

Marriage Helps

Getting Married? Wanting to Make a Good Marriage Better?

Here are 7 Myths You'll Want to Be Aware of...Soon!

I know what I'm getting. I've met her mother already.

That's nice. And, he or she will probably come to bear some visual resemblance to their parent of the same gender. Hope you're happy with that one! Your spouse will even embody some similar mannerisms and ways as the parents. No doubt, we bring forward many of the ways in which our parents played out the marriage roles. The whole notion of *Imago Therapy* is based on this assumption. But as powerful as those influences are, we also leave behind some of our original family's shaping. Life will take a new couple to places they never dreamed of. You and your spouse owe it to each other to develop self-awareness about the influences of your upbringing. But, don't box each other into the roles and biases of home. Help each other to lovingly discover the differences and similarities between your parents and yourselves. Address a few that need tuning up. Embrace the ones that work! Celebrate your uniqueness.

Time heals all wounds

This myth is pervasive in our culture. The saying seems well intentioned and harmless enough. Trouble is, many people really do believe that time will somehow fix things. Try the saying this way, instead: *Time well spent heals all wounds*. Big difference. Issues un-addressed have a way of waiting around for you. Got some pain? Been disappointed? Fears gnawing at you? Ask for the help you need. Do the work and move on.

"Part of marrying me is just accepting me for who I am."

Let's be honest--You don't even know fully who you are. True, your spouse better have as clear a read as he/she can because you are a lot of who you're going to be. Trying to fix someone isn't a reliable plan. But, in some important ways you will also change as time ebbs and flows. You'll discover things about yourself you never knew, and you'll confront painful shortcomings. You will even grieve realities of who you are. You may not be able to be taken on as a fixer-upper, but neither will who you are right now remain exactly so. Here's why there is a myth—there are maladaptive behaviors that you fall back on, there are shortcomings you could correct, and there will be new ways you need to learn to do things because you've made a partnership commitment in marriage. Part of that commitment is to learn and adjust. To problem-solve and to compromise. So, you are responsible for your words and your actions. Part of getting better in marriage is being better as people.

You win some, you lose some.

You'll find differing opinions, and a variety of terminologies, to express opinions on this matter. Here's why I express this as a myth. If one of you is keeping an emotional scorecard, and perceives yourself to be on the losing side of the tally, you've got trouble. Most often, when one of you loses you both lose. True solutions involve creative compromise. Want another myth that fuels this one? Try: *compromise = selling out*. Married love requires meaningful ways in which partnership reigns supreme over short-term outcomes. Losing feels bad. A "win" that leaves your partner feeling bad is bad for both of you.

I can affair-proof my marriage. Affairs are sex outside of marriage. I would never do that just for sex!

You're exactly right. Except that you're wrong. You might not do that just for sex. But, affairs aren't ABOUT sex; they just ARE sex. Affairs and boredom come from un-met needs. Intimacies in a marriage that go without nurture are where the vulnerabilities that lead to affairs spring from. Want to come as close as you can to "affair-proofing" your marriage? Pay attention to nurture of each other intellectually, romantically, sexually, spiritually and emotionally. And, never assume that you wouldn't "do that." Be careful. Be committed.

My partner knows I love Him/Her. Heck, we got married. I don't have to tell them all the time.

Yes, really you do. Not in ways that become cheap and mechanical. Predictability is a romance killer. But, here's the issue. For a lifetime ahead your partner will want to not just hear, but also to see and know that they are loved. In fact, by your very living you are telling your spouse of your love (or lack thereof) constantly. We all need to hear that we are loved and valued. And, the message needs to match the reality we live with. Your consistency--and occasional creativity-- in expressing married love is vital. This is what keeps romance alive!

If marriage is this much work, then the relationship must not be real.

No, if you don't work at a relationship then that's the one that might not be real. One of the great challenges of new marriage is in navigating a turn of the corner between recreation and responsibility. Married love should be free and easy in some ways. But, there's no way that a mature relationship between two whole persons won't require some work. Do you need skilled, third-party help from a counselor or therapist? Reach out for that help. Grow your love and move forward together.

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