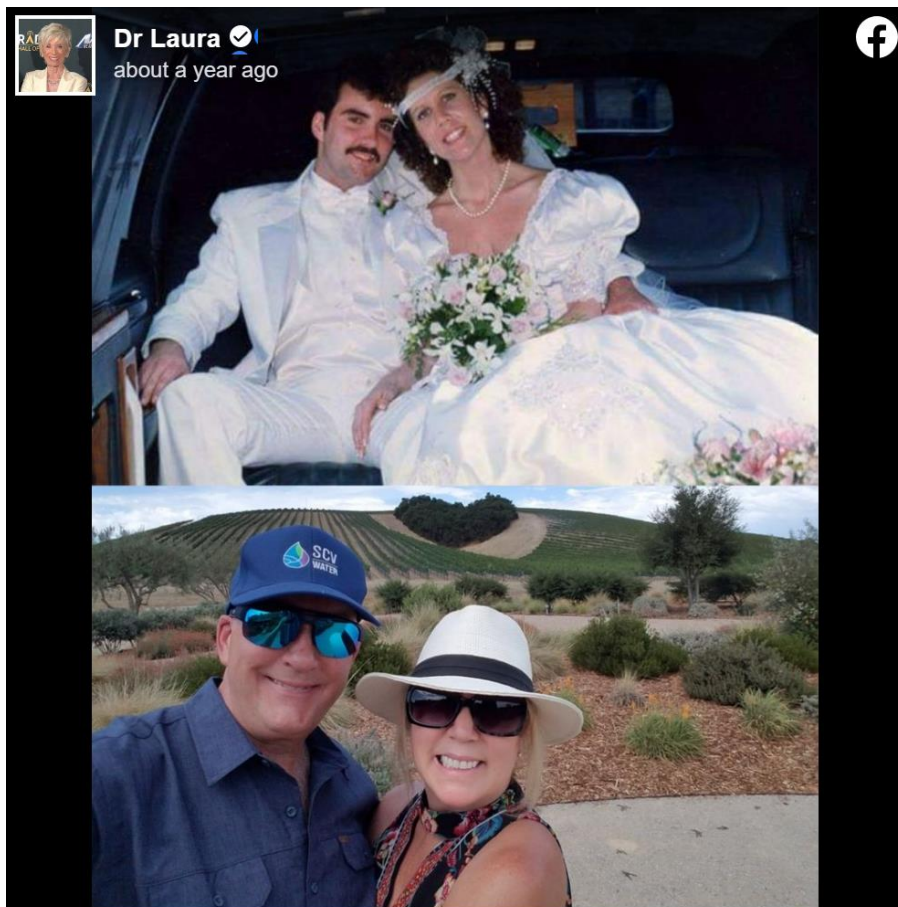




The following "secrets" are the key ingredients of Arturo and Margaret's 40-year marriage. Arturo says, "Unless we are apart, we begin and end every day with a hug and a kiss. ❤️❤️ -- We are committed to resolving any dispute and making up before going to bed. In the 14,600+ nights we have married, we have failed to do this only about 10 times. 😊😊 We make it a point to regularly say "please" and "thank you." We do not take each other for granted. 😊😊 We recognize our roles and ... [See more](#)

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## Choose Wisely



Karla chose wisely! 29 years ago she left her laundry in her building's community washing machine a bit too long. She returned to find it dried and nicely folded by a handsome young man named Steve. She married Steve, they had children who she stayed home to raise, and they are still treating each other kindly today!

Has your marriage lasted 25 years or longer? Everyone wants to know how you did it!? Share your story with me. I'll be sharing back my favorites in the weeks to come.

👍 5.5K    💬 735    ➦ 244



## Say You're Sorry and Make Up



Dr Laura ✓

about 9 months ago



Mark and Patty were married 46 1/2 years when Mark lost Patty unexpectedly. "God said that two become one flesh. I never understood that until I lost her," Mark says. "The secret to our happy marriage was that we made a decision early on to never split up. We never let the sun go down mad or angry. It's not important who was at fault. Say you're sorry and make up. I would give everything I own to say, 'I love you' one more time."

Do you have a love story that has lasted 25 years or longer? Share the secret to your success with me, and let's inspire others! Don't forget to send a photo of yourselves on your wedding day as well as today.

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💬 328

➦ 335

## Through Thick and Thin

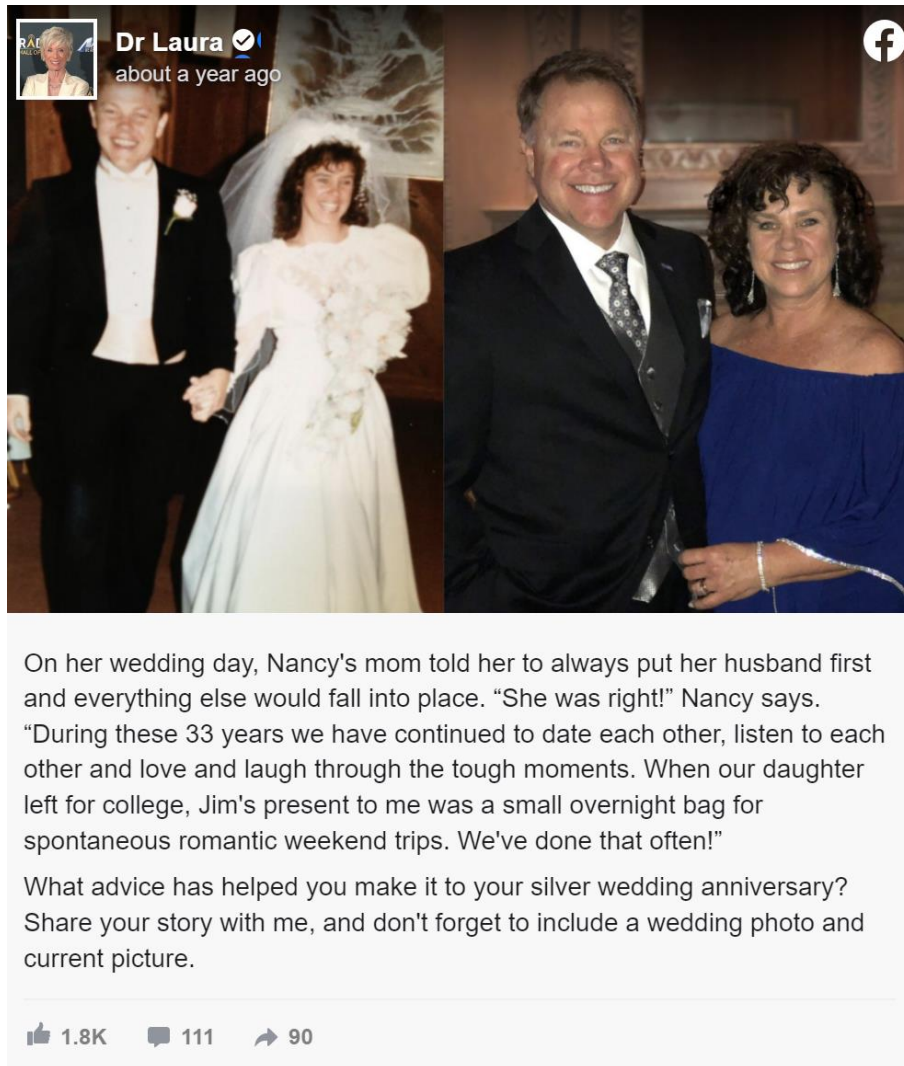



Jennifer says it's good to be married for 30 years to a hubby who sticks by your side through thick and thin. "When I was diagnosed with breast cancer, Steve never left my side. He shaved my head before chemo and never missed one doctor's appointment. He held me up in the shower when I was too nauseous to stand, washed my hair before it started falling out, helped me get dressed daily for almost 6 months and held me in bed while we cried together. We only cling tighter to each other while the never-ending hurricane swirls around us."

Has your marriage survived the ups and downs of life for 25 years or longer? Share your story with me by emailing it to [drlaura@drlaura.com](mailto:drlaura@drlaura.com). Don't forget to include photos from your wedding day and today.

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## Put Your Spouse First



**Dr. Laura**  about a year ago

On her wedding day, Nancy's mom told her to always put her husband first and everything else would fall into place. "She was right!" Nancy says. "During these 33 years we have continued to date each other, listen to each other and love and laugh through the tough moments. When our daughter left for college, Jim's present to me was a small overnight bag for spontaneous romantic weekend trips. We've done that often!"

What advice has helped you make it to your silver wedding anniversary? Share your story with me, and don't forget to include a wedding photo and current picture.

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How did these couples who have made it to 25 years or more of marriage get so lucky? First and foremost, they didn't rely on "luck." Most happily married couples know that a good marriage takes work, attention and commitment. Passionate feelings are not enough for the long haul of a marriage.

[Read More Silver Love Stories](#)



# How Can I Have a Happy Marriage?

Listeners of my [radio program](#) often hear me boil marital success down to this:



I always give the disclaimer that if you've married someone abusive, untrustworthy, irresponsible or addicted, trying to apply my advice won't work. I cannot overstate the importance of taking the time to get to know your prospective spouse so that you can identify the red flags and avoid making an unwise choice. That means dating for two years and participating in premarital counseling. If I ruled the world, no one would be married without six to nine months of professional premarital counseling.

Assuming you've chosen wisely, the other side of this happy marriage coin is to treat kindly and be the kind of spouse you would like to come home to. What does that look like? Treating kindly means behaving in a loving way whether you feel like it or not. The fact is, when you act in a loving way, you actually feel more loving.





# 3 Rules for a Good Marriage

*Deb wrote this email with the "rules" for a good marriage she put in place after listening to my radio program.*

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*Dr. Laura:*

*As a feminist, I'm an unlikely huge fan of yours. I did not marry until I was 47 (I'm 61 now). When I married, I had not yet started listening to you, but I did have the sense not to "shack up" with him before marriage and we dated for 2 years. We also went to pre-marital counseling, so I guess I was a supporter of yours without knowing it!*

*After several years of marriage, I started feeling like a "nag," and felt like I wasn't being appreciated. That really scared me, because I could feel the resentment building between us.*

*Then I stumbled on your program, and after listening for several months, picked up on three rules for a good marriage:*

- 1.) Watch and compliment*
- 2.) Tell him what a good husband and decent man he is*
- 3.) Remember that sex makes him feel loved.*

*None of these were in my repertory at the time, but I decided to do them anyway. Once I did, I was blown away with his appreciation and love. I don't think I was a terrible wife, but I WAS a mediocre one, with much to lose if I did not wake up.*

*Since doing those three things, our relationship has greatly deepened, and we're having much more fun. Like you predicted, the nicer and more appreciative I was, the better everything else became. Your advice was truly invaluable.*

*~Deb*

Be the kind  
of person  
you want  
to come  
home to.



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# Roadblocks to a Happy Marriage

I believe that one of the most egregious problems standing in the way of folks having good marriages today is an almost total lack of understanding, appreciation and respect for what is masculine and what is feminine -- and therefore what it means to be the counterpoint to the other. This is the reason I spend a lot of time on my radio program, in my books and in my newspaper columns reintroducing people to masculinity and femininity and how each can bring out the best in the other as well as bring joy and pride in being a man and a woman. I spoke to Larry King about this topic several times:



This recent call to my program helps illustrate the situation many couples find themselves when they allow the busyness of life to come before the vows they've taken. Lindsay's 8-year marriage hit the rocks after years of her being a tired, nagging, annoying, non-sexual wife. I told her, "When you were dating him you didn't pull this crap. You knew what to do to please him. You were desperate to have him marry you and you did everything you could to be nice, pleasant, sweet and unselfish. You know you can do it all, but you choose not to."

LISTEN TO THIS CALL OF THE DAY:



Dr. Laura Call of the Day  
Marathon Sneak Preview: I'm a Pain-in-the-Butt Wife

ART19

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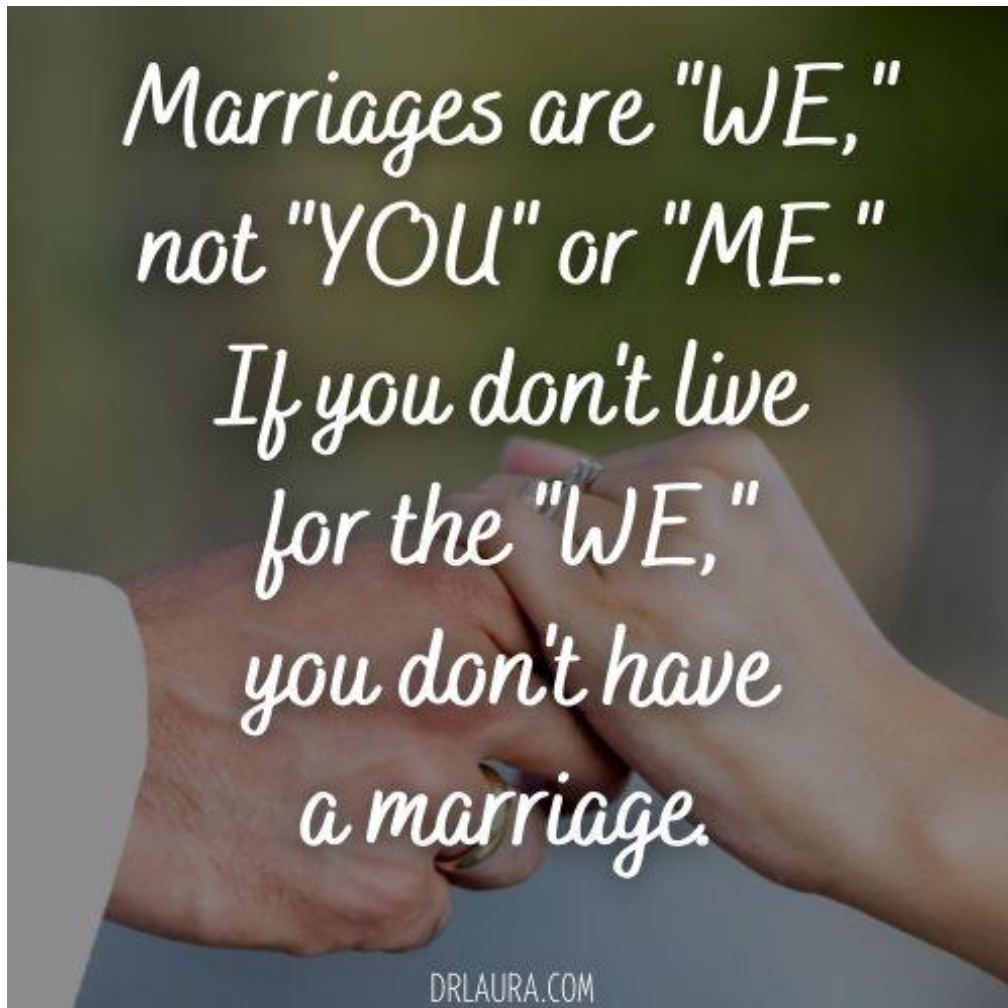
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## 6 Tips for a Happier Marriage





Married couples don't grow apart - they stop paying attention, showing affection and caring for each other. Most people who get divorced within the first five years of marriage later realize that the split was totally unnecessary. So, how can you keep your marriage happy? Keep these six concepts in mind:

1. Marriage is about giving, not keeping score. There are going to be times when you are making the compromises, and there are going to be times when your spouse is making the compromises. It all evens out eventually. Don't make your marriage a competition of who does more.

2. There is no marriage without annoyances. Not one. No two people are 100 percent, completely compatible. When you ask older couples what's the secret to staying together for so many years, one of the things they'll say is you have to let a lot of things go and ignore what isn't going to change. You have to stop nitpicking and learn to live with things.

3. Learn which issues can be remedied and which cannot. Not every conflict in a marriage gets resolved. There are always going to be issues with in-laws, children, money, etc. Many people who go into marriage counseling are dissatisfied with the outcome because they think all the problems will be gone forever. Not a chance. The reality is that the small, nitpicky ones are never going to change, and you're only wasting your breath by getting angry about them. Besides, you knew what you were getting when you were dating this person (that's why you should date for two years before getting engaged!). If you said, "I do," you embraced those idiosyncrasies, so leave your spouse alone. You're better off not trying to change them. Work around the quirks and commit to staying together. Resolving the problems is not what's really important. What's important is keeping things positive.

4. If you are going to fight or argue, make it about the big issues, not the little stupid stuff like socks being left on the floor. Is it really beneath your dignity to pick them up yourself? Jesus was on his hands and knees washing people's feet. Keep that image in mind when you think you're above picking up a pair of socks.

5. For every negative thought, word or action on your part, you need at least FIVE positive ones. Make small gestures and make them often. Always think about repairing the relationship even when it's not damaged. After all, that's what our bodies do. Even when we're not sick or injured, our bodies are constantly replacing dead cells. You've got to do the same thing in your marriage except the balance must be even more heavily stacked in repair mode. How do you do that? With humor and affection.

6. See your spouse's point of view. When you are aggravated with your spouse, take on the role of your spouse's defense attorney. Maybe they're exhausted from sitting in traffic after being hounded at work all day. Maybe they've had a particularly stressful day with the kids. If you take each other's side instead of instantly attacking, there's going to be a lot more peace.



You made vows to cherish your spouse, so cherish them! Don't nitpick, blame or constantly criticize. Happily married couples don't live to fight another day. By spending most of your time being positive, you'll feel better, your spouse will feel better, the marriage will be healthier, and the kids will be happier.

# DR. LAURA'S 3 A'S FOR A HAPPIER MARRIAGE

In her New York Times Bestseller, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, Dr. Laura Schlessinger gives women the tools they need to have the marriage of their dreams.



## PROBLEM

Marriages suffer when, in reaction to life's many challenges, we turn from each other instead of toward each other. If you find yourself growing apart, let the 3 A's guide you back to your beloved.

## ATTENTION

You like attention, and so does your man! Start giving your husband a hug on his way out the door, a kiss when he gets home, ask about his day, show interest in the things that interest him. When you pay attention to the feelings and needs of your man, he will give you the world.

## SOLUTION



thank you



## AFFIRMATION

Men want to know that the things they do for their family are appreciated – working hard to provide, being a good dad, spending time working in the yard, on the car and around the house.

Start noticing the things that your husband is doing and let him know you appreciate him.



## AFFECTION

You feel close when he listens to you. He feels close when you're making love. It's a different language, but the same sentiment. Spend 15 minutes minimum every day flirting, hugging, kissing, caressing. #BeYourHusbandsGirlfriend



**Love is not a feeling. It's a behavior. Do something loving towards your husband each day. When you pay attention to the feelings and needs of your man, he will give you the world.**

Dr. Laura Schlessinger is a New York Times Bestselling author and Hall of Fame radio personality.  
Learn more at [DrLaura.com](http://DrLaura.com)

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## A Recipe for a Good Marriage

A listener named Diane wrote in with this retro "recipe" for a good marriage. It's funny, because it's true.



While searching through a handwritten cookbook from 1946, I came across a very simple recipe at the back. It has a corny picture of a husband in a hot frying pan. I had to read on, and here's what it said:

"The first thing to do is to catch him. Many a good husband is spoiled in the cooking. Some women keep them constantly in hot water, while others freeze them with conjugal coolness; some smother them with contention and others keep them in a pickled state all their lives. These women serve them with tongue sauce.

Now, it is not to be supposed that husbands will be tender and good if treated in this way; but they are, on the contrary, very delicious when treated as follows:

Get a large jar (call it the jar of carefulness), place your husband in it and place him near the fire of conjugal love; let the fire be pretty hot. Above all, let the heat be constant.



Cover him with affections; garnish him over with spices of pleasantry. If you add kisses and other confections, let them be companioned with a sufficient portion of secrecy mixed with prudence and moderation. It is OK to overcook the affections at any time. Simmer for a lifetime."



## 6 Benefits of a Happy Marriage

Studies show that there are several physical and mental benefits to happy marriages. Some of the benefits of good marriages include:

- provide the best environment for children (see video below)
- live longer and have better overall health including fewer strokes and heart attacks and survive major operations more often.
- less depression and better overall sense of well-being and happiness
- better decision making (two minds are better than one!)
- more financial security
- lifelong companionship



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Making Your Marriage Great



**Never stop being your husband's girlfriend.**



Let me give you some suggestions on how have a great marriage:

1. Choose wisely. If you're dating someone who's spent time going from sexual partner to sexual partner or shackled up before you met them, then their lifestyle is not one of monogamy. That's one of the many reasons why I advise against people having a lot of sexual partners - it becomes easy to turn to because you're so familiar with it.

2. Don't ignore your spouse's complaints. Whether it's about housework, money, affection, in-laws, or texting, when your spouse tries to express the reasons for his or her unhappiness, you need to listen. You don't have to necessarily agree with every point they're bringing up, but you do need to acknowledge their discomfort and do something to improve the situation.

3. Don't let sex fall off the radar. Sex is a big part of marriage, and people who are having regular, good sex with each other tend not to get as pissy about the small stuff. It's amazing what a big eraser great sex is to small annoyances.

4. Wake up every morning, look at your spouse, and think about three things you could do to make them happy they're alive and married to you. Show appreciation as opposed to having a complaint.

5. Put down the damn cell phone! Stop texting and talk to your spouse. It's pretty crummy to feel second-fiddle to a smartphone.

6. Talk to your spouse as though you love them. You love this person - so act like it! Always ask yourself, "Would a person who loved this person behave/talk this way?"

7. Have fun family and marital rituals. Put the kids to bed and watch a movie, take walks, or play a game together. Just have some fun with each other.

Behave 24/7 as though  
you love your spouse  
completely and  
without reservation.  
It brings the best out of  
your spouse to be  
marinating in love and  
tenderness - and it makes  
you feel it more.  
Behavior brings feelings and  
not the other way around.



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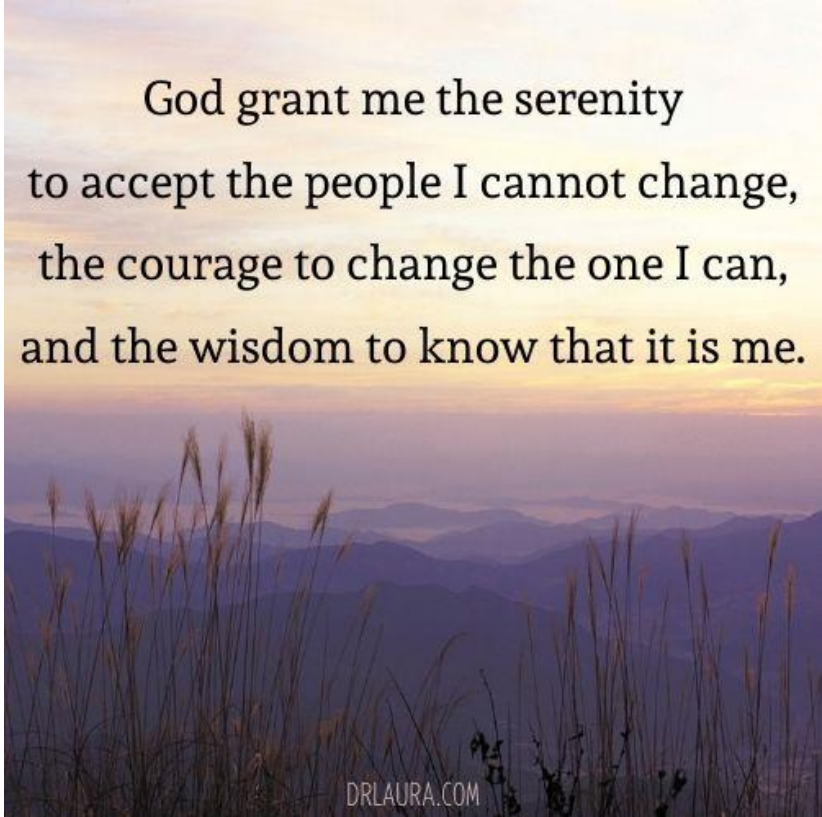
## Common Marriage Mistakes

1. Getting married too quickly
2. Turning on each other instead of turning to each other
3. Overcommunication with words instead of actions





4. Nitpicking
5. Spending time with negative naysayers who like to complain about their spouses and encourage you to do the same
6. Prioritizing other things over your spouse including your own wants, your kids' needs and work
7. Making sex a chore instead of your chance to connect



God grant me the serenity  
to accept the people I cannot change,  
the courage to change the one I can,  
and the wisdom to know that it is me.

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## When I Changed, He Changed

Melissa wrote into the Dr. Laura Program to share how she and her husband brought their marriage back.

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*Dear Dr. Laura,*

*My husband and I have been married for 32 years. I did choose wisely, but I didn't always treat kindly and we almost didn't make it. When my 3 children were teens we started to have differences in parenting styles and instead of being unified, we were divided. We fought in front of the kids and I treated my husband with disrespect and hostility. He left and had an affair. We were separated for 9 months. My friends were telling me to leave the bastard, but I saw what it was doing to my children. Not having their father in the house was worse than our arguing. So, I decided to save my marriage.*

*When I changed, he changed. No, the problem wasn't all me, but I realized divorce was only going to create a lifetime of problems for all of us: holidays, birthdays, graduations, all of that was going to be painful...forever. That was 10 years ago and there isn't a day now that we don't look at one another and thank God we worked it out. Our love is deeper and stronger than it ever was. Last year we were both there, TOGETHER, for the birth of our first grandchild. WOW... I wouldn't trade that moment for anything!*

*Yes, it was hard on our children, but I know that what we modeled to them about the marriage commitment may help them in their own marriages someday. My oldest son is now married to a wonderful woman and my other two are waiting to find the right one. When they do, my husband and I will be there cheering them on to have a long and fulfilling life together like we have had. Even their grandparents are going on 67 years together. Their secret? They still kiss one another every morning and every evening before going to sleep. Maybe their example is why I chose to keep my commitment... I am so thankful I did!*

*~ Melissa*

What's the "secret" to 50 years of marriage? One of my listeners put it this way:



"We believe in fixing things that may be broken instead of just tossing them out!"

## Can Your Marriage Survive an Affair?

One of the ways marriages "break" is through infidelity. There are two kinds of people who have affairs. The first are just bad people. Their self-indulgence and untrustworthiness stems from low character, not a troubled marriage. If it feels good to them, they'll do it.

It's a dumb waste of money to spend time in counseling with a serial cheater. If your spouse has been unfaithful more than once and refuses to be held accountable for their actions, your appointment should not be with a marriage therapist - it should be with a divorce lawyer (and a really good one at that).

The second type of cheater isn't "bad;" they simply may be going outside the marriage to have their needs met. Now, I want to make one thing perfectly clear: I'm not saying that there's any excuse for someone to have an affair. Affairs are bad and there is no justification for breaching your vows. All I'm doing is giving an explanation for why some people have them.

I can't tell you how many times callers on my show have told the lie, "My spouse's affair came out of nowhere and took me completely by surprise." I say "lie" because after a bit of questioning, they admit about 99.8 percent of the time that there were problems:

***"He complained that we weren't having sex."  
"She complained that I never listened or helped around the house..."***

The bottom line: their spouse wasn't being fed.

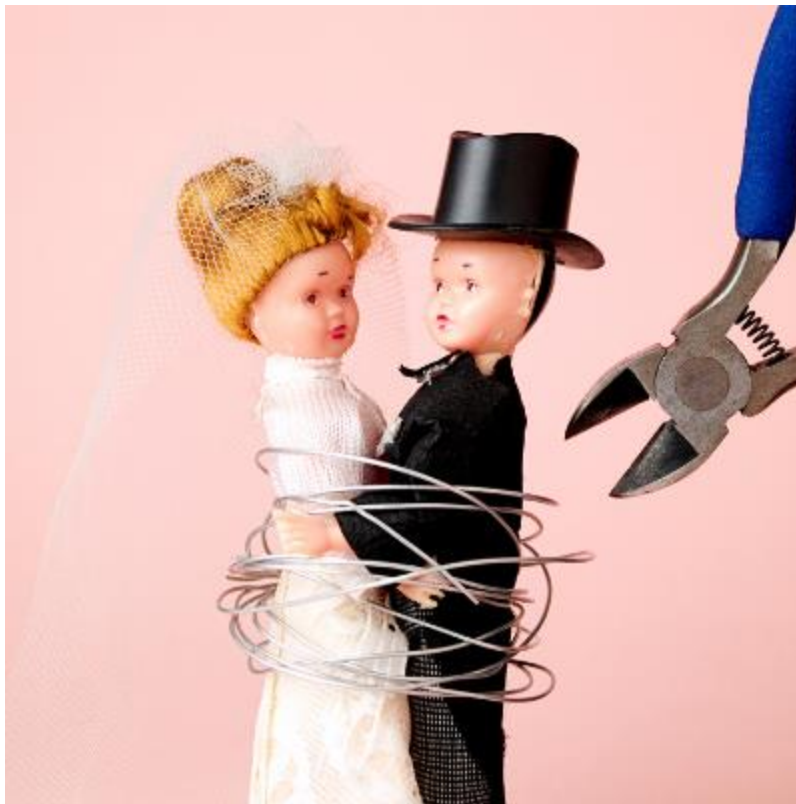
Typically, the person who has been cheated on jumps to blame instead of looking at their participation in their spouse's fooling around. They make it all about how they've been hurt, and ignore the fact that they've betrayed their vows by not supporting or paying attention to their spouse.



If you can understand how you've contributed to a hungry spouse going out to a different restaurant, you can start making the menu better at your home, and the whole thing could be reversed. Blaming isn't useful - explaining the issue(s) is.

## Your Roadmap to a Happy Marriage

Whether you're thinking about getting married, navigating a new marriage, feeling exhausted by marriage or trying to hold a marriage together, you need to know:



More than 70%  
of people who divorce  
regret it, and admit  
their lives  
are not better off.

Much of your marital success is in your hands. I've spent the past forty-plus years teaching people how to choose their spouse wisely and how to treat their beloved kindly. On my [radio program](#), in my best-selling [books](#) and through my [Marriage 101](#) online course I share stories of struggles and success.

So, if you're looking for a roadmap to a happy marriage, educate yourself. Find out what people with challenges similar to yours have done to find the love, joy and stability most of us want and need.



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## Marriage 101 Success Stories

*This was an excellent series of topics and videos to teach me how to treat my husband and marriage. I am already seeing my marriage change in positive ways, because I changed my attitude, quit complaining, stopped choosing the dog's needs before his, stopped finding excuses for not spending time with him and I am shocked at the majority of thoughts I have towards him are loving and positive. Because I changed, he has changed and it happened very fast. The minute I decided to be a good wife, somehow my thinking and my speaking miraculously started flowing out of me. I did not recognize who I was when*

these genuine words started to become the real me. I wanted to be doing this all the time anyway, so when I started doing the "right thing", the rewards have been terrific. Thank you for this amazing piece of work you have offered every woman who has the courage to sit down and learn about her husband. It is the best thing I have done for my marriage and it worked! ~**Kristin T.**

Just wow. I love my husband very much. He has grown distant. In some ways we are very different from the norm. Main difference : HE is the one withholding love, affection and all intimacy... I want and miss him very much. I often feel alone even when he's in the same room that I am. I would love nothing more than to be welcomed into his arms at the end of a hard day . It is a very hard time, but I find it extremely encouraging to listen to this class. It is possible that my actions are the reason why he's grown distant even if I did not know I was doing anything disrespectful or naggy. I'm not a bitchy person. I'm a generally very happy and loving person. We don't communicate well and this class has definitely helped me figure out why. I feel I am often misread by my husband. The reason why I am encouraged is this: if all of this is because of my actions, then I have the power to change it all, so here goes!!! ~ **Jerri**

About 2 yrs ago now, at the fault of us both, our marriage began to fall apart. We have been angry, hurt and lonely but because he is on the passive-aggressive side and I refuse to play games, we only pushed one another away. We have been traveling by auto for the last 7 days now, listening to you EVERY time the show runs on SXM and it seemed to eventually break the ice and get us communicating again. We spent the last 2 nights at a hotel in gorgeous Olympia, WA and let's just say "we reconnected" and suddenly it's like it used to be! Fast forward to being back in the vehicle and listening to the last 3 airings where we just honed in on the ad for this course. My husband doesn't remember listening to the book, I decided I wanted to do the course and now we are going to do it together!!! As I wrote this lengthy comment, he has asked 4 times, "are we ready to start?!". So, here we go! And, bless you Dr. Laura, for giving us the tools to remember why we fell in love in the first place and why we chose to share our lives as one. ~**Jen T.**

*Last night my wife and I fought. Again. Generally, we are very happy but sometimes, it gets hard. She did not have an example of how to be a good wife and mother but she is surprisingly a natural at it in a vast majority of things. I wanted to find something we could both do to make things better and these fights (fairly infrequent) stemming from one or both of us not putting the other first can become a thing of the past. I went back to my favorite advice-giver Dr. Laura. I started listening to her show on the radio while I worked as a package delivery driver when I was in college. I have continued to love her advice and insight. I have shared her advice with family and friends. I could never quite get my wife to listen (talk radio wasn't really her thing) but after listening to the first lesson of this course this morning, I asked my wife to join me. I told her we will snuggle up in bed and go through the course together. I am very grateful that she agreed and I hope to begin to be a better husband and have my wife understand what a man really needs as I try to give her what she really needs as well.*

*Thank you Dr. Laura. I am glad to say you are the "other woman" in my life. I will always value what you have said and hope to pass that on to my beautiful daughters someday. ~ **Tanner M.***

*I've been following the suggestions since yesterday and tonight, after I made one of his favorite dinners, he cleaned up the kitchen! Wow this course is gold! ~**Beth M.***

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