Marriage Adjustments

Journal:
To keep the fire burning brightly, keep the two logs together, near enough to keep each other warm, and far enough apart for breathing room. Good fire, good marriage.

- Marnie Reed Crowell
Objectives / Standards:

• The student will be able to:
  • Identify common marital adjustments and how to resolve them.
  • Identify the difficulties in the first two years (myths versus reality).
  • Discuss the impact of parental approval or lack or approval of the marriage (in-laws).
  • Discuss adjusts in marriage (dual income, personal needs and expectations, sexual adjustments).
Questions:
1. What is your biggest fear about getting married?
2. What do you look forward to the most about marriage?
3. What do you think are the most important things to look for in mate?
4. If you could ask any question about marriage and adjusting to marriage and no one would know it was you, what would you ask?
5. How do you think you will handle conflict in your marriage?
A number of stumbling blocks inevitably arise to challenge the couple's best intentions. For example, young couples often fail to see things realistically. Caught up in the romance and in the excitement of wedding plans, many couples are unable to envision what their relationship will be like on a routine, day-to-day basis. For those anticipating a Cinderella-like happily-ever-after storybook marriage year after year, disappointment is likely to come sooner or later. Conflict, crises, and daily hassles are part of virtually every marriage relationship. Discussing important issues like money, children, role expectations, sex, and in-laws before marriage will help set the stage for a smoother relationship. The single most accurate word to describe what happens in a new marriage is "change." Anything which can be done to help prepare for the inevitable changes of marriage is a good investment in the relationship.
Adapting to Change

• Change always produce stress!
• A lot of change is required while getting married.
• Judith Wallerstein, in her book entitled The Good Marriage: How and Why Love Lasts, says that the common thread characterizing good marriages is flexibility. Couples who have the ability to adapt to unexpected change plus a "marvelous facility for looking down the road" and anticipating the potholes and detours of life are more likely to have a strong and lasting relationship.
Some of the more obvious changes and differences which most couples will have to face include:

- Change in lifestyle.
- Change in location.
- Change of friends.
- Differences in the way you do things.
- Differences of opinion.
- Change in attitude.
- Changes in personality.
- Change in appearance.
- Different expectations.
- Having children.
Realistic Expectations

• Many, if not most, expectations for marriage are based on idealized myths. If realities within a relationship do not match the myth, one or both partners may think they have made a terrible mistake.

• What do you think are some myths about marriage?
  – Go to blackboard and start a discussion. Must post your own myth, then respond to two others.

• A few of the myths about marriage are:
Myth of Marriage:

2. Having children typically brings a married couple closer together and increases marital happiness.
3. The keys to long-term marital success are good luck and romantic love.
4. The more educated a woman becomes, the lower are her chances of getting married.
5. Couples who live together before marriage, and are thus able to test how well suited they are for each other, have more satisfying and longer-lasting marriages than couples who do not.
6. People can’t be expected to stay in a marriage for a lifetime as they did in the past because we live so much longer today.
7. Marrying puts a woman at greater risk of domestic violence than if she remains single.
8. Married people have less satisfying sex lives, and less sex, than single people.
9. Cohabitation is just like marriage, but without "the piece of paper."
10. Because of the high divorce rate, which weeds out the unhappy marriages, people who stay married have happier marriages than people did in the past when everyone stuck it out, no matter how bad the marriage.
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<tr>
<th>Myths:</th>
<th>Reality:</th>
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<tr>
<td>A good marriage will always be romantic.</td>
<td>Just because the feelings of love are not always present doesn't necessarily mean a lack of love; love is more of a choice than a feeling.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Marriage will make me happy.</strong></td>
<td>A marriage partner does not have the power or ability to make another person happy. A person's sense of happiness must come from deep inside himself.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>If we really love each other, everything else will fall into place.</strong></td>
<td>Constant sensitivity to one another's needs and continual adaptation to relational changes are necessary to keep love alive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myths:</td>
<td>Reality:</td>
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<td><em>My partner should intuitively know my needs.</em></td>
<td>a spouse's does not have the ability to read her/his partner's mind. Needs often must be verbalized in clear language, sometimes repeatedly.</td>
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<td><em>Conflict means a lack of love.</em></td>
<td>Conflict is inevitable, but it doesn't have to be damaging to the marriage relationship, but handle appropriately can strengthen love.</td>
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<td><em>Marriage benefits men much more than women.</em></td>
<td>Contrary to earlier findings, men and women benefit about equally from marriage.</td>
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Make a list of adjustments a Married Couple may experience during the first and second years of marriage.
Steps in resolving marital adjustments.

• 1. Look at this period as a transition all couples go through, not as a sign of a bad marriage.

• 2. Concentrate on adapting yourself rather than trying to change the other person.

• 3. Share your feelings about the adjustment with your spouse.

• 4. Strengthen the marital commitment.

• 5. Pour on positives.
Helpful hints for a positive relationship with your new family might include:

• Respect your in-laws as family members of the spouse you love.
• Don't compare your spouse's family with your own.
• Don't run to your own parents for support when you have conflict with your spouse.
• Don't direct anger you may feel for your spouse toward his or her family.
• Establish a family atmosphere that avoids a contest between your two families for your time, attention and affection.
• Treat both families equally and fairly.
• As a couple, try to establish as much independence from both families as possible. For example, it may create conflict to borrow money from in-laws.
Performance Assignment: Develop a list of ways to personally build and strengthen a marriage.

WAYS TO STRENGTHEN A MARRIAGE

Develop a list of at least 20 ways to personally build and strengthen a marriage. This may take a little bit of reading and research on your part. Websites that may be helpful are:

www.marriagebuilder.com
www.utahmarriage.org
Summary:

• The key to a happy and healthy intimate relationship in marriage is open and honest communication that focuses on the good and assists the relationship to move forward into a move positive situation for both partners.
• **Adjustments in the Early Marriage Years**  
  *by Thomas R. Lee, PhD*  
  Department of Family and Human Development  
  Utah State University [http://www.utahmarriage.org/index.cfm?id=STRENGTH26](http://www.utahmarriage.org/index.cfm?id=STRENGTH26)

• **Marriage – Many-Splendored, Sometimes Splintered, Things**  
  Dr. Daniel Wayne Matthews  
  [http://www.utahmarriage.org/index.cfm?id=MORE07](http://www.utahmarriage.org/index.cfm?id=MORE07)

• **Marriage – A many-Splendored, Sometimes Splintered, Thing**  
  Dr. Daniel Wayne Matthews  

• **The Top Ten Myths of Marriage**  
  David Popenoe  
  [http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/Print/Print%20Myths%20of%20Marriage.htm](http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/Print/Print%20Myths%20of%20Marriage.htm)

• **Take Specific Steps To Nurture Love In Marriage**  
  *Dr. Stephen Duncan*  
  *Brigham Young University*  
  [http://www.utahmarriage.org/index.cfm?id=STRENGTH16](http://www.utahmarriage.org/index.cfm?id=STRENGTH16)