

# *Marriage Tips and Traps (Presentation)*

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Joseph Smith—“We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true ‘Mormons.’” (*TPJS*, p. 316).

“Truth is ‘Mormonism.’” (*Ibid.*, p. 139).

Electromagnetic World

++++ ---- Energy

Randy Chatelain—Awaken at 7:00 a.m. Retire at 10:00 p.m.—60, 15-minute + or - energy moments each day.

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## CURRENT TRENDS AND FACTS

- ◆ There is an intergenerational transmission of marital relationships. (Jenson, 1999)
- ◆ About 50 percent of marriages today will end in divorce. (Jenson, 1999)
- ◆ Ten percent of the population are presently divorced. (Jenson, 1999)
- ◆ Thirty-five percent of all marriages involve one or more previously married partners. (Jenson, 1999)
- ◆ Forty to fifty percent of ever-married couples under age 34 cohabited prior to marriage. (Jenson, 1999)
- ◆ Those who have cohabited prior to marriage are twice as likely to divorce than those who have not. (Balakrishnan et al., 1987)
- ◆ Premarital sexual experience is correlated with the following:
  1. Lower marital satisfaction and divorce (Kelly and Conley, 1987)
  2. Extramarital sexual experience (Newcomb and Bentler, 1981)
  
- ◆ The Utah divorce rate is .1 percent higher than the national average. (Jenson, 1999)
- ◆ Children in single parent families are:
  1. six times as likely to be poor and to remain poor.
  2. two to three times as likely to have behavioral problems, to drop out of school, to get pregnant, to abuse drugs, and to get in trouble with the law. (National Center for Health Statistics)
  3. Less likely to achieve intimacy in their relationships, to achieve a stable marriage, and to hold down a steady job. (Bane and Jargowsky, 1988)
- ◆ About 16 percent of grandparents participate in active everyday caregiving of their grandchildren. (Population Bulletin)
- ◆ Couples will spend about as much time caring for the elderly as they did parenting. (Jenson, 1999)

## MARITAL QUALITY

The higher the marital quality in the parents' marriage, the higher the marital quality in the adult children's marriages (Glenn and Kramer, 1987)

Marital satisfaction is greater for both husband and wife when they are more androgynous or feminine in their gender roles; nurturing, caring, being affectionate, devoting oneself to others, being sympathetic, gentle, and kind are especially important traits. (Ickes, 1993).

The presence of children negatively correlates with marital satisfaction (Broderick, 1970).

John Gottman—"Amazingly, we have found that it all comes down to a simple mathematical formula: no matter what style your marriage follows, you must have at least five times as many positive as negative moments together if your marriage is to be stable. . . . [The] magic ratio is 5 to 1" (Gottman, John, 1994. *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*. New York: Fireside, pp. 29, 57).

**"WHY STAY IN A RELATIONSHIP IF IT IS MORE NEGATIVE THAN POSITIVE?"**

Gottman—Heart of any healthy relationship "Love and Respect" (Ibid., p. 18).

INTIMACY = spiritual, emotional, social, intellectual closeness.

## INTIMACY BONDS

Physical touching of an affectionate, nonsexual nature

Shared feelings

Closeness without inhibitions

Absence of psychological defenses

Open communication and honesty

Intellectual agreement on major issues

Spiritual harmony

Sensitive appreciation of the mate's physical and emotional responses

Similar values held

Imparted secrets

Genuine understanding

Mutual confidence

A sense of warmth, safety, and relaxation when together

Sexual pleasures lovingly shared

Signs of love freely given and received

Mutual responsibility and caring

Abiding trust

Barlow, Brent (1982), *What Wives Expect of Husbands*, pp. 40–41

## THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES

1. Words of Affirmation
2. Quality Time
3. Receiving Gifts
4. Acts of Service
5. Physical Touch

What is your primary love language?

Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages*, pp. 39–128.

## MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP=MARRIAGE

Focus on the marital relationship for a few minutes—WHY?

1. Your marriage has a huge impact on your children both + and –.
2. Your relationship patterns socialize your children into the same kinds of relationship patterns with their siblings, friends, and partners.
3. Your marital style tends to reflect on your parenting style.

## Gottman—The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

“... my name for four disastrous ways of interacting that sabotage your attempts to communicate with your partner. In order of least to most dangerous, they are *criticism*, *contempt*, *defensiveness*, and

*stonewalling*. . . . As each horseman arrives, he paves the way for the next.” (Ibid., p. 72).

**Criticism**—Attacking someone’s personality or character.

**Contempt**— Intentional insulting or name-calling.

**Defensiveness**—Feeling victimized by others in response to contempt.

**Stonewalling**—Withdrawing from interactions.

John Gottman

## 1. CRITICISM

\*Gottman—“Attacking someone's personality or character—rather than a specific behavior—usually with blame” (e.g. You don't care; you *always* think of yourself first; you *never* like what I do; you *should* . . . [Ibid., p. 73]).

### Complaint

\*Gottman—“. . . a specific statement of anger, displeasure, distress or other negativity” (e.g., when your share of the chores don't get done, then it falls back on the rest of us to do them and that isn't fair to any of us; when you arrive after curfew, you show a disrespect for family rules, for the fact that we will worry about you, and for our right, to get a decent night's sleep.” [Ibid., p.75]).

Gottman—“. . . Criticizing someone is just a short hop beyond complaining, which is actually one of the *healthiest* activities that can occur in a marriage. Expressing anger and disagreement—airing a complaint—though rarely pleasant makes the marriage stronger in the long run than suppressing the complaint.” (Ibid., p. 73.)

## 2. CONTEMPT

\*Gottman—“What separates *contempt* from criticism is the *intention to insult* and *psychologically abuse* your partner. With your words and body language, you're lobbing insults right into the heart of your partner's sense of self” (Ibid., p. 79).

1. Name calling
2. Hostile humor—mean teasing Mosiah 4:14–15
3. Mockery—mimicking, making fun of, using ridiculing words and actions
4. Body Language—sneering, rolling eyes, looking away, curling upper lip

## 3. DEFENSIVENESS

Gottman— “The essence of defensiveness is self-protection, a natural response to warding off a perceived attack. . . . The fact that defensiveness is an understandable reaction to feeling besieged is one reason it is so destructive—the ‘victim’ doesn't see anything wrong with being defensive. . . . If you are being defensive (even if you feel completely righteous in your stance), you are adding to your . . . troubles” (Ibid., pp. 85, 89).

1. Denying responsibility: “It wasn't my fault. It was your fault.”
2. Making excuses: “I couldn't help it; I know I promised I'd get it done, be home when I said, but . . .”
3. Rubber man/rubber woman: “You don't listen to me. . . . Well, you don't listen to me. . . .”
4. Yes-butting

5. Repeating-yourself syndrome—repeating your own stance over and over in an attempt to prove you are right rather than trying to understand another's perception.
6. Whining: “It's not fair,” etc., etc. (always the victim)
7. Body language (clenched fists, arms folded, body turned away)

#### 4. STONEWALLING

Gottman—“Stonewalling often happens while a couple is talking. The stonewaller just removes himself by turning into a stone wall . . . about 85 percent of them are men . . . the message to the spouse is the same: I am withdrawing, disengaging from any meaningful interaction with you. If either spouse refuses to communicate whenever conflict arises, it can be hard to heal a marriage . . . once either spouse develops into a *habitual* stonewaller, the marriage becomes fragile.” (Ibid., pp. 95-96.)

#### TEN WAYS TO DAILY IMPROVE ANY MARRIAGE!

- Say “I Love You”
- Kiss or Hug
- Give a compliment
- Meditate for three minutes—(Why it is wonderful to be married to my spouse?)
- Touch goodbye
- Touch hello
- Share a personal feeling
- Perform an act of service
- Provide surprises

Charles B. Beckert. PhD., *Marriage Enrichment Series*. 1998

## THREE STABLE STYLES OF MARRIAGE

Gottman

VALIDATING MARRIAGE—“Couples *compromise* often and calmly work out their problems to mutual satisfaction as they arise.”

CONFLICT-AVOIDING MARRIAGE—“Couples *agree to disagree*, rarely confronting their differences head-on.”

VOLATILE MARRIAGE—“Conflicts erupt often, resulting in passionate disputes.”

## TWO UNSTABLE STYLES OF MARRIAGE

Gottman

HOSTILE/ENGAGED—“These couples argue often and hotly. Insults, name calling, put-downs, and sarcasm are all part of their repertoire.”

HOSTILE/DETACHED—“Husband and wife may yell and abuse each other, but neither really listens to what the other is saying, nor do they look at each other very much. Such couples are quite detached and emotionally uninvolved, but they get into brief episodes of attack and defensiveness.” (Ibid., pp. 28, 69).

Gottman's Question: Why is some negativity necessary?

“Why don't stable marriages have a positive-to negative ratio that is more like 100 to 1? Wouldn't marriages work best if there were no disagreements? Our research suggests that in the short run this may be true. But for a marriage to have real staying power, couples need to air their differences, whether they resolve them in a volatile, validating, or minimizing style. . . . Too much negativity and the marriage becomes doomed. But too little can be destructive as well. . . . A certain amount of conflict is necessary to help weed out actions and ways of dealing

with each other that can harm the marriage in the long run.” (Ibid., p. 66–67).

The prophet Lehi expressed this principle in another way when he said to his son Jacob: “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness, nor misery, neither good nor bad” (2 Nephi 2:11).

Place to start—

## CREATING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

1. Congruent Communication
2. Four KEYS

### 1. CALM DOWN

Gottman—“Calming down is the exact physiological opposite of flooding. When you're flooded, you are extremely upset and physiologically aroused. By calming down you take a direct step toward reversing that distress. Calming down is especially important for men since . . . they are more likely to feel physiologically overwhelmed sooner than women during a heated marital exchange.” (Ibid., p. 176.)

- ◆ Take time out. (It takes an average of about 20 minutes for a person to calm down.)
- ◆ Rewrite your inner script. (Most people tend to rehearse negative distress, maintaining rather than soothing and validating thoughts.)
- ◆ Try relaxation methods
  1. Sitting quietly
  2. Deep muscle relaxation
  3. Aerobic exercise

## 2. SPEAK NON-DEFENSIVELY

- ◆ Use praise and admiration—“The single most important tactic for short-circuiting defensive communication is to choose to have a positive mindset about your spouse and to reintroduce praise and admiration into your relationship” (Ibid., p. IS 1).
- ◆ Remove the blame from your comments.
- ◆ Say how *you* feel.
- ◆ Don't criticize your partner's personality.
- ◆ Don't insult, mock, or use sarcasm.
- ◆ Be direct.
- ◆ Stick with one situation.
- ◆ Don't try to analyze your partner's personality.
- ◆ Don't mind read.

## COMMUNICATION

Gordon B. Hinckley—“I hear so many complaints from men and women that they cannot communicate with one another. Perhaps I am naive, but I do not understand this. Communication is essentially a matter of conversation. They must have communicated when they were courting. Can they not continue to speak after marriage? Can they not discuss with one another in an open and frank and candid and happy way their interests, their problems, their challenges, their desires? It seems to me that communication is largely a matter of talking to one another.

But let that talk be quiet, for quiet talk is the language of love. It is the language of peace. The voice of peace in the home is a quiet voice. (“Cornerstones of a Happy Home,” Husbands and Wives Fireside Satellite Broadcast, January 29, 1984, in *Teachings*, pp. 324–325.)

## 3. VALIDATION

Gottman—“It is an antidote to several of the horsemen—criticism, contempt, and defensiveness. Instead of attacking, or ignoring your partner's point of view, you try to see the problem from your partner's perspective, and show that you think that viewpoint may have some validity. . . . Validation is a real art and has many gradations. At the top of the scale is true empathy and understanding.” (Ibid., p. 195.)

- ◆ Take responsibility
- ◆ Apologize
- ◆ Compliment (e.g., honest praise for handling a situation well)
- ◆ Doing the minimum  
“. . . simply listening to and acknowledging your partner's point of view, even if you don't share it, can work wonders” (Ibid., p. 196).

To validate another person, one must:

1. *Listen* by giving full attention.
2. *Listen* to the emotions being expressed.
3. *Listen* to the needs that are being expressed.
4. *Understand* from the other person's point of view.

Gary Lundberg, *Church News*, October 24, 1998, p. 10.

#### 4. OVERLEARNING

Gottman—“When you've had one successful fight using these techniques, you may think you've mastered the strategies. . . . Each time you rehearse being nondefensive or validating is new and different and it's important to keep trying, even when you're tired and don't feel like it. Eventually these strategies will become more automatic. . . . The idea is that if you overlearn a communication skill, you'll have access to it when you need it most—during an argument or heated fight. . . . That's when all of this overlearning will pay off.” (Ibid., pp. 199-201.)

**Conclusion:**

1. The balance of our lives is made up of each of these 60 15-minute moments.
2. One key to healthy families is to help guide them into positive energy choices by:
  - a. Making positive energy choices ourselves.
  - b. Improving our relationship skills in our marriage so they can directly and indirectly impact our children's relationship skills.
3. The 5 to 1 positive to negative interaction ratio is crucial for healthy relationships to develop and grow.
4. Negative energy moments can lead to positive energy moments if handled skillfully.
5. Focusing on positive tools for communication as well as the skills of calming down, speaking non-defensively, validation, and over-learning can help steer us clear of destructive interactions.
6. Learning the primary love language of another and developing the skills to speak to others softheartedly will foster healthy relationships.

Marriage Tips, Trips, and Traps: How Your Marriage Affects Your Children