

# 69

## THINGS

**I WISH I KNEW BEFORE  
GETTING MARRIED**



**PARUL TYAGI**



.. I wish I knew before  
getting married



*.. I wish I knew before  
getting married*

- Porul Tyagi



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# INTRODUCTION

Marriage God did not appear in my dreams to give me a magic pen to write this down. No Distressed Parents Association has contracted with me to come up with reasons which can convince their children to explore marriage as a must-achieve milestone. The reasons for this book are totally different.

Just when I completed ten years of my marriage last year, I started getting weird reactions from those around me- especially the unmarried brigade who would pop their eyes out and say: Really? You are married for ten years? TEN? You?

Now there could be three reasons for this amazement:

a) If there is a mould which a typical married woman should fit in, maybe I am unfit for it. Yes, I don't wear the red mark on my forehead and I have not taken out my Mangalsutra from the bank locker for the

same number of years that I am married.

b) I don't even behave like someone who is married. Maybe I should look a bit mature and give gyaan to youngsters about how they should conduct themselves in life. More often than the acceptable number of times, I am the maddest person in a room.

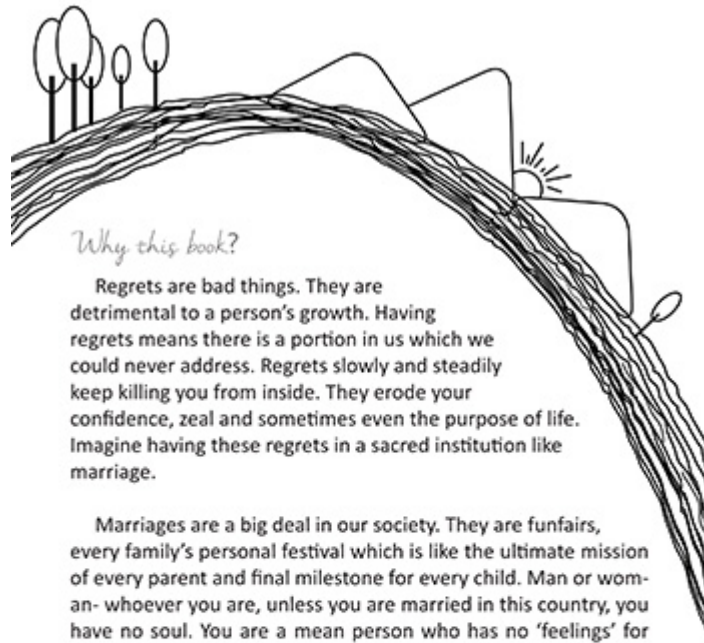
c) Last and definitely not quite ignorable is the fact that I am happy in my marriage. I am content and I am secure. This helps a great deal to explain why I don't need to reiterate that I have a husband who is keeping a watch on me. I haven't changed a bit 'because of' my marital status and as you read the book you will realise how that determines who you are.

Whatever the reason, they would follow up their amazement by saying, "How does one do it?"



Of course, what they really want to know is how one ensures staying married for so long. This is increasingly so now because the trend of 'quick divorces' is travelling fast towards the east from the west. When my generation was growing up (I am not very old! Let's say I have not seen the 1970s era) we heard of divorces being easily available alternatives to Americans. We never bothered about it as our parents instilled in us that marriage is like an Underworld Don's gang they showed in old movies- "You can enter by your choice but cannot exit without the Don's." As time is progressing, I have come across many of my friends, juniors and family friends opting out of marriages. Their reasons seemed valid too. But it got me thinking. I asked myself why I overlooked these reasons and decided to stay married. I faced them myself but never considered breaking my marriage due to them. Yes, love plays a major role here because at the end of the day if love is supreme and issues can be ironed out, is love and understanding not an option for this generation? Or is it that I was weak? Scared? Immature? Too emotional? Actually, I am none of these.

I have faced issues that every couple necessarily faces in a marriage. I have had passing thoughts about whether marriage was the right decision at all. I am sure my husband has had his share of such moments too. But the fact that we are still going strong fixes a responsibility in me. I felt a need to sit down and jot down points which could have made my life easier in those weak moments and if I could put them all together, it would certainly benefit others who are open to consider marriages as a long term affair.



### *Why this book?*

Regrets are bad things. They are detrimental to a person's growth. Having regrets means there is a portion in us which we could never address. Regrets slowly and steadily keep killing you from inside. They erode your confidence, zeal and sometimes even the purpose of life. Imagine having these regrets in a sacred institution like marriage.

Marriages are a big deal in our society. They are funfairs, every family's personal festival which is like the ultimate mission of every parent and final milestone for every child. Man or woman- whoever you are, unless you are married in this country, you have no soul. You are a mean person who has no 'feelings' for your ageing parents. It won't be an exaggeration to say that most youngsters get married just to get into the good books of their whining parents and then go about discovering themselves. It is this last bit which scares me.

If there are things in a marriage which you are not aware of, chances are you will not enjoy this alliance. You have heard that keeping your marriage alive is no easy business and you need to make sacrifices, honour promises, stick to commitments and change yourself as you are now two, not one. Yes, I agree. Marriage is all these humongous things but it is also this: a beautiful relationship that can last a lifetime, happily and easily. Every marriage has its lows but it is not difficult to sail past these impasses



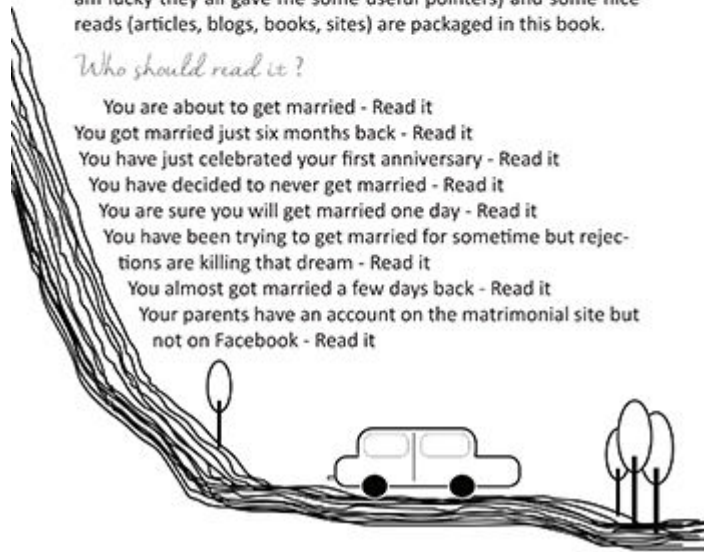
if we are aware why some things are happening the way they are. This book is just an attempt to throw light on things which every marriage will face (in big and small measures) and thus, when you know the givens, it is easy to manage the unknowns. Like they say- a known devil is better than an unknown one.

### *The process of writing this*

This book is totally based on my personal experience. Being a writer, I am a keen observer of human behaviour. Also God probably knew that one day I will write this book, so he made me encounter a wide range of married couples in my life. I have seen marriages that have been sad, unequal, near perfect, perfect, mismatched, ugly, broken, rearranged and other such adjectives. My experiences, backed by some live surveys (I interacted with one All Males and one All Females group and posed the question - What is that one thing you wish knew before getting married- I am lucky they all gave me some useful pointers) and some nice reads (articles, blogs, books, sites) are packaged in this book.

### *Who should read it ?*

You are about to get married - Read it  
You got married just six months back - Read it  
You have just celebrated your first anniversary - Read it  
You have decided to never get married - Read it  
You are sure you will get married one day - Read it  
You have been trying to get married for sometime but rejections are killing that dream - Read it  
You almost got married a few days back - Read it  
Your parents have an account on the matrimonial site but not on Facebook - Read it



You dream about your wedding day - Read it

You were gifted this book - Read it

You are ready, your girlfriend is not - Read it

You think you know everything but your friend needs to read it - Read it

You hate lavish weddings and will opt for court marriage - Read it

Your family pandit says you will get married twice - Read it

Marriage is the last thing on your mind - Read it

*Is there a particular way to read the book?*

Yes and No! Yes because you need to read it with an open mind. You need to understand that your and my experiences, family backgrounds, cultures, upbringing and life partners may not be similar and there are bound to be some differences. At the same time, largely the book has been written keeping in mind these differences and thus aims to talk at a macro level about general human behaviour and does not indulge in individual pin-pointing. No - because this is a fun book. The points are not placed in order of any importance or significance. You could read it from the 69th point or the 33rd one. It doesn't matter where you start from; what is important is where you will end it. I hope when you have finished reading it entirely, you will be better informed about what you are getting into when you get married.

*Does this mean that if I am married I should not read it?*

Hell NO! Of course you should. In fact you should read it more carefully. You are the one who will best relate with these chronicles. You are the one who will write back to me and say, "Oh I thought Point number twelve and twenty-two happened only with me!" Pain reduces when we share it, my friends. If you are married, you are rowing this boat with me. I feel with you!

*What should you expect?*

You should expect a cocktail of Ekta Kapoor, Madhur Bhandarkar, Sooraj Barjatya, Narendra Modi (I am using his name because only he sells these days) . Perhaps not Sanjay Leela Bhansali because the publisher refused to gold plate the cover, you see.

*What will it not tell you?*

If you are picking this up because your Mom asked you to – Beware! This book will not tell you why marriage is the most beautiful thing. While the author of this book (ME) is happily married, she has made efforts in all 69 departments to make that happen even without knowing these 69 departments beforehand. This book only tells you- tell Aunty that- if marriage needs to be a happier one, you should know what it entails rather than jumping into the bogie and then asking the TT if this train that you just boarded from New Delhi Railway Station will take you to Paddington Station in London (Vague? Yeah marriage is this vague if you aren't getting into it for the right reasons).



Are you one of them? I dedicate this book to you !

# GLOSSARY

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V and N - My sons

V and N's Papa - I am sure you  
understand who that will be.

# CONT









Marriage begins at the end of Honeymoon. The grand ceremony is not marriage. It is called a wedding

So preparations are in full swing, huh? The parlour is booked? The menu is set? Have you guys matched the colours of the venue's sofas with what you are wearing that evening? Have you called that stubborn mamaji at least thrice because he operates on the "invite me thrice or I will not even send the shagun lifafa" policy? Have you decided which photographer is doing your pre-wedding shoot, sangeet night shoot, reception night shoot and suhaagraat (oops!) coverage? What about the crucial decision of a ghodi vs. a vintage car for the baraat? Okay, it seems everything is done. Great! So the three day wedding extravaganza is about to begin and all the experience you gathered from the glitches at your favourite cousin's wedding has been put to use.

I wish I could tell you that marriage is just about getting these ceremonies right. Afraid it is not. In fact, marriage is everything after these ceremonies end. It is easier to wade past the ruckus that mamaji will create but very difficult to understand what actually follows. Now don't you get me wrong. I am not scaring you or discouraging you to pull out your enthusiasm from everything that you have planned so far, oh-so meticulously. I am just saying - be realistic. When the spotlight on both of you switches off, life begins. Make your wedding day the most memorable by all means even if it means sending a return ticket to mamaji but also stay focussed on everything that will follow. Include the period of your honeymoon in these celebrations. The real 'fun' of marriage will end when the whole tamasha of wedding will end. If it is still not clear what I mean, consider the following situations:

- Do not get over-excited for your own shopping and go about hurting the feelings of your in-laws when they ask you to accompany them on one of their shopping days. These are the same people who will remain when the spotlight is off.

- If someone from the family is making a polite suggestion about a holiday destination, don't junk their advice. Listen to all, do what you both want.

- Do not insist on wearing colours for your wedding which are in major conflict with what your in-laws believe. If you have dreamt of this day all your life, chances are they have too.

- The limelight is momentary. Life is forever. So are our people and relationships. Value them more than a ceremony which your guests are surely going to forget unless you decide to wear swimsuits for reception. Yes, that is a good way to keep the focus on your wedding rather than marriage.

*A good marriage would be between a blind wife and a deaf husband.*

*- Michel de Montaigne*



Your partner has had a life before you came into it

Yes, your partner's life should now totally revolve around you. Yes, you should be at the centre of their world but hey can you make them erase everything that they have lived with till the time you came in? Isn't it illogical to whine about the life your partner lived before you? Also, isn't it better to acknowledge that their experiences of that past have had an impact on shaping them?

Let me make it simpler for everyone. I am enlisting a few things here that belong to a person's past and which are important for you to accept/understand/respect.

Friends- Be open to many surprises on this front. Some people you will meet under this category will totally shock you. They could make you happy too and you might go on to become best friends with one of your partner's old friend but my advice: stay objective about your partner's choice of friends. If they are still friends- look for the right reasons instead of sulking about \ them.

Romance- Everyone has an ex buried in their pasts. It could be as harmless as a one sided crush but the fact is that it was there and it needs to be respected. As long as it is not affecting your present (and future) there is no harm in getting to know about it.

Career- A bad experience at a job, a tough experience with a colleague or an ugly fallout with a client, anything that affects his current decisions regarding his/her job are things you need to be clued on to. You cannot trash away the learning from these experiences by simply asking your spouse to move on and think about the two of you.

College and School life- If he/she went to school and college, there must have been good and bad times. Don't you have memories from there? Aren't they an integral part of how you grew up? When you're being told about some weird experiences, show maturity and not judgement!

Neighbours- This is especially true for girls as they come to live in their husband's houses. The camaraderie, discomfort, peculiarity with some or few neighbours is bound to affect your life \ too. Stay prepared.

Parents- I really do not need to stress on this point. Your partner's relationship with their parents affects your relationship too. Just stay focussed on only improving the quality of this relationship and your life will be happier

Siblings- Thumb Rule: Treat them like you treat your siblings and see the magic. Never forget that just as parents share their children with the spouses, so do the siblings. In my experience when all else fails, it's them who are standing beside you as a family. Explore this opportunity to its best.

Everything else that is not covered in the above points!



*The one who marries for money, at least has a reasonable excuse*

*- Gabriel Laub*



You must know how to unlearn some of your old habits

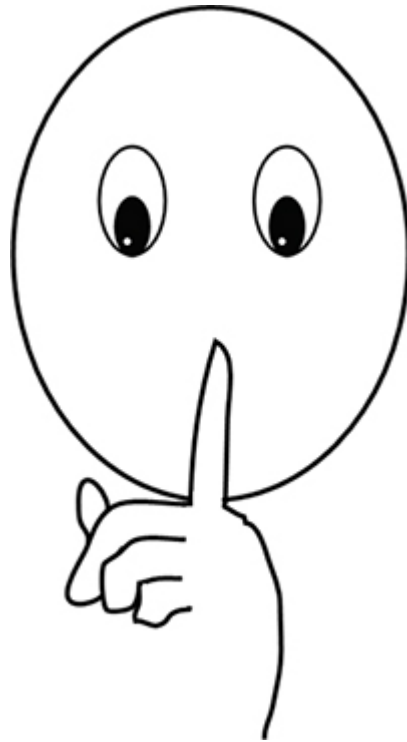
If God plays a role in getting two people together and making them agreeing on marrying each other, then he surely is a mean thing. He always puts an unorganised person with another who has an OCD for cleanliness. He will invariably put an early riser with someone who hasn't seen the world before 10 am in the morning. Oh, and he sometimes even put vegetarians with non-vegetarians which is really tricky for the non-vegetarian one. I mean, a true blue non-vegetarian will agree that going out to a fancy restaurant and ordering Shahi Paneer is criminal.

Since I knew V and N's Papa a little before our marriage, I had made sure he loved his Chicken-Mutton as much as I did. I also ensured his socks didn't stink. He is also succour for the morning newspaper, just like me. Having all these points in place, assumed that I am perfect for him and he is for me.

Came marriage and reality beckoned us:

- I hate mornings- He loves them
- I use a nail cutter for my nails- He has strong teeth
- I am OK if I don't take a bath for a day- He cannot imagine someone like me could lead a safe life
- I play games on my phone- He rarely even touches his

Did either of us acquire these habits after marriage? No. We were always like this. But when married, we realised that sharing your life with someone entails making minor adjustments in our habits. Neither of us has given up on our habits as they are part of who we are, but yes, we have learnt the importance of not letting our habits pose discomfort to our partner. So I do wake up two hours before my normal waking hours and I think he chews his nails while driving back home from work.



Learn to keep quiet, at the right time

This advice works super importantly in my case. I am an acute case of verbal diarrhoeic person who just cannot shut up. There are people who are overtly chatty and then there are people who are their bosses. I fall into the latter category! I was at an event recently where I was introduced to the person who holds the Limca World Book record for talking nonstop for the maximum number of hours. I whispered to V and N's Papa that the record holder wasn't competing against me or I would have entered the book convincingly. And he agreed!

Now for someone like me, marriage is a rude shock. When you are married, there are times when keeping quiet can work wonders for the both of you. Like there are some relatives who like to see quiet daughter-in-laws. Like there are bosses who judge you because your partner just cannot keep her mouth shut for a second. Like there are phone calls which need to end quickly or world wars could begin. So in all such cases and many more, either I learnt through my mistakes or the able nudging of my husband (who has developed a secret sign with me) which indicates, in time, - 'Please keep quiet now!'

But you have an advantage- you can learn from my mistakes. Always know the right time to keep quiet. Sometimes, silence will sail you through the biggest hurdles of your relationship too. There are moments when your partner does not want you to talk. They just want you to listen. In those moments, your silence will work better than your words. They will support your partner better. Talk your heart out to the world, be yourself, but learn the art of staying quiet when it is required. After all, marriage is about the two of you. Use ears wisely and mouth sparingly- on occasions that demand so.



Loving each other and living with each other are two different  
ball games

Imagine getting married to a girl who leaves the toothpaste cap open, throws the wet towel on the bed, spills food on the table, and pushes herself to a bath every day. Tough? Well, my husband married one such girl. A guy whose almirah looks like no one has ever touched the clothes, someone who keeps a duster in his hand all the time as he cannot bear even a spick of dust around him. But when we decided to get married we didn't put conditions on each other's habits. We decided to get married because we were in fact completing each other. It was fun to see him go about putting things in order. And for him it is amusing to see someone being so shamelessly careless about routine things like mending the bed!

Now there are two scenarios:

1) You knew about all these habits but after marriage you suddenly do not like them: I would say that's plain, simple silly. You cannot complain about something you were aware of. Marriage is a union. It is not a Trade Union where everything needs to be complained about!

2) You weren't aware of some of these habits and discover them only when marriage allows you to stay with the person you loved- Well, in this case the only thing that determines your sanity levels is the love you have for your partner. For instance, I did not know that my current husband loves to drive his car at high speeds. We never got to be in a car before getting married as we were students and didn't date that much as we met every day at work. Now since I don't like to sit in a car that's on high speed, I can either tell him about my fears or trust him that he is driving safe. I tried doing the former but with time realised that he was fast but not reckless. He too realised that he cannot take me for a ride (literally) at the speed I am not enjoying, with him.

Life will be so monotonous if I was looking for someone just like me. It's so much better to have that one person in life who is so different from you that you in fact love him (or her). Know that living together will call for tremendous adjustments but they are just adjustments and not issues unless you make them. And trust me, you cannot waste your time in trying to make a list of things that you ought to know before you start living together Because matrimony is a 24 hour game. There will definitely be that ONE thing you will know only when its time comes!



*My most brilliant achievement was my ability to be able to persuade my wife to marry me.*

*- Winston Churchill*



Taking advice from experienced people is not a crime. Just  
don't do it hiding from each other

There will be times in your marriage when you will get stuck. Both of you won't know what the hell is happening. You will feel suffocated, lonely helpless and vulnerable. It will start from a minor issue and escalate to a point where even the idea of pulling out your partner's hair will seem a lesser punishment. Reason and negotiations will stop working and discussions will get into a never-ending loop which has no head and sadly no tail. I am talking about the point when even liquor will not work. It is then, my friends, when it will be perfectly okay to seek advice. There will always be that one person in your radar who you have gone to for advice on choosing subjects at high school or stream in class XI or even picking up the theme for your Sangeet night - that person who is always there to listen to your rant and tell you which way you should head. That person is for keeps. Reach out and ask for help. Seeking help from someone you think can help is not a sign of any weakness. It is in fact, a sign of your strong belief of making this marriage work.

But this will work only when the following three things are in place:

- 1) You have to know who the right person is for this sort of advice. Someone who will not judge you both, someone who has made a difference in either of your lives when you have been in a similarly tough situation and someone who loves you both as much as you love each other
- 2) Try and keep this practice limited to one or two times only Learn to get out of your problems together without depending on someone else. When I say that taking advice isn't a crime, don't mean that you keep doing this at the drop of a hat. Get unstuck only when the situation looks irredeemable to both (not one) of you.
- 3) The whole 'seeking advice' activity will fall flat on its face if you are indulging in it without the knowledge of your partner. Isn't it unfair to let a third person know only your side of the story? Be fair and real about this. It is not necessary that this session should look like a full therapy session where both of you need to be present, but yes it will help if your spouse has been informed that you need help and you are willing to seek it from this person who matters to you and to whom, you matter too.

*A good husband makes a good wife.*

*- John Florio*



You are not the best person your partner could ever meet.  
Stay real about this self pride

When Kareena Kapoor a.k.a Geet in Jab We Met said, “Main apni favourite hoon,” (I am a favourite of myself) I had the widest grin possible on my face. This sentence applied so well to what I thought of myself. I actually believed I was the most lovable person on the face of this earth. Till I met V and N’s papa. My husband is the epitome of being practical. After so many years of big and small fights and long and short adjustments, am proud that he has made me aware of my real self. He has made me realise that I do crib a lot about silly things, that I am a compulsive pessimist, that the kind of nit picking I do while eating is sometimes beyond comprehension, that I am highly disorganised and that I simply do not think before talking. If you ask me I would never want to get married to someone like me!

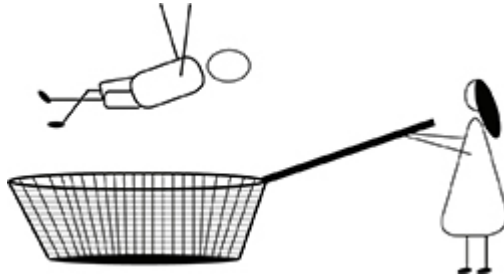
Marriage does this to you. Since it is possible to run a happy marriage only in collaboration with your partner, both your strengths and weaknesses will eventually be out in the open. A good partner’s role will be to take over when you fall weak and your role is to hide their shortcomings. But the truth is, that reeling in self pride that your partner could not find anyone better than you, is the worst mistake and the silliest assumption that you will ever make. Putting down your partner by making him or her feel that they did not ideally deserve you is dangerous because of two primary reasons:

A) It disturbs the ‘equality’ that should be the basis of a successful relationship. Any marriage where one partner appears or insists that he or she is superior than the other, is a failed one.

B) It is actually not even the truth. We have seen how in many cultures and castes, men are supposed to be the ‘better ones’ in a marriage while women are supposed to hang around like mere shadows. It is so because they are constantly told that this man has obliged you by getting married to you. Such marriages are anything but fun!

When a man steals your wife, there is no better revenge than to let him keep her.

- Sacha Guitry



The prince does not fall from heavens. You need to find him!

I don't even want to begin with the whole Prince- charming-arriving-on- a-white- horse- while-you- are- running -towards-him- in-a- white-fowing -dress- on- a- beach rant. If you have picked this book, I assume you have no such notions nailed to your brains and you are actively working towards finding the right guy for you. It is a process. It is not destiny. In fact, you can say that it is destined but there is a process of arriving at the right destiny. You cannot sit in a closed room all your life and the best looking guy with a six figure salary, an understanding mother and a sea facing house, will open the door of that room and go down on his knee to say those four magic words. That reminds me, when I knew I was going to marry my husband, who was my friend in college, I asked him to one day sit on a knee and ask me if I want to get married to him. We laughed like maniacs as this question looked so artificial and minuscule in front of the enormity of our commitment of having no choice but to spend our lives together (given our parents agreed, of course).

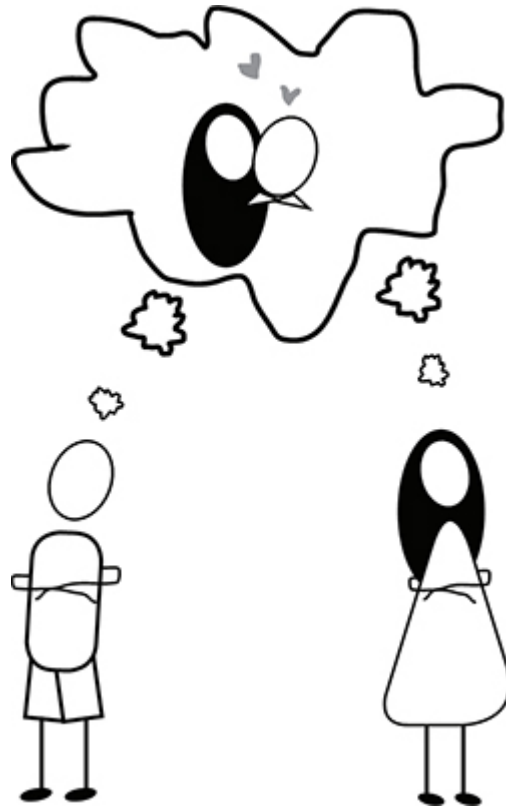
Do not read articles that draw up a list of things you should look for in your husband. Do those list makers know you? How can they put all the guys in a framework and say this will work in a marriage and that will not? Trust me, if you carry such a list in your pocket and tick every box each time you meet a boy, there will be no boy who will have ticks in all criteria mentioned. It is not because there is paucity of eligible men. It is because such lists are baseless!



Be it an arranged or a love marriage, sitting on your bums and hoping that God must have thought good things for you, will make your bum sore. Get up and take the reins of your life and decisions in your hands. This is a big decision. Even if you go wrong with it, at least be the one responsible for it!

I've had an exciting time; I married for love and got a little money along with it.

- Rose Kennedy



Arguments happen.  
But they need to also end

“A happy marriage is a union between two good forgivers.”

There is no greater truth than this! It's amazing how the same topics of arguments look so huge and grave after marriage. Just because we are now tied down by societal rules and stamps, why do we make arguments so big in our heads? When we could tide over issues and pass them off as 'petty' and 'harmless' before marriage, why do we hold onto them after getting married? There is a reason! We have all the time in the world to NOT forgive. We can stretch that period as we aren't in any hurry. We sulk longer, we beat around the bush longer. All this happens because we take each other for granted. Almost magically! It is so organic a feeling that you won't even come to know and continue to make the argument bigger and bigger in your head. You start attaching notions like, “Oh, you are saying this because you know I cannot leave you now,” OR “You never complained about this when we were dating”. My two bit advice: Arguments are natural. Conflicts are essential. Differences are required. In fact they are needed as they teach us lessons about equal partnerships, but this only works when both are clear about resolving the issue and not hell bent on increasing the tension. And what is equally important is that we don't push them under the carpet by accepting that we have nowhere to go to. We must work our way around our issues in a way that grows our relationship. Put an end to a fight so it doesn't look like a favour. Do it in a way that respects both your individual viewpoints.

I can give you a brilliant solution to how you can ensure that an argument will see a logical end. Yes, it is clichéd but it works. Never sleep on an argument. Stay angry all day, stay quiet on the dining table too but do not sleep till the argument has ended. If your partner forgets it, remind it to him or her that this is something you have decided in advance. This will help in two ways- If your partner is the one who likes to sleep early (like mine), he/she will quickly come to a solution for the love of sleep. Secondly, you will wake up cuddled together!

*By all means, marry. If you get a good wife, you'll become happy; if you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher.*

*- Socrates*



You don't marry the person.  
You marry the entire family

I know a girl who revealed after a good ten years of her marriage that hers was a love marriage and not arranged like it was told to everyone in their social circle. Trust me, for all these ten years we had all believed and perceived her husband as someone who is an outsider and who has adjusted seamlessly into her huge family and even bigger circle of friends. She says she had to hide this fact and cook up a story about an arranged alliance to please her orthodox family members. Imagine what the boy must have been through. To act like you are having an arranged marriage, to convince your own parents to play along this theory and to be so sporting all through the years- well, marriage probably taught him that.

Let's not be judgmental here. I mean, who am I to get judgmental anyway? I am somebody who got married without knowing these 69 things!

Love marriage or Arranged, in India, families are bound to get involved. Be it after or before or in the middle of it all, families are entities that have all the business in the world to poke noses in a marriage. See the 'before' scenario: Till the time you are studying or just started working, these families are away in their own homes, raising their own children, minding their own issues. But the minute you announce that your interest in furthering your education is gone, they pounce on you with all their might. They make it their agenda to suggest a boy or girl, to match kundlis, to pester you to tell them if you have someone 'special' in your life.

In the 'after' scenario: It is almost mandatory for the extended family to know exactly where you went for the honeymoon, when you plan to have kids, who does the dishes in the house, when was the last time you fought.

When you are about to get married, please do not assume that life will be all about you and your partner and the two (or one or is it none?) kids that you both will be making. Life is also about his and her families who are as omnipresent as the air you are breathing. Try and know your partner's family values, the culture you will have to adjust with. Instead of wasting your precious time after marriage, arguing why you are expected to make adjustments with his or her family traditions, it is better to know what you are getting into. In a country where there are so many religions, castes and even sub castes, this point is of great importance as an informed choice can ease out your life. If you love someone so much that religion is the last thing in your mind, even then stay open about the feelings of your partner's families because they did not choose you. You have chosen them and thus it is upon you two to make it smooth for them.

One last piece of advice under this 'family business' is to never ever compare your family with your partner's. A light hearted comment in happy times can lead to drastic results during fights because Apples and Oranges grow on different trees. It will help you a great deal if the Venn diagrams here are mutually exclusive!



*There is nothing nobler or more admirable than when two people who see eye to eye keep house as man and wife, confounding their enemies and delighting their friends.*

*- Homer*



Your parents are good. Your partner's  
parents are good too

There are things in life that one is extremely possessive about. These things are beyond reasoning or logic. No one is supposed to judge them. I guess our 'Parents' would top this list. I know our Rooms are also in the Top 5 of this list but let's stick to Parents for now as we all know (haven't I mentioned this at the start of the book?) that Marriage isn't just about you and your partner. It is also about your families. In our country it is the girl who needs to 'leave' her parent's house and come and live at her husband's. Even if your in-laws aren't living with you (you can be in a different city or country), it is important to know that your partner's parents have had a crucial role to play in his/her life at least till the time you both met.

We once went to someone's house whose son had recently got married. As the new bride got talking (she was overtly chatty; imagine someone like me saying this, who holds a world record for being chatty) I realised one important lesson of a happy marriage. Every topic that was being discussed in their living room would inevitably have one sentence from that girl: "You know, in my house we used...", or "You know, how my parents taught me this was...". After a while it did get a little irritating as to why this woman was bringing her parents or their house into everything that was being discussed. It was then I realised that we need to understand that marriage is not about showing off how your parents did this and that for you. It is in fact about demonstrating by your actions what your upbringing has been. Clearly the fact that this girl had to now live and adjust in a stranger's (read her husband's) house was so overbearing a feeling that she wanted to let everyone know how she had it in her house. But I wanted to ask her, "What is the need to do that?" I know it is sad that women are expected to adopt every-thing of her 'new' house but if it is something way away from how you have been doing it, you need to gradually go about influencing your new family regarding it. Let marriage be about an amalgamation of new and old, not new versus old!

*It is not a lack of love, but a lack of friendship that makes unhappy marriages.*

*- Friedrich Nietzsche*

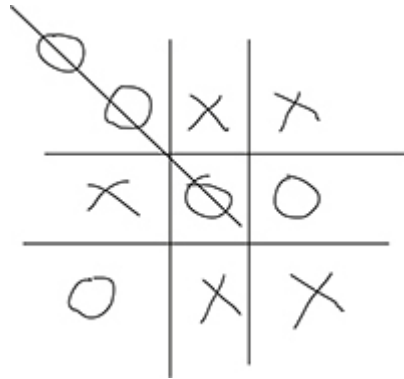


There are no two sides of a coin in a bad phase. There is one and you both need to be on that side

It is easy to be in a relationship when everything is perfect. Being happy in your partner's happiness is certainly a good way to establish strong emotional ties with them. Being excited about their promotion, best friend's wedding, milestone at work or any other joy which is important to them, is said to be a great indicator of how happy that relationship is.

Marriage however, is a combination of good and bad times. While 'good times' can ONLY belong to either of the partners, bad times are times that are to be shared in equal measure. Even if that bad time is a result of an incident at your spouse's workplace, the onus of sharing the fallout rests on both of you. I have reiterated many a times in this book that marriage makes you a permanent team of two. Thus, when there are ups and you are enjoying the journey, the lows will need your combined attention too.

Being together in a bad phase is also important because to the outside world, you two are one. Right or wrong, unless you are on the same page with your partner, the perceptions that will be built will further ruin the already bad times. Even if you disagree with your partner, be with them. Even if you do not have a solution to his/her problem, be with them. Even if your partner is not willing or ready to hear out a solution from you, be with them. A bad phase is inevitable in life. What makes it easier after marriage is that it is now two of you facing it. What makes it worse is your rigidity, blame game and the feeling that you could have handled it better. Stick together and sail through- because every bad is succeeded with a good and if you haven't treated each other well in the bad, the strains will remain even in the good.



## Walk the talk

Like in any other relationship, mere talking isn't enough. Often you have to lead by example. All the impressions you created while you were in courtship are now expected to be implemented. It is here when most relationships feel tasteless-when realities are different from projections.

I understand that not every couple will get a chance to see each other's reactions to adverse situations before marriage, but it would certainly help if they did. What such a situation does is that it brings you closer to the values that your partner lives by. Do not panic if that did not happen in your case. What is more important to know is that when you profess or propagate some ideals or principles to your spouse, don't just let it be rhetoric. When life presents you with a situation where you get a chance to apply what you believe in, show your partner that action is more noteworthy than talking.

Promises are part of any new alliance. Why just marriages, even business deals start with contracts which make the involved parties sign on certain things they will or will not do. This assumes greater importance in marriage, as whatever you stand by in life will affect your partner in equal measure.



Television in your room is a marriage's  
worst enemy



Some things in life are best watched lying down on the bed, inside a cosy blanket, in the comfort of your room. But all the good things in life are best done without a TV.

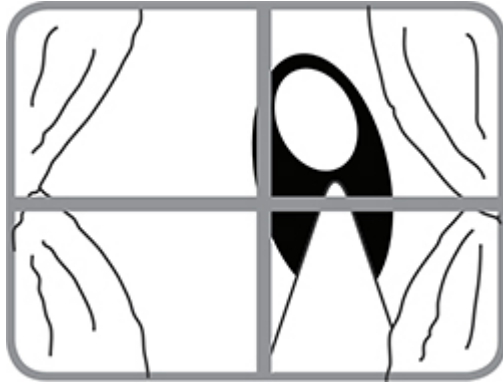
Please note that I am only keeping the TV out from the bedroom of a married couple. Please fight it out amongst yourselves about the impact of a TV in the house, on your marriage. I am nobody to recommend or de sell the existence of TV or comment on TV viewing habits of partners.

‘Shun the television out of your room’ is what I am saying. I have been sharing my room with my husband for ten years now and not even for a day we have had the idiot box in our room. There are only two idiots allowed in my room- one him and one me. What the third idiot would do to us is to steal the time we have been using to lie down next to each other and talk. It would have robbed us of little moments when just before sleeping I slipped to his side as we have just finished a horror flick (on the TV that’s kept in the Living Room). It would have crept into our arguments and made them last longer. TV would have definitely distracted him when I was trying to make him feel the movements of my first son while he was still in my tummy. TV would have also ensured that we couldn’t read two different books, silently in each other’s company.

Hey, you Television - stay away from the rooms of married people. They have to build a lifetime of memories and most of those memories will belong to the room they are sharing. The fights, the tears, the smiles, the flirting, the adjustments, the sulking, the sharing and everything else that make a man and woman perfect for each other can only happen when you are not feeding them with News of political cats fighting each other or two teams outplaying each other on a field.

*A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person.*

*- Mignon McLaughlin*



Don't judge your own marriage by your friends' sex life

Life is anyway full of so many troubles. Spare yourself the misery comparison brings. Do not compare your life, and especially your sex life, with how your best friend is feeding you with hers. Firstly, it is true that people lie about it and secondly, it is unfair to do so.

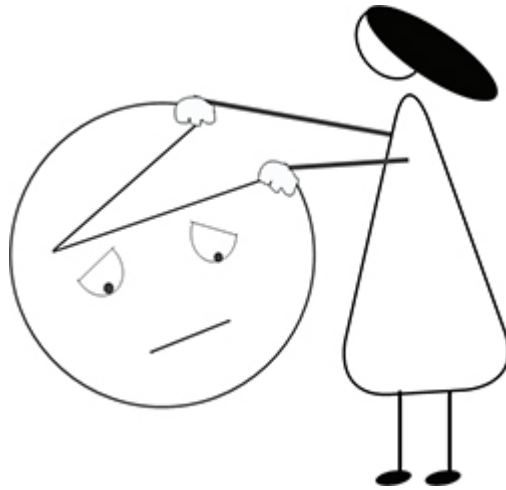
I clearly remember that first instance when someone very close told me how her husband was craving for sex the entire day. She told us how he would send messages even when she was in office reminding her how much he missed her. Like a stupid girl I even asked her how many times a night did they do it? When she told me a number which exceeded my count by quite a margin, I was devastated. For days I kept thinking if there was something wrong with us. I did not dare to share this with my husband but I was sure we were far behind others who seemed to be having more fun than us in the bed. With time I saw some major flaws in that woman's fundamental relationship. For some reason I couldn't match her stories to the reality I was seeing. It was then when I realised that the moments I wasted in comparing my life with hers were such a drain of my time. I could clearly make out that she maybe built up those tales to shift the world's focus from the real side of her marriage.

You guys are getting married in the age of the social media. I can only imagine how difficult it is for you all to not compare your life with your cousins or friends who are always happy/ travelling/partying/kissing/beaching and blah blah. But let me give you a life saving advice - STOP yourself from doing so. Do not get sucked into this false whirlpool. Also, don't believe those glossy magazines that carry inane surveys regarding libidos and mojos. They have to sell their articles and you have to save your marriage. These two intersect and only you can stop them intersecting.

Do this: If you like the lacy stuff and you know it works for you- do not ask your friend how she does it. Chances are she will say- Oh, just laces? I cannot imagine myself out of the thongs! Focus on yourself.

*Let the wife make the husband glad to come home, and let him make her sorry to see him leave.*

*- Martin Luther*

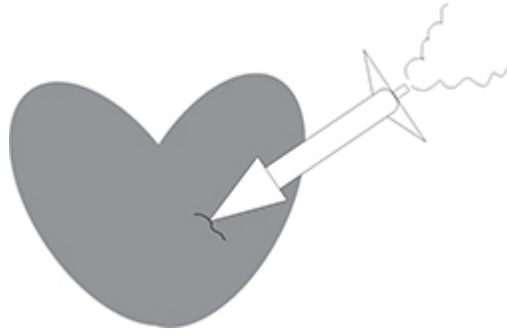


Reading each other's mind is not an art.  
It's a necessity

*Kitaabe bahut si padhi hongi tumne, kabhi koi chehra bhi tumne padha hai?*

I know, I know! The worst quote ever to begin a chapter, no? But what can I do? There's nothing better to convey what I want to say. If you claim to be a poor judge of people, a pathetic face reader or similar such things, it is time you perfect these skills with the person you have decided to get married to. It is not a luxury to be able to understand his/her feelings and then acting upon what is expected. It is an absolute necessity. It makes everything so simple. I believe the easiest and shortest way to achieve this is by loving your partner so much that you can pre-empt his/her next moves. The next best option is to practice it. There is no such option of not even trying to do anything about it as then you are wasting each other's time. Knowing what's going on inside your spouse's mind will let you know when to shut your mouth in a conversation, when to take over in a family get-together, when to stop behaving like a fool in front of your friends.

I love it when my husband understands my tone on a telephonic conversation and carries flowers on his way back from work. It just melts down every fear that is bothering me. There are times when he cannot do anything about my problem but the fact that he knows that I need comfort is enough. Oh, and I reciprocate in similar measure- what else gets me out of the bed on a lazy Sunday morning to make tea for him when he has been awake for over an hour? Trust me, nothing can ease out minor issues than hearing what your partner is not saying.



Being happy in a marriage is  
Rocket Science



Let's not use this phrase- Rocket Science- just for the sake of using it. Let us understand why I did not compare marriage with an even more difficult thing like climbing the Everest or threading a needle in a moonless night or beating Kamaal Rashid Khan (KRK) in a game of chess. What exactly is Rocket Science? I looked it up on Google and got a three part explanation to this science. Let me compare marriage with that definition-

Rocket science is the science behind getting rockets into outer space. More formally, it's aerospace engineering. The field requires a wide range of knowledge of physics, aerodynamics, mathematics, propulsion dynamics, and other types of science and math.

Bang On! Marriage is about getting two people in outer'space'. A space that's away from every relationship that this couple has had so far on an individual level. It is a place that is not supposed to be invaded or trespassed by anyone other than these two. Like in Rocket Science, staying happy in marriage does require a wide range of knowledge of physics (Every action will have an equal and opposite reaction!), aerodynamics (Any unwanted air around your false pride can lead to massive turbulence), mathematics (If your wife says that she didn't empty your wallet and the money value got to zero on its own, you have to believe it), propulsion dynamics (Do you really care what this term means?)

Anything that gets and keeps a spacecraft in outer space is included under the rocket science umbrella.

Right again. The 'anything' of the above sentence in a happy marriage is the two people who decided to take this plunge. Anything also means their combined efforts, intentions and the basic ingredient for happiness - Love!

*The field also includes design.*

How your marriage looks like is totally dependent on you. Every marriage is different and the key to stay happy in marriage is to carefully design it around your value systems, comfort zones and strengths.

Voila! I have just proved that marriage indeed is Rocket Science. To give a final touch to how complex (and finally easy) it can get, I have to lift this from Paul Rieser's book, Couplehood:

*The problem is, when two people live together, there is no more Business of Your Own. Your Own Business is closed. You've merged and gone public. You have to run everything by the partners. And if there are too many conflicts of interest, the business may go under, freeing the partners to once again open up smaller concerns by themselves.*

*Like all businesses, couples engage in endless meetings to discuss areas of management concern and division of labour.*

*"You know, we really should call the post office and tell them to hold our mail while we're away."*

*"We? You mean me, don't you?"*

*"No, I mean we. I didn't say 'you.' I said 'we.' You or me."*

*"Oh really? Are you ever going to call the post office?"*

*A moment to think. "No."*

*"Then you mean 'me,' don't you?" "Yeah."*

What does this tell you? Running a marriage is team work. It requires tremendous patience, compatibility and understanding. Being one team also is fun. It means you both can divide the day in and day out responsibilities and rely on the other one for the fulfilment of those duties. Like in my case, I don't have to remember dates - of birthdays, anniversaries, important days of friends or family because my husband has a photographic memory. And in his case, umm... Okay, I cannot think of anything that he has totally left on me to take care of! That's kind of heartbreaking and I will take this up with him. But you got the point, right? Marriage is a big thing to run and at the same time the easiest when you believe in adding up the positives, nicety, and beauty of small things together, and make them the reasons of running it.



Handle with care- the Egos

Being egoistic is both good and bad. Ego is like salt- put in less and there is no taste. Put more and the dish is ruined beyond redemption. It is important to respect yourself. It is important that we build a wall around our sensitive hearts which people are not allowed to walk over. If we like something and others make a mockery out of it or parents try to be harsh on them, it is important to safeguard our hearts against forces which might make you compromise with your own happiness. But egos make us stubborn and sometimes even nasty. We live our lives nursing our egos and utilising them against various people we come across. In some cases they work, in others we fail. In instances where our egos are hurt, we react - good or bad, is relative.

Marriage however is a game where egos need to be shed a bit. This protective wall around our hearts need to loosen up a bit. Often boys in our society are told that if they do not protect their egos, they aren't real men! A family member of mine, who follows a hugely popular Godman, once told me that this Guruji advises that the best way to protect your marriage is to never hurt the husband's ego. Imagine how many people this man has infused with such a lame and obnoxious thought. If men grow up in such scenarios, they succumb to this business of keeping their guards up. A slight hint of the woman not fuelling to this ego will make them react negatively. Women have egos too. have seen many couples where the men have surrendered to their egoistic wives as they go about boasting their wealthy dads or better education.

The truth is that a marriage will only be a good one where both of you commit to let go of these egos - every single day! Relationships that are above the self worth of the two partners, where they are willing to make sacrifices for each other and commit to fidelity, are the only relationships worth having.

*Marriage is the alliance of two people, one of whom never remembers birthdays and the other who never forgets them.*

*- Ogden Nash*



PDA is futile. Infact it means just the opposite  
of what you are trying to show.

Love on Facebook is for social consumption, not personal. Flaunting your holidays, awesomeness as a couple and endless date nights does not make anyone jealous. It bores people. If I may add, this display says a lot about you as a couple. You might counter this with your argument that since you are living away from the family, these pictures are an attempt to make them see that you are fine. Puhleez, give me a break. There are albums you could share personally with family and we all know of them. I have even seen couples who seem to be getting married only so they could post pictures on social media. Why are you plaguing the beauty of your intimacy by the pressures of making them look good on Facebook?

My husband hated the fact that I put pictures of our holidays and special days on Facebook. He let me be and didn't ban this habit of mine. He always said that one day I will realise the stupidity of it. With time, I realised what his point was. While I would carefully select 15 pictures out of the 150 we clicked, just so that family and friends get a gist of a special occasion, I saw people putting as many as 200 pictures in their albums. There would be pictures of the rising sun, setting sun and then the sun rising again the next morning. This made me cringe at people's inability to understand that if they love each other so much, there is no need for validity from the outside world! Just like that, after one super holiday of mine, I took a stand for the sake of my wonderful relationship with my husband - and I stopped putting our updates online. I stopped letting the world know that we holiday once every two months. I stopped letting the world see that my sons are growing up fast and thus I controlled what I wanted others to know about US.

Facebook is just one way of this PDA. There are couples who believe in eating out of one plate at weddings or holding hands even while sitting in your drawing room. This silly need of letting the world know that you are in love will not make them believe so. Besides, what really is the point in proving anything to anyone? If you truly loved each other, you wouldn't involve any third person to appreciate it. You would be far apart in a room, looking at each other and still planning the night ahead in your heads. That's love.

Work on your relationship and make memories with the person you love. Share memories too, if I may add. But refrain from projecting yourselves as the ONLY ones enjoying life. Some of us are just not Facebooking them.



*Marriage should be a duet - when one sings, the other claps.*

*- Joe Murray*



You are not just two wheels of a car. You are also its brakes, gear and accelerator.

Let me bore you with another classic comparison that people will feed you when you are preparing to get married or are freshly married. They will tell you how marriage means you are two wheels of a car and need to run constantly and in sync if the marriage has to go on forever. What I will tell you is that first, if you are two, it is not a car that you are running. It is a scooter or a Motorcycle. Secondly, these people know nothing about driving. It is not just the tyres running a vehicle; the brakes, accelerator and the gear box deserve equal importance. Also, knowing that a happy marriage is a combined effort of all these things, regular servicing is a must. It will help you understand your issues better if you understand that the problems could not just be the two of you, but also things that you may be overlooking.

Following are instances where I applied these features of a car in my marriage:

**Brakes:** When life was tough, we applied brakes to take a break ( and reflect upon how to resurrect.

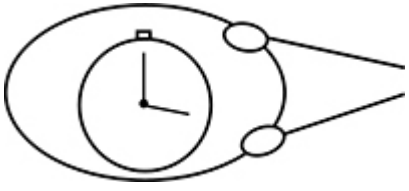
**Gear:** When one of us is down, the other one takes the reign of our lives and takes decisions and faces the world.

**Accelerator:** We believe in taking holidays on a regular basis. Living between two holidays makes us live the regular life easily

I learnt to drive a car seventeen years ago and I have realised that I cannot drive unless there is music in the car. Even if the temperature outside is outrageously sultry, I will not switch on the AC before I have switched on the music. I do head-bang-ng on a foot-thumping song, I hum along a soft number, I cry on a sad song, I smile at some melodies. The same habit applies to my marriage car. I have been sailing through it because I have kept the music live in my ears. I have enjoyed it because I have always considered it as something that relaxes me and not strains my senses.

*I think the best thing I can do is to be a distraction. A husband lives and breathes his work all day long. If he comes home to more table thumping, how can the poor man ever relax?*

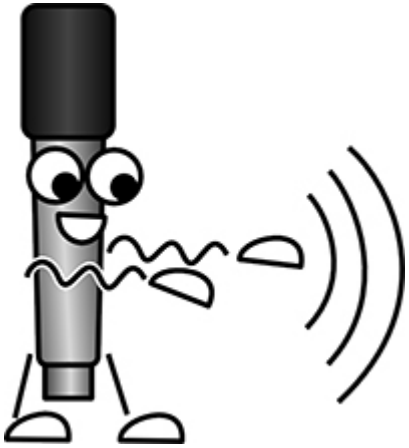
*- Jackie Kennedy*



Give it time

Initial hiccups are hiccups, not full stops. Trust me when I tell you that the first two years in a marriage are not what your entire life is going to be. The first festivals, the first family holiday, the first bad news in family, first anniversary celebrations - everything that happens in the initial years should not be assumed to be how things will be all your life. Yes, they are indicators but don't sulk about anything just yet. What we forget and then ruin is that we don't want to give our relationships and our positions in our new families, any time. We want to hurry up and prove our points. That is not fair at all. Neither fair on you nor fair on your partner. Warm up to your new equations and ease out on new situations.

Have you ever stood on the gas and boiled milk? If you haven't, try it today. You will realise that when you are in a hurry to go somewhere and waiting for the milk to get a boil, it will not! It is pretty strange but it is tried and tested. The milk boils (at least 97 out of 100 times) when you are not waiting for it, when you are distracted. How does this compare? If you will be impatient and desperate for your marriage to look like the ones they show in glossy magazines, it will not happen. The minute you ease out a bit, it will brim over and spill and spilling of milk, my friends, is considered a good omen in our country.



How you behave in public is  
his business too

One pleasant evening, I am out with family for a celebration at a swanky restaurant in South Delhi. The place isn't strict about acting formally (what I mean is that we aren't at Gymkhana Club) but even in a crowded restaurant, families are supposed to stick together, refrain from intruding into other people's tables and generally maintain an implied discipline. Two restaurant employees are roaming around the tables with mandolins in hand, playing soft old Hindi film songs. Suddenly, without any warning or encouragement, an Uncle right next to us starts singing the song that the men are playing on their instruments. He is singing well, so all the adjoining tables look at him, smile in appreciation but eventually get busy with their own business. The Uncle seems like a real shaukeen as he doesn't stop after one song. He goes on to his second and soon, the third one. All this while, his family – two teenage kids and a wife - are acting like they don't know this person they have come with! While uncle is getting occasional smiles from other tables, on his table there is silence and a slight embarrassment. His children quickly finish their dinner and head out of the restaurant. Soon, their mother follows while Uncle is enjoying his fourth (and we later realised, his last) song of the evening. As he prepares to settle his bill, sitting all alone after his family has deserted him, he looks at us (since we are on the closest table) and says, "My kids and wife were so embarrassed that they are waiting for me to finish my singing and are waiting in the Parking."

While we put up our most sympathetic expressions, I wondered what a mess that Aunty's life must be. She was feeling embarrassed of a certain behaviour which seems to be a common occurrence as Uncle told us before leaving, "I just cannot stop myself from singing."

We can assume her evening was spoilt. Even though nobody in the restaurant was objecting to his singing, mainly because he was doing a good job of it, his wife might have felt awkward sitting with someone who was looking to seek attention.



When you are in public with your spouse and do something that's not appreciated by your partner, even though you are habitual of doing that thing every time before you got married, isn't it wise to talk it out and know what exactly troubles your partner about this behaviour of yours? Talking loudly, dancing wildly drinking insanely chewing nails - there can be many things like these which may not be 'perfectly okay' with your partner and since you are both seen as one (you are a couple, remember?) why not come to a common ground regarding this one?

*Never get married in college; it's hard to get a start if a prospective employer finds you've already made one mistake.*

*- Elbert Hubbard*



Romance can never go away from marriage. It should never!

If you are getting married and intend to remain so forever, work on keeping romance alive in your relationship. Romance is not just the feeling of love. Romance is more the expression of it. The little things you do to remind each other that you still desire each other. Often marriage brings with it increase in weight, hormonal imbalance, family pressure, increased responsibilities and thus, stress. But a couple that continuously works on keeping their courtship romance alive, is a happier one.

When I was unmarried, I admired some married couples around me a great deal. They were often two people who looked like friends rather than fitting in the man and wife dyes. They would give each other high fives, they would laugh a lot and they always seemed to be taken care of by each other. was sure I was going to replicate this awesomeness whenever got married. Fortunately, V and N's Papa was my best friend in college and thus we had shared many things as friends before being lovers. We had a lot of common friends and com- { mon incidents as friends which gave us hearty laughs before we realised we wanted to spend our lives together. We weren't aware that this transition of being a married couple from being in a relationship could change the camaraderie between us. As expectations increased and we came under the lens of people who now viewed us a married couple, we realised, "Oh, we need to behave a certain way now!"

But in time, I realised that I cannot lay undue importance to how life is treating us. If we need to be happy we have to focus on things that kept us happy than to act in a way that suits our external situation. The arrival of children also affects how much a couple can retain in the romance wing of their relationship. So remember one thing loud and clear - Never let romance take a back seat. Do little things to keep it alive. Work on the following to keep your sanity intact:

- 1) Your appearance - Don't think that if your partner is always going to be there, why invest in looks. Look nice, feel nice, smell good, wear clothes he/she likes, visit the Salon, keep your feet neat... so on.
- 2) Alone time with each other - Even if it is at bedtime, utilise that time to talk, share, play, laugh, discuss and even fight!
- 3) The power of touching each other - This works! Hug her when she wants you to. Hold his hand when he needs it.
- 4) Saying I Love You - Often!
- 5) Reminding them repeatedly, that you miss them when they aren't around.

Let me give you a tiny instance from something I do everyday - this is my bit of keeping romance kicking - I lay a lot of importance on leaving everything and greeting and hugging V and N's Papa when he arrives home after work. I just drop whatever I am doing and rush to him. He admits that this makes him forget all the tension that the world has filled him with throughout the day. And now after almost ten years of experiencing this each and every day, he misses it when I am not at home when he returns from work. It is our little 'Romantic thing'. Make one of yours.

*For marriage to be a success, every woman and every man should have her and his own bathroom. The end.*

*- Catherine Zeta-Jones*



If it's important for your partner,  
it is for you too

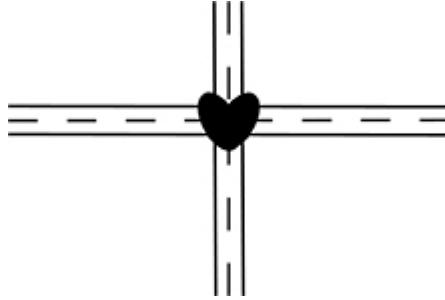
There are two kinds of people in this world. One who believe in God and others who do not. Now suppose you get married to someone who is the latter. How will that change your life? Most certainly it will be a difficult thing to deal with. took this example because this is one of the rare extremes that one can have to deal with in a marriage. There are many issues, equally big or small, which you realise are points that hamper your functioning because you aren't used to them. If your goal in life is to stay undisturbed, marriage is a rude shock, my friend. Other common issues which can have a varied degree of prioritisation in a couple's life is importance to families, children, career, ambition and attitude towards money. But what is marriage if there are no such surprises? If you are now sharing your life with someone, you must also be open to accommodate his/her beliefs. Do not give in to them and start practicing what he or she does. All you need to do is - accommodate. Make enough room for your partner to continue valuing these aspects. If you have known your partner before marriage, there are high chances that you would not get extreme, rude shocks regarding some of these things. But in an arranged set up, if there is something that is important for your partner, like visiting the temple every Monday, why would you want to curb it? Does it interfere with your happiness as a couple? Maybe curbing it will affect it. So stay open to getting to know a few things which may be important for the individual you married and make them important in your life too. Also, you will have to refrain from mentioning this difference between you and your spouse in public. It will not serve any purpose as it will only make you two easy subjects of mockery. One sure shot way of instilling trust in your partner is to show them how well you have made one of his/her pet peeve, your own.

Do not enter the temple but at least drop her to it? This is doable.

*Any intelligent woman who reads the marriage contract, and then goes into it, deserves all the consequences.*

*- Isadora Duncan*





Coming mid way in an important decision  
is not surrender. It is often love

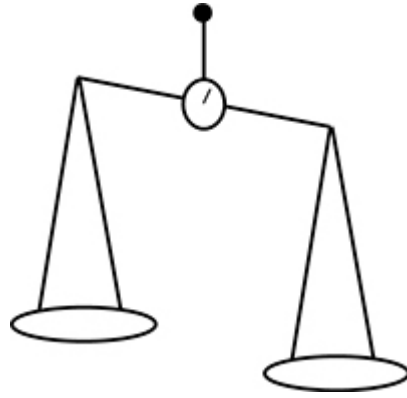
Stretch and stretch a rubber band and break it forever. Stretch and stretch a chewing gum and lose it as it gets stuck to your hand and is cumbersome to come off. Stretch and stretch a balloon by blowing into it and burst it with a bam! Need more comparisons for the point I am trying to drive home?

Many earth-shattering decisions will depend on the wisdom of the two of you after you are married. The funny thing is that they will always look so enormous that you will wonder if you both are even mature enough to tackle them. Till yesterday you were imagining life to be a bean bag sort of relaxation and then suddenly someone has thrown you into life changing situations from a catapult. Well, that's marriage. When the first set of such decisions is to be taken, your graph starts from being enthusiastic and ends in frustrations. The latter obviously is the case when there are disagreements between you two. Trust me, I am not talking about the decisions which relate to choosing between Mc Donalds and Pizza Hut. I am talking about serious stuff like who will take care of the car's EMI or who to invite for a housewarming party. Since both of you consider yourself mature enough to handle your own problems, a slight indication of non-conformity is bound to be irksome. So either you decide to be stubborn about your stand or you take that first step towards a fulfilled alliance where you decide to resolve the matter by making small sacrifices. In the examples I quoted earlier, for instance, you could decide that while the car's EMI could be your problem, it could be spread over five instead of four years to lessen the monthly burden. Or your partner could call his irritating old neighbour, but promises to take care of him the entire evening and not expect anything from you.

Walk towards each other and not in opposite directions. If not at all times (as a clever spouse can start taking your surrender for granted), then at least for the sake of your love, be together at some crucial junctures.

*One advantage of marriage is that, when you fall out of love with him or he falls out of love with you, it keeps you together until you fall in again.*

*- Judith Viorst*



“Atte Daal ke bhaav pata lagna”  
is a reality

Remember when you wanted to buy that expensive video game and Dad refused to fund it and assured you that when you will “grow up” you will know why your parents couldn’t afford it? I am talking about that. If you are getting married, you have grown up. And when you grow up, there are some harsh realities which are part of your daily life now.

Try and come back to the real world as soon as it is possible after your marriage. Get out of the hokey stories of eternal bliss that you have imagined a marriage giving to two people. Face the realities head on and you will see there is nothing more rewarding and fulfilling than marriage. If you thought getting married was the most expensive part of the whole deal, be aware that from now on everything will get more and more expensive. Your holidays, your comforts, your food, your drives, and your lifestyle - everything will now have a higher price tag. There is nothing wrong with that either. It is just that marriage is a natural progression towards a more long-term way of life that you will now adopt.

There are priorities to be set now and you must understand that everything that you will eat will come out from the money you could spend on buying a new pair of shoes. The old Black and White movies showed us how the father postponed buying a new shirt because he had to pay the school fees of the little (oily haired) hero’s rickety school where he was excelling in every subject. This dad knew that the times of impressing his wife by wearing a crisp white shirt (don’t forget that while the movie was Black and White, in reality, his screen wife could see the actual colour of the shirt) were gone and decided that his son’s education was more important than that. You will also be expected to do the same.

As a couple you will start making lists of things that need immediate attention in a month and postpone other things for the next. This will irritate you, maybe even make you fight with each other but what needs to be done, needs to be done.

*Only choose in marriage a man whom you would choose as a friend if he were a woman.*

*- Joseph Joubert*



Joys double when the pains that you  
shared are larger

Someone I know had a series of tragedies in her parents' house. She first lost her Dad and then Mum, within a gap of six months or so. She was devastated and we, all her family members, were doing our bit to explain that all this is destiny. But we knew in our hearts that this was too big a tragedy to blame on her destiny. To lose both your parents who were perfectly hale and hearty, that too with barely any time gap in between was certainly too much to bear. It is at times like these one needs a partner who just doesn't try and talk you out of your pains but also feels it as much as you do. It is now that you realise that the only one who can sail you out of the loss of someone very close is someone you are closest to. Since this was a close family member, I got down wondering what I would do if something like this happened to me. Will I have a cushion that I can collapse into and slowly come out of such a grave loss? I am fortunate that I had my answer instantly.



Don't guard your pains or keep them within yourself. Don't try to look stronger or better or wiser by bearing it all alone. Marriage is a wonderful opportunity to have someone who can carry the entire burden of yours on his/her shoulders. Marriage is about being able to share rather than bear it all by yourself. I remember watching a famous Pakistani serial where the storyline was such that the female protagonist considered herself so strong that she did not involve her good-looking, caring and super understanding husband any chance to peep into her life. She wanted to help her mother buy a house and took a personal loan from office while her husband -a huge businessman who could have given that money from the top drawer of his office desk - was kept in the dark. The story kept getting more and more interesting as the sensitive husband tried to look into her phone to seek out things that made his wife look perpetually troubled, or tried to talk to her about the issue that made her go silent on him. A point came when this woman simply refused to share her sorrows with him and decided to move out of the marriage simply because she wanted no help from her husband. It's then when the husband tells her that his reasons for constantly nagging her to tell him her issues was not because he wanted to look manly or powerful by being able to help her. All he wanted her to know was that marriage is not about compartmentalising yourself in a strict chamber where you feel proud of shouldering your own miseries all by yourself. In fact in that chamber where you are suffocating your feelings, you are also making your partner suffocate as your arrogance is thwarting their trust, confidence and camaraderie with you.

Think about it

*Well married a person has wings, poorly married shackles.*

*- Henry Ward Beecher*



Her question, "Am I looking fat?"  
is equal to his question,  
"Can I watch Cricket instead?"

There are some things in our life which we know for a fact, but we are still fishing for conformation from people on them. As per the book *Women are Crazy, Men are Stupid* by Howard J Morris and Jenny Lee, the top most question that men dread being asked is: Am I Fat?

They go on to explain how every woman who asks this already knows the answer. They are right. You are either fat or you are not. Tell me, all you women, what exactly is the answer you are looking for? Which amongst the following three, most-common answers will make you happy?

“Yes, a bit. But there are ways to help that.” - Won’t you kill him for saying this?

“Of course not! You haven’t gained a bit ever since we got married!” - Won’t you kill him again for not even noticing those six kgs that you put on and how the jeans you wore on your honeymoon now occupies the last slot in that pile in your almirah?

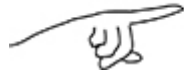
“You look gorgeous as ever!” - Yeah, this is the most diplomatic answer, and thus used commonly by all intelligent men.

All men know that they can never call a woman fat. They cannot even imply that. So women must realise the futility of putting them in a spot where the right answer is not the right thing to say

Similarly for women, when a man asks, “Baby, can I watch cricket now?” and then without waiting for her answer, switch channels, it is a stupid question. Of course he can watch it. He will watch it. He is already watching it! While ideally she would love to snap the cable off or break that screen, she is reminded how he smiles gently every time she wants to know if she is fat, and so she ends up saying, “Yes baby of course. And I am sure Virat will strike a century today!”

*If you want to sacrifice the admiration of many men for the criticism of one,  
go ahead, get married.*

*- Katharine Hepburn*



Name game

In our country it is unimaginable for a girl to not take her husband's name after marriage. I know families where the family renames the girl when she becomes their daughter-in-law. Your passport needs to now say that your maiden name and marital name have been tampered with. For me and V and N's Papa, this thought never crossed our minds. We did not even spend an iota of a second on wondering whether or not I will drop my father's surname and take his. I continued as Parul Tyagi and continued being happily married. Some curious relatives did ask why I was 'harassing' my husband (and his mother) by being stubborn about this. I tried with all my might to explain that I did not even once get pointed upon by them to adopt their name!

Why is it so difficult for our society to accept people who attach little or no importance to such irrelevant things? Why judge my relationship with my husband by comparing me to your daughter who happily added her husband's surname after her original one, thus respecting both families? (Babe, your \ name looks so big on Facebook that by the time I finish reading it, I have updated my 100 words' status message). And then there are those 'ultra sweet' girls who insert their husband's first names too after their own names. To each his own. Leave me alone and I promise I will leave you too. To some of us, it does not matter if we are known as our husband's wife only because we have his surname. Also don't think that we love our fathers more so we retained his name. The name we grew up with is our identity It is part of who we are. It is a portion of who you decided to get married to, boys. Rise above insisting that your wife takes your surname. Instead, give her reasons to be proud of your name.



There are days you feel un-attracted.  
That is normal



If you woke up one morning, looked at your partner who is still sleeping and did not feel like smiling at him/her- It is NORMAL. Don't trust those fancy linen advertisements where a couple fights with pillows in the bed early morning. Feeling un-attracted is quite a claustrophobic feeling, especially when it happens to you for the first time, as you may curse yourself for being stupid enough to marry this person.

A girl who has had access to her mother's Cosmopolitans will go back to the articles where they advise you to Stay Calm and Rekindle Romance (that would include serving him tea on the bed, leaving love notes around the house or wearing a top that shows the cleavage, just enough to get back into his 'attractive' zone).

What will the guy do? Maybe ping a best friend who recently got married and ask if he could come out for a drink tonight- alone! Exchanging notes over 'important' issues has always helped in the past.

But trust me, within a few minutes of going through this turbulence, life will pass by you. You will even forget something like this happened to you.

Life, as I have said before, is not a fairy tale. Firstly, realise that it is perfectly Normal and secondly, it is not permanent.

Usually you feel un-attracted to your partner when you have had a fight. And sometimes it's got to do with PMS. A hormonal dysfunction when you look at your spouse and ask yourself - "I actually married this person?" But even if this happens without any apparent reason, do not over-focus on this thought. It is a passing feeling. What can ruin this harmless feeling phase is your over-reaction to it! You start doubting if there is a future with this person or not. You blame your lack of sexual activity as your partner has lately been busy at work and often comes home when you have dreamt half your dreams for the night. Trust me people, there is nothing wrong with your relationship till you have resolved to make it wrong. Your partner has not suddenly become 'unattractive'; it is you who are 'feeling' un-attracted for a moment. See the difference?

Whoever, fleeing marriage and the sorrows that women cause, does not wish to wed comes to a deadly old age.

- Hesiod



When in doubt,  
wear your spouse's shoes

Are you saying in your head that those heels will be really tough to get into? Not just difficult, they will be highly uncomfortable? You are right. But sometimes getting into her shoes will be the best way to know why she is behaving the way she is.

I was reading through an issue of Outlook magazine which had featured a bunch of Power Couples of our country, who were both extremely qualified education-wise and successful professionals. The gist of the story from the Editor's point of view was the fact that the saying - behind every successful man is a woman - now works the opposite too. For a married woman to make it to the corner office, a supporting husband is invaluable as otherwise she would never be able to make her mark without guilt. As I went on to read the interviews of one couple after another, there was a sense of repetition. Each one of them was unanimously saying that since they understood how life is at work, they gave each other enough opportunities, help, space and support to grow professionally.

Now this is exactly what I am talking about. When there is a deadlock over an issue and your partner is pleading you to 'try and understand' where they are coming from, take a deep breath and step into their shoes. Throw that ego out of the window for a moment and put yourself in your partner's position. If you cannot understand why he/she cannot make it to a family function because of an office deadline, think what would you want your partner to do if you were stuck like that for your own work. You would want him/her to pick up the phone and say, "It's okay, I'll manage the family. You relax and finish up the work." This level of understanding will only come when you know how tricky some situations can be and trust your partner enough that they would be feeling equally awful for not being with you.

*All men make mistakes, but married men find out about them sooner.*

*- Red Skelton*



Silence is not golden.  
Keep talking

For someone like me, silence is not even an option. I am never silent, except of course when I am sleeping, because if I am awake, I am talking. I talked even while going through a tough 12 hour labour pain ordeal and V and N's Papa was impressed at my ability to just not give up on talking!

Now the kind of talking that I do is not the one I am recommending to you. What I mean to suggest is that if there is anything that you wished you could share with your partner - do it! There is no better way to come close than to communicate. Do not bear the pain alone and don't keep accumulating stuff in your hearts, fearing that speaking out will ruin your equation. More often than not, your honesty and having the courage for speaking out would be appreciated and will enhance trust and companionship between you two. While it is important to know when you need to shut up (so that small issues do not assume larger shapes), it is also important to not go inside your shell, refusing to talk to our spouse about problems/dilemmas/ doubts that you may be nurturing alone.

Researchers will also tell you that in a good marriage, women talk and men listen. And I heard an extended version of this observation too. They say that if men kept injecting this monologue with a correctly timed "Yes baby", then sex might happen too. Funny, yes but not the reality. Since marriage needs daily doses of efforts, talking is one of the most integral part of this dose. Even if you are the "I don't talk much" type- talk!



Hold each other's hand while walking

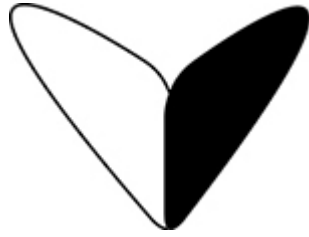


I am a little averse to people who display their love to the public at busy restaurants, weddings, movie halls, malls and other such places. I instantly know that there is something wrong with their relationship; that is why there is a need to show the world that all is hunky dory. I may be coming to a wrong conclusion in most cases, but that is how I will interpret your closeness in public.

At the same time, when V and N's Papa and I are walking by ourselves, we do walk hand in hand. (Please note that I hate walking, and if I have agreed to go on a walk with him, it is usually at times when one of us badly needs the other for some alone time).

I recommend holding hands while walking for leisure. Yes, you should also hold hands while you are walking from one side to the other side of the road if you suck at crossing roads, but when you are walking for just being with each other, interlock the fingers.

I did not come across any internet researches (thank God for that) where couples who held hands lived longer than those who didn't, but I realised that when married, I had the 'licence' to hold his hand and just walk in silence (another unnatural feat for me to achieve - silence). I realised that often our grip would tell us how the other one was feeling at that moment. You also realise that you can never get that feeling while holding any other hand now. That tightness, that firmness, that belongingness - it is so vital and fulfilling for you as a couple. Try it!



Fulfil each other. Do not seek to  
complete each other

I always considered myself to be a very balanced, fair and mature girl. I was always the winner in any fight because I never, ever lost my cool and always put my point across the best way. I had that soothing sort of an effect on whoever I was arguing with. All this was when I was not married. One day after a terrible argument with my husband I realised that I sucked at reconciliation. So did he! That was quite a revelation. I, always the sober one, was just not giving up or making any efforts to be the first one to relent in that fight. What I also realised in the same breath was how wonderful a man my husband is. He did have a point and was not going to give in to my silly ask. It was then that I decided to not fight out things in my marriage. I sat down with him and we decided to never, ever fight again. I realised that by arguing over our difference of opinions, we were trying to make the other one feel about things exactly like we do. And that is so boring. We are two human beings, intelligent, well read, from good families and thinking brains. How could we strive to make the other one become like us when we were actually full in our own selves?

Don't read up wrong books or watch stupid films that ask you to look for people with qualities that you DO NOT have. It is like saying that because you do not like to enter the kitchen, look for a girl who loves the kitchen. Is life all about cooking three meals and doing the dishes after that? No! Life is about sitting and laughing about where the next meal will come from if none of you wishes to cook it. I laugh on the silliest comedy shows on T V. When I turn around to look at my man, he doesn't even have a smile on his lips. I ask him,

"That didn't make you laugh?"

"Nah"

"Shall we change the channel then?"

"Of course not!"

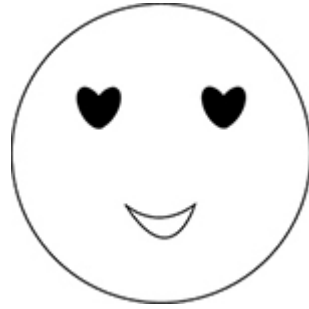
"Why? You are getting bored."

"I am happy that it is making you laugh."

You will enjoy more with a person who is happy in your happiness and not with someone who is happy when you are not and not happy when you are. Think!

*Marriage may be the closest thing to Heaven or Hell any of us will know on this earth.*

*- Edwin Louis Cole*



Recognise the good points of your partner

Let's leave the job of being perfect on Aamir Khan! The continuous search for 'only' good qualities in your partner is an oppressive and cumbersome task for everyone involved. No one is perfect and trust me that if someone was perfect, it would be impossible to live with that person. You are the best person to know your partner's good and bad qualities. For a blissful life, accentuate the good ones. Constant cribbing about the bad qualities will bring misery to both of you. You think this is easier said than done? Okay, let's make it easy for you. Get a pen and a paper. Write your name and the name of your partner on top. Under each name write GOOD and BAD. Now for every bad habit that you can think of your partner, write one bad of yours which he/she complains about. Mind you, if your partner has pointed out that your everyday reminders of his/her bad habits is also one of your bad habits, note it down. Now move to the Good points. Enumerate all the good habits that you think you have. Every time you have written one (I am sure this list will be endless for you), force yourself to write a positive point in your partner. Spend at least 10 minutes on this list and stick it on your fridge. Stick it for just half an hour and you will yourself realise how futile this exercise was. If your partner is reading this book too, he/she will be making one too and sticking it on the same fridge, right? (You guys have personal fridges? Huh!) As you will read the list under your name's BAD Points, your soul will cringe.

Another important thing you will realise is that when some third person (be it your best friend, cousin or a nosy aunt) points out a negative in your partner, you feel like boxing the person on his nose. Obviously this happens if you love your partner. Why? Because you know that the goodness in your partner far exceeds the silly bad qualities that you unnecessarily waste your life on.

How easy it is for one human being to point out the bad points in another. What we must know is that when two human beings are married, the importance of good points is greater than in any other relationship. It brings intimacy, and ensures harmony.

*A successful marriage is an edifice that must be rebuilt every day.*

*- Andre Maurois*





Growing old together is a reality. It not just sounds good

Who can ever forget that scene in the movie The Wedding Singer where Adam Sandler walks down the aisle of an airplane to Drew Barrymore and sings: I could be the man who grows old with you.

Super duper romantic, huh? I am sure half of you reading this have already used this phrase or are planning to say it to your current or future wives. First let's try and understand why the idea of 'growing old together' sounds so utterly-butterly romantic. I believe it sounds like you are making a long-term commitment. It also assures longevity of your relationship with your partner. Also, it is too perfect an expression of wanting to share everything with that one person. All these feelings form the foundations of an institution like marriage which needs these sort of frills. But it is not just the beauty of this statement that you should rely upon.

Growing old is a scientific process which can sometimes be difficult to gulp down a married throat. The physical, psychological and mental repercussions of age aren't things you can deny or turn a blind eye to. Take a thing as simple as your partner acquiring a condition like Diabetes because his/her genes were made that way. So while you have had a fruitful four years of marriage where you have vacationed and finished a kilogram of chocolate truffle cake between the two of you, suddenly Diabetes will expect even you to cut down on such indulgences as the cake just doesn't seem as tasty as it did earlier when you had your partner to share it with.

If you considered growing old together as the most beautiful thing to do earlier, stick to it. Accept it as a natural process and be objective rather than wonder what the hell happened.

*It is a full time job being honest one moment at a time, remembering to love, to honor, to respect. It is a practice, a discipline, worthy of every moment.*

*- Jasmine Guy*

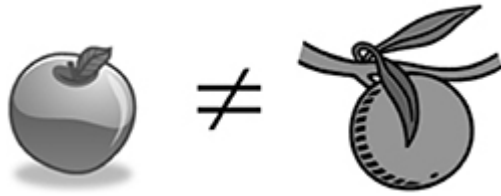


Candle light dinners are not clichés.  
They are often rejuvenating

In the daily rat race of meeting deadlines, handling extended families' functions, paying the bills, managing the maids and groceries - make time for a cheesy candle light dinner. Buy clothes for that dinner, make bookings, arrange music, order a cake, pop a champagne and just sit across a flickering candle as a couple. Do not bother about friends or cousins who make fun of you if you are booking such a date with your spouse. If they are very troublesome, don't even tell them. Also buy a small gift. Small, but an expensive, exclusive gift.

Please realise the importance of candle light dinners. They put you back in touch with how you were when you were dating or were in courtship. They give you the silence that pushes you to look and feel romantic. The ambience is so over bearing that you cannot help but say nice things to each other. There will come a time in between that dinner when you will have nothing to say at all. At that moment you will both look each other in the eye and smile. The smile that will evaporate the memories of the last fight you had. The twinkle in the eye which will reassure you that the promises are still intact, so what if the coming weekend is bringing an irritating relative's wedding which must be attended under societal pressures? The restaurants who host such dinners also help you by training their staff to look very happy about this whole episode. They speak softly, bow their heads a lot and treat you so gently that you are pressurised to re-fall in love! It is a conspiracy, play to it.

Did I mention somewhere that you should carry a nice gift? One brilliant suggestion for the gift - a note that the next month's dinner is already booked.



She is not your mother.  
He can never be your father.

Daughters are blessings. How much ever some of our countrymen try to make their population thin, the truth is that daughters are truly amazing. They grow up watching their fathers turn around every problem into a solution. They idolise this man as someone perfect who will always protect them. The trouble begins when these daughters start looking for such perfection in the man they want to get married to. We can understand how this is a problem if we first know that fathers are not perfect because (God?) suddenly turns a man perfect when he makes him a father. He is perceived so because by nature, daughters are more attached to their dads than to their moms. If you have a brother, ask him if he thinks that your father is the man who is beyond comparison. Most likely he will not agree and please do not hate him for that. It's just natural. For him, your mother is perfect and I will address him later in this article.

While you will always, at the back of your mind, see how differently your partner is reacting vis a vis your Dad, do not bog him down by constantly reminding him that you think your father did it better. It is irritating, unreasonable and sometimes can even be a deal-breaker. You are on an equal footing with your spouse. Are you so with your Dad? Your Dad is supposed to take care of you. All the logics along the lines of - "I brought you in this world" to "Oh, she is so small" - apply to him. While your husband may love you as much, his way of approaching your problems, difficulties, happiness and achievements is bound to be different. He is your counterpart. He will do everything not because nature wants it that way but because he has chosen to do it.

Moving over to all you men reading this - Yes, your mother makes the best Aloo Parathas in this world and can select the best bhindis from heaps of bhindis in a vegetable market, but please stop looking for the same woman in your partner. Do not commit the mistake of reminding your wife that she cooks awful food, keeps the house disorganised or raises your kids badly and you loved the way your mother did it all. The same logic applies in this case. Your mother was someone's wife too. Ask that person if he thought she was anything in comparison to his mother!

This is a dangerous comparison. It does more harm to your relationship than bringing the kind of improvement you want in your partner. Keep your relationships at different levels. Not for the sake of harmony but simply because they ARE different.



*In marriage there are no manners to keep up, and beneath the wildest accusations no real criticism. Each is familiar with that ancient child in the other who may erupt again. We are not ridiculous to ourselves. We are ageless. That is the luxury of the wedding ring.*

*- Enid Bagnold*



His mother won't support you in an argument. Why even expect that?

So I have lived with my mum-in-law all my married life and I share a super awesome relationship with her. We are both similar in more ways than one and that has really helped me adjust well into her world. Also, my parents have nailed it inside my brain that if I ever have to make a choice in my life to keep them happy or my mother-in-law happy, I have to choose her. But despite having a great understanding with her I have seen that she never, ever takes my side when her son and I are having a friendly discussion and are on either sides of it. The conversation typically ends like this:

Me: Ma, you tell me who is right?

She: \*quiet\*

Me: Ma, you know I am right here. Please make him understand.

My husband is smiling in confidence, knowing the futility of me expecting support from his mom!

She: I don't know. You both decide. Although I think he is also not all that wrong.

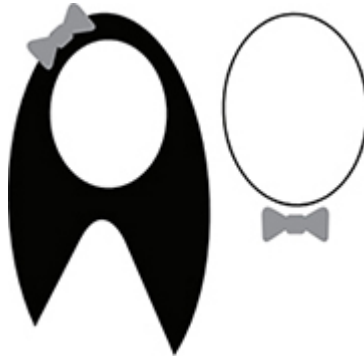
Now we are on our own and usually doing what he was asking us to! I can fare up if I am immature enough to expect that she will side with me. Mind you, mom-in-law is involved in our arguments only in fun and silly arguments like which flavour of cake we should call in for her birthday or which relative of ours is her favourite in our opinion. I love the fact that she always supports her son and I will do the same with her grandchildren.

Lalita Pawar thrived on being a mean mother-in-law all her life. There must be thus some merit in the old adage that mother-in-laws can make or break a marriage. Why just a woman's, in some cases even the man's mother-in-law is so meddling and nosy that it becomes difficult to think straight, especially during an argument. But the focus of this point is on the mother-in-law who witnesses more of the couple. In our country, she is usually the mother of the man. It doesn't matter if you live with her or not, probability says that you will risk having an argument in front of her rather than in front of the girl's mother.

There is a sense of displacement of ownership. She has to now share her baby with you. How would you feel when your time comes? Know that this relationship may be complex but I believe a lot of things in your equation with your spouse can improve if you respect and love his/her mother.

*Before marriage, a girl has to make love to a man to hold him. After marriage, she has to hold him to make love to him.*

*- Marilyn Monroe*



Pinks are for girls and Blues are  
for men. There is some truth in this

I know I am risking a full blown debate on being a sexist or propagating clichés but I am not totally wrong when I say that there are some things which suit women and other which suit a man. For instance, I grew up in a family where men were never seen in the kitchen. My father still cannot fetch water for himself from the kitchen as he is not aware where the glasses are kept or bottles could be. This doesn't mean that he would instruct my mom to do it; he would mostly remain thirsty till he spots someone around the house who could help him get a water-filled glass. I am not sure if this affected me or I was born like that, but I have never liked men carrying vegetable bags home on their way back from work. Trust me, I am not asserting this view on anyone or judging any of your fathers if they did so. It was just something I did not see too often around me.

I got married to a guy who was somewhere between how my dad is and how these uncles are. He is the best combination of these two extremes. While he has changed the nappies of his sons, he has never brought me bananas from the market saying, "I was passing by and I liked them so I thought I'll buy a dozen."

What I am trying to tell you is that compartmentalisation of stuff which you consider belong to girls and some that belong to boys, holds significance even in a marriage. Some of your notions might get blurred and some may get reinforced but the truth is that you will end up making your house a bit of yours and a bit of him. I have seen friends vacating their wardrobes as their wives need at least three cupboards to accommodate their clothes. At the same time I have seen girls buy good looking ash trays because their man will hang out with boys too.



Monogamy is not a favour.  
It's your partner's right



After the Tiger Woods story came out, I remember reading several articles by marriage counsellors and marriage experts from around the world, debating why we humans attach so much value to sexual exclusivity. They talked about how two people in a marriage could remain absolutely faithful and committed to each other and still just have sex with other people. They also talked about how fidelity is an important pillar of a strong relationship but a non-committed sexual encounter cannot be the end of it. Tiger Wood's wife, I am sure, did not agree to these theories and separated.

I do not want to get into the For and Against of this debate. I can only tell you how I perceived this statement before my marriage and whether marriage altered my opinion. Largely, no. Marriage is a very beautiful bond. Your intimacy and the things you share with your partner are special because you do not share them with anyone else. Isn't that a reason enough for you to not justify your urge or need for infidelity? Marriage leads to dependence - both emotional and physical. The interdependency of these two aspects will explain why Monogamy cannot be branded as a favour.

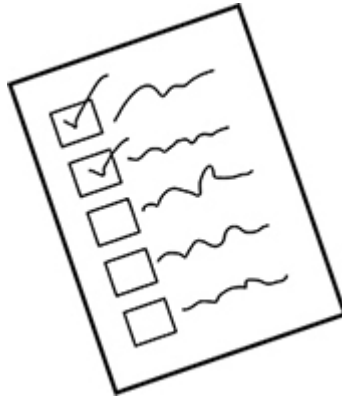
Emotional Dependency: If you have a partner who trusts you with his/her innate desires and needs, can you imagine letting them down by feigning ignorance when the time comes? They could be looking up to you for who you are, they could be discounting a lot of your negatives, they could be correcting a lot of your flaws - for doing all this don't they deserve you, just for themselves?

Physical Dependency: I have heard a lot of stories about Partner Swapping being rampant in some social circles. Apparently, men keep all the car keys on the centre table and women pick a random key. Whoever owns the key they pick is the one who takes them home. The rest is history. Well, to each his own, but in case this is not your life, chances are you and your partner depend on each other for the normal physical asks of your existence. In such a case, letting your partner follow it and you wavering from it sounds a little scary, no? I mean, Karma will catch up with you if nothing else.

If you love your partner, polygamy will never cross your mind. And the day you cease to love them, walk out of the marriage gracefully and have encounters with others. While you are married, do not deny a faithful partner his or her right!

*All married couples should learn the art of battle as they should learn the art of making love. Good battle is objective and honest - never vicious or cruel. Good battle is healthy and constructive, and brings to a marriage the principles of equal partnership.*

*- Ann Landers*



The seven promises of marriage are often told when the bride and groom are half sleeping. They should precede all marriage rituals

I am talking about the Saat Pheras that happen in a Hindu Marriage. They typically happen when all your guests are gone and the caterer is fighting with the bride's father on the exact number of plates that got lifted. It is also the time when your mother is filling your ears with the names of the remainder guests and the ones who left even though she considered them close enough to have stayed till the pheras. Around the same time, the three members of the Band wala, who have been left behind, are hanging around at the background waiting to play the saddest wedding song ever - Baabul ki duayen (which Indian wedding is complete unless Balraj Sahni has reminded the bride's father that he too had a role to play in raising his daughter!). Amidst so many emotions and chaos, the tired bride and groom are made to sit in front of the panditji who looks as fresh as a daisy. The panditji is actually the only one looking like that since he did not dance in the Baraat, or helped in stealing the groom's shoes, or welcomed the 1000 guests with a bowed head, or even gossiped with the Mamaji from Agra about how weddings nowadays are all about showing off. The two most important people, however, are now exhausted and waiting to find a bed. No, you sillies. Not for the suhaagraat but for some sleep! Ironically however, this is THE TIME for which the two families, who are now staring at the ground with hung heads, spent so much money and energy for. Ultimately it is all about the seven vows that the couple must take to lead a happy life together.

Let's know what those Seven Pheras mean and then you tell me if I am wrong when I say that ideally, these vows should be taught in the school curriculum rather than surfacing at a time when the last thing you want is someone telling you to make promises to this person next to you who looks like he/she can sleep on your shoulder, like in a roadways bus.

“Om esha ekapadi bhava iti prathamam”

A prayer to provide each other food and nourishment.

“Om oorje jara dastaya”

Together we will defend our family and home.

“Om rayas santu joradastayaha”

A promise to raise wealth by honest means and give comforts to the family; also to stay faithful to each other.

“Om mayo bhavyas jaradastaya ha”

A pray for a happy life with good children filled with all health.

“Om prajabhyaha Santu jaradastayaha”

We work together for the happiness and wellbeing of our family. May we have righteous and obedient children. May our loved ones be filled with happiness and prosperity. May we share each other’s good fortune.

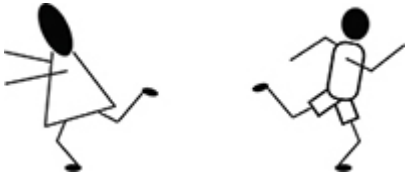
“Yajne home shashthe vacho vadet”

I will always be by your side in your endeavours.

“Om sakhi jaradastayahga.”

With this last Phera we forever belong to each other and will remain friends forever...

Don’t they say everything that makes any relationship unique? If only reading this book had not been the only way to find out these meanings.



'Giving each other space' and 'Running away' are two different things

We have seen in movies how they over dramatise the whole 'giving space to each other' aspect of a marriage. But if we know the difference between respecting each other's privacy and invading into it, life will be easier. Don't hype your personal space like it is a high security prison where entry and exit is strictly with permissions. Marriage is an arrangement when one person, chosen from the entire wide world, is brought closer to you in a way that's special. Now imagine haunting each other with a constant reminder that while you can share each other's bodies, you still cannot share certain things. Don't get me wrong here. I am not recommending that you have a life which is now totally inclusive of this partner. Spending time with friends, shopping alone, eating out with your own people without your spouse, is nice but not when you tag this 'me time' as your space where your partner is not allowed and is expected to respect it too.

A relationship that suffocates either of you will only bring misery. After marriage, there will be times you will feel that everything you are doing is affecting your spouse and thus there is no life of your own. At the same time you know that you are connected with a delicate cord which cannot be snapped just because you feel like being your old single self who could go on a drive with high music on. Make your married life a great cocktail of the best of both these thoughts. Know that when you let your partner a bit on his/her own, they miss you too. This only strengthens your relationship. Not, of course, when you are married to the wrong person. If your love is intact, being on your own works wonders for a relationship. It boosts trust, dependency and vigour. Do not expect your spouse to stop interfering in matters that you think only you can handle well. Everything now is for the two of you. Make the other one participate in your life but trust each other so much that you know your individuality is an important ingredient for keeping your partner happy. No two people are similar in terms of the 'space' they require. Not even you and your spouse. Hence, you cannot crib that while you have shared your Facebook password with your husband, he doesn't let you touch the diary he writes in, every night. The entire beauty of this point is that we have to respect each other's privacy and still make our partners a seamless part our existence.



*Marriage is good for those who are afraid to sleep alone at night.*

*- St. Jerome*



Secrets are lies

We have talked about how it is important for every couple to have their own space and privacy in a marriage. If you are in touch with your innermost self, chances are your relationship will be an intimate one. Simply because your partner trusts you with your space, the need to give back to him/her with more and more honesty goes up. However, there is a tricky bit to this arrangement. Aren't there some secrets that you have kept to yourself all your life? The ones you shared with a friend whom you trusted with not letting anyone know of them? I say, keep those secrets to yourself. Anything that doesn't concern the well-being of your spouse or that happened before your spouse appeared in the scenery of your life, can be your harmless little secret which you want to keep to yourself. It is your right to have a life that's untouched by anyone. But the problem begins when you keep increasing the 'secrets list' even when you are committed in a marriage.

If you are keeping secrets from your partner which you know will harm your relationship, wither away your image, break his/ her trust, burst a bubble you have gotten them to believe in, then such things cannot be classified as secrets. These are lies. By calling them your secrets you are trying to lessen the burden on your soul but in reality you are just lying.

Before you get married, just think about the number of the following points that you will mark 'yes' today. And then if you want a healthy, long lasting marriage, are you willing to open up to your partner and erase out this mess from your head?

- Are there are some messages on your WhatsApp which you cannot allow your partner to see?
- Are there people in your life who you just cannot disclose to your spouse?
- Is there something wrong with you physically which, when known to your partner, will jeopardise your marriage?
- Are there any inclinations or addictions which you know will affect a normal relationship in an arrangement like marriage?

- Are all the secrets that you have so long cherished in your life safe enough for your partner to live with?

*Every good relationship, especially marriage, is based on respect. If it's not based on respect, nothing that appears to be good will last very long.*

*- Amy Grant*



Sex is an important ingredient of marriage. No, not just love making. SEX

When the initial wedding smell wares off and you slowly start coming out of the newly wedded cocoon, amongst other things, you realise that the hype behind coupledness is a bit overrated. When routine-ness starts to set in, your weekends start to drag. You gradually understand that there is life beyond your partner too. There are things that you would love to do all by yourself or without your partner. If you have hobbies that your partner is not interested in, you start going back to them. Your love will remain, it is just that you now know that being on your own and not attaching unnecessary compulsion on your partner is just fine. So if he wants to spend his afternoon sleeping, you will call a cousin who lives nearby to catch a movie. The afternoon will be fun and you will realize that while being married, you can still be your single self if there is a need to be so.

However, amidst this realisation there is something that you can get only out of your partner. That, in an acceptable norm in our society, is SEX. Sex is something that you will only indulge in with your spouse. The level of communication and dependence between the two of you because of your sexual activity is something that is exclusive to this one person. This is why I say, however selfish or shallow or dirty I may be sounding to you, sex is the most important ingredient of marriage.

Why I distinguished it from love making is because love making is just a fancier word given to the same act. It has emotions, desires, lust and belonging attached to it. Sex is that physical necessity which every normal functioning human being needs and when that need is being fulfilled by your spouse, that person definitely becomes more important than others.

Many people cheat on their partner due to non-fulfilment or under-fulfilment of this bodily need. Studies have shown how faking orgasms, weakening desires or inability to satisfy your partner has led to strained relationships and with time when these incidents accumulate, couples drift away. At the same time, I would say that do not over-read into sexless spells in your marriage. Wondering “if something is wrong with us” on a night your partner chose sleep over sex, is wrong. Like marriage, sex is an ongoing aspect of a relationship. What is important is that both partners remain interested in each other to fulfil this need.

*There is nothing in the world like the devotion of a married woman. It is a thing no married man knows anything about.*

*- Oscar Wilde*





You change to stay happy in a marriage.  
Don't blame each other for it

Every woman wants her man to change after marriage. And every man wishes she doesn't! Quite a situation, but hey, this is true. Whatever changes that you anticipate in yourself right before you get married, add at least 10 more to that number. Change is a constant. Not just for married people but for the general functioning of this world, isn't it? Why do we then credit the changes in us due to marriage with such weirdness? I am talking about the changes you are making to take the relationship towards mutual happiness and those that you make to ONLY keep your partner happy. Changing oneself to be happy and changing oneself to keep others happy are two different things. What you should do is the former. Never forget that you have changed some of your habits in the past too. It is not just about marriage. It simply becomes more relevant after marriage as we get a convenient target to blame if the changes we did in ourselves backfire. This is why the second part of this chapter's statement is important. Never hold your spouse responsible for 'changing' you. A good partner will not force you to change. He/she will only motivate you to do so. And there lies all the difference. At the risk of repeating myself the umpteenth time, I will still say: If the change in you makes you happier, because it makes the person you love happier or eases out differences between you two or just lifts a little burden off your shoulder, adopt it right away. It is worth it.



Being possessive about each other is love  
(Not when it's excessive)

Wife: Why do you love me?

Husband: Because you belong to me.

Did the above conversation make you go awww or did it scare you?

Every coin has two sides (unless of course you have Jai's coin from Sholay). On a personal level, this husband's response was totally 'Awww!' I am the kind of person who truly 'belongs' to her husband. I don't view it as a threat or a suffocating gesture. For me, it works when my husband puts his hand around my waist when introducing me as his wife to a new set of people. I am not saying he owns me, but yes for me, I am definitely his. And why just me? He belongs to me too, doesn't he? I'm not talking in terms of the old adage where belonging to your husband refers to surrendering to his 'masculinity'. I am only talking about being possessive about each other because of the intimacy you share with your partner in bed.

I do not recommend being with a person who stretches his possessiveness too far and does so because of his/her insecurities, jealousies or shortcomings. I was very small when I saw the Manisha Koirala-Nana Patekar starrer Agnisaakshi and my adolescent brain made a note that any guy who will try and cut my wings is someone I will keep an arm's length from. For a person like me who is outgoing, social and often over-the-top with everyone around her, I chose a partner who loved me exactly for this madness. I cannot imagine shutting up because my partner thinks others in the room will take me away from him. In fact my partner is so secure that when I am dancing like a mad girl on a dance floor in a club, I know he is at distance keeping a watch on men who could act smart with me. That is possession stemming out of love. It is to people like these, your heart and soul should belong to...

When a man opens a car door for his wife, it's either a new car or a new wife.

- Prince Philip



You can't teach each other manners now.  
Either accept them or let them go

I am sure it's been a while since someone asked you: "Don't you have any manners?"

Manners are things taught to us in school or when we were toddlers. When guests came home and we did not greet them, we knew Mom will pull us in the kitchen by the elbow and ask if we have forgotten our manners. School's parent-teacher meetings were also events where we could be reminded that manners are the things we are lacking in, and then our parents and teachers would be confused as to who is responsible to teach us some. We grew up and our 'manners' - good or bad - became us. Note that manners and habits are two different things. I would call chewing your food loud enough that neighbours could hear you as manners and keeping your plate inside the kitchen after you are done as a habit. The line is thin but of great significance in a marriage. Here is how:

While it is okay to expect your partner to tweak a few nasty habits so even he/she would be benefitted by that change, it is mindless to teach each other manners. Questioning manners would mean questioning an upbringing, and anything related to pointing fingers at the latter is an invitation for trouble in a relationship. You must know and understand the difference between these two. Forget telling your partner that he has poor manners or should learn some manners. It is futile. At the same time it is unfair. The way it works best is to let them fall and learn. Instead of keeping a finger permanently pointed in their direction, let it go. That will do two definite things:

- a) Make your life a wee bit peaceful as manners are a part of personalities. They aren't things you can fret about all your life. Constant cribbing about them will weaken your equation.
- b) Your acceptance might just trigger a feeling of bringing about an actual change in them. Annoyance can make them stubborn. A friendly reminder will go a long way.

*To keep your marriage brimming, With love in the loving cup, Whenever you're wrong, admit it; Whenever you're right, shut up.*

*- Ogden Nash*





Always remember- There is no  
expiry date to a marriage

While growing up, I distinctly remember my father always quoting an acquaintance who used to boast about how he prepared his three daughters right before their marriage. He told them all just one thing: "Never feel ashamed to come back to your house if you feel the marriage isn't working." My father loved me as much, if not more, than the acquaintance loved his daughters. He also quoted this often and told me that I should not ever feel suffocated or unhappy in my husband's house thinking that I do not have any other place to go to. But I knew this was just his love. He of course never meant it as strongly. He did not raise me to be compulsively snobbish about not making any efforts in my marriage and constantly feel relieved that I have an 'option' to walk out of it.

I chose my husband on my own. Dad agreed to him primarily because he loved me way too much to put me through the trauma of heartache. Every time I shared with him how my husband's house, traditions, culture or family was different from ours, he never reminded me that I could give it all up and come back to him. Does that mean that he doesn't love me enough? No. It just means that keeping your exit doors open will always tempt you to take them. You are the princess of your parent's kingdom but you cannot consider them as a fall back option. It works the same for boys. Get into a marriage with the resolve that this is to stay. Your affairs, friends, night-outs, chill addas are bound to get affected as you will owe an explanation to the person you are sharing your bed with now. All those things do not need to be thrown out of the window, they just need to be understood and explained to your partner.



School and College life were certainly  
the best times of your lives

I am one of those rare people who hated school. My father still wonders how someone could hate school so much. I did not enjoy going to school and never wished to go back to that life till I was married. Due to some personal reason my graduation was done in parts in two different universities. That further fuelled my hatred towards these institutions. Since I did not have many good friendships, I grew up, first hating my school life and then college life. I am not implying that I was a loser and had no friends and was roaming around these places as a loner. I am just talking about that natural smile that flashes on people's faces when they are reminiscing about their school or college life. I never had that particular smile.

Then came marriage and the first thought that occurred to me (like millions of other people who are married) was - Shit! Wish we could remain in school (or college) only. The way your life changes after marriage due to added expectations and responsibilities, one feels like becoming that carefree person again whose biggest worry in life was arranging the right 'notes' to study for that 'tough' economics paper. Little did we know then that what seems to be so tough is actually the size of a peanut in front of what life has in store for us. Trust me, if I can say this, anyone will.

I miss the freedom, I miss the fact that I had no clue where the bread comes from or the tube light in my room gets energy from. I miss my room. I miss my parents. I miss homework. I miss fighting non-stop with my kid brother. But I love my husband and I can leave everything (except parents and brother, of course) to be married - and this is the ONLY motivation to go on if you take this plunge.



Passions can survive marriage. Your partner can make them do so.

Close your eyes and imagine any young boy or girl answering the most abused question posed to a marriageable person ever - "What qualities are you looking for in your life partner?"

Now honestly tell me how many got the word 'understanding' as one of their likely answers? I can bet it will hold true in 80% of the cases.

It is our dream to get a partner who is loving, caring, with a good sense of humour and above all, understanding. While I could understand the implications of my partner being loving (he should love me even when I shed tears watching Rakhi cry for her Karan-Arjun), caring (he should know when Paav Bhaaji can actually solve my problems), have a good sense of humour (he should be rolling on the floor with me when I am watching Season 4 of F.R.I.E.N.D.S a hundredth time), I wasn't very sure how being understanding could be a game winner in this list.

Today after ten years of my marriage, I can vouch that the quality that has contributed the most in making our relationship stronger and stronger is the fact that my partner understands every emotion of mine.

Keep this trait on top of your 'to verify' list. Getting a partner who understands you in and out will understand the need to fulfil your passions too. Suppose playing cricket every weekend at the club is a necessity for you. You are so passionate about the sport that a Saturday morning which has not seen you playing for your team, is a Saturday not worth a mention. Now something as important as this is possible to be pursued after marriage only if you have a partner who understands what this game means to you. Only someone who agrees that this isn't about the game but also about your happiness will let you out to play at a time that you could be ideally spending with your partner, cuddling in the bed.

Keep your passions intact. Keep the fire inside alive that you will continue to pursue them or make your dreams a reality. Marriage is not a roadblock that will put a full stop to them if the partner you have makes them their own dreams. Talk it out and make it happen.

*An ideal wife is any woman who has an ideal husband.*

*- Booth Tarkington*



Ageing is a scientific fact.  
It shouldn't surprise you.



I recall an interesting conversation with an ex colleague once when we were driving back to office after a team lunch. There were two twenty-something interns in the car and were telling her (she must be nearing forty) that she drinks at parties like a teenager. She agreed that she still felt as young as them, but she couldn't help the skin and body that had started looking its age.

"Oh, that can be managed ma'am. I am sure you apply the anti-ageing creams," said one of the two jumpy guys. "Yes, I do. For some five years now. But now I am at an age when applying these creams won't help. I think I have to eat them!"

She said this in light humour, but this reality stuck with me. I was, at that time, somewhere in between these two set of ages. I could relate with the innocence on one end that these glossy ads in magazines can actually delay our ageing process.

On the other side, I could see the helplessness of a confused age bracket which has a young heart but needs to prove it to the world by almost having to eat a cream that worked initially with external application but now refuses to hide any lines on the corner of the owner's eyes.

In a marriage when you and your partner are at a stage where your hair starts greying and your wrinkles start to show, you will enjoy these only when the experiences behind you are enriched with fulfilling memories. When you start to age, everything around you changes. People who called you the life of parties start asking you if you will be able to 'handle' the fourth peg. Younger colleagues ask if you will be able to climb the stairs or they should run ahead and call the elevator. In your heart you laugh at such stupid assumptions but your age number sort of makes you older than you really are! Only your partner knows and understands those stretch marks on your stomach because he held your hand when you were pushing out his baby or that irritating white hair right on the temple which she carefully cuts with a scissor every time it interferes with the black on your scalp.

*If there is such a thing as a good marriage, it is because it resembles friendship rather than love.*

*- Michel de Montaigne*



Life takes a full turn around.  
Good or Bad is in your hands.



Aneesha was raised by her grandparents as her parents travelled the country with a job in armed forces. She was loved, pampered, nurtured with just two more people in the house and occasional spurts of her parents during her vacations. This is not just a case of a tight nuclear family scenario but also a unique situation as she wasn't expected to adjust with any family member, all her life. In college when she fell in love with Mrinal, she often was amused by how many times his parents, uncles and even cousins called him in a day. She shared with him how different that was from her own scenario where she needed to just send a message to one person in her family, once a day. She was still deciding if she liked it or found it silly when they decided to get married. Mrinal lived in a typical joint family. Even though the four brothers of his father lived and ate on separate floors, the general bonhomie amongst the four families of way too much for Aneesha to handle. Festivals, birthdays, and anniversaries - with so many important people around each other they just kept happening almost every single day of the year. While initially she loved it, with time it started to suffocate her. It seemed she had no life of her own with Mrinal. Everything had to include his extended family. No celebration was complete if they weren't made a part of it. When I met her she was on the verge of breaking down. We talked and joked about the whole large family set up till one of her lighter comments brought the solution to her entire problem. She said, 'Imagine when I have a baby and so many people come to see me in the hospital, will be a butt of everyone's jokes.' She paused for a moment and reflected upon what she had just said. Post that day I saw a totally different Aneesha. She started talking fondly about Mrinal's family. Her WhatsApp profile pictures suddenly had selfies with all those million cousins. She even cancelled a lunch date with me because she had to take one of the aunts for a nai extension parlour! You know what had affected her suddenly? Her marriage gave her a family. It's only that she realised the importance of it a bit later. In her words, "That day I realised that I was looking at the wrong side of having a huge family. I was doing so because I was raised a particular way. I was loved by just a handful of people who began and ended their days around me. I remember when my grandfather fell very ill one time, and I and my grandmother were all alone in the hospital for 36 hours as my Dad took that much time to reach us. It was ))the scariest experience of my life. But imagine if I had a bigger

family. We would have had more people to share our despair that night. This incident suddenly made me realise the upsides of a huge support system around me and since then I am doing my best to nurture it.”

Marriage brings with it many experiences that are completely opposite to your life before it. Be prepared for them and work your life around them which benefits you and your partner’s peace of mind.

*Marriage is a wonderful invention: then again, so is a bicycle repair kit.*

*- Billy Connolly*



Loving your mother-in-law is often  
the key to many a problems



Hey, all you girls! If you are your Dad's princess, why can't he be his mother's prince? He is! And the best way to deal with this fact is to accept it. When you are getting to know 'him' better, also try to know 'her' better. Her is your mother-in-law. She is that one woman you will always share your husband with. How much ever you may mean to your husband, at the end of the day there is a relationship he shares with his mother. It is best to be in her best books, look after her, listen to her and most importantly, genuinely love her. It may be an impossible task to achieve in some cases as a mother-in-law is also a human being and I must not generalise that every mother-in-law is worthy of love, but one thing is for sure - if your research tells you that your man shares a very good bond with his mother, then your love and attention can in no way disrupt it. In fact, it should not even try to disrupt it. You should imbibe it in your values to recognise her special place in your partner's life and then see him magically love you even more. It is as simple as this - suppose you love the street side chaat and your man hated it all his life { but as you spent more and more time together you see him eating that chaat with you just to give you company. Won't you respect him more? He developed this habit only so because you couldn't live without it. Isn't it...umm...CUTE?? Simplify this logic minutely and you will see that a mother-in-law can actually make your equation better with your husband.

It works equally well if you are a man. Share a bond with her mother like you do with your own. She is not getting any younger and chances are she is looking for a son in you too. Value her place in your woman's life. All those jokes of a wife's mother coming over and staying at your place are convenient plugs to make fun out of a situation that rarely happens. Even if she wishes to come over, take pride in the fact that she wants to spend some time in her daughter's new home.

The expectations of your partner loving your mother are right only if you are giving the same amount of love to theirs.

*It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.*

*- Jane Austen*



Weekends are bliss.  
If you both work that's the only  
time you will have with each other.

Movie- Check  
Dinner Out- Check  
Romantic Drive- Check  
Sorting out insurance papers- Ugh?  
Buying Grocery- What?  
Customary trip to the Sabzi Mandi- Huh???

Weekends aren't just the top three. In fact they are more about the bottom three items on this list! When you are married, domesticity is a given. How many weekends you may try and procrastinate, there will come a weekend when the LIC premium will require your attention. Even that fused CFL on the staircase, that you have been cursing every evening after office, will beg you to get its replacement. Weekends will then become days you no longer look forward to. Friends will send you invitations for fun evenings and you will commit your presence only when you have honoured the promise that all the household chores will definitely be taken care of.

Have I scared you to the hilt? That certainly wasn't the intention! Better be prepared than shocked, right? Marriage will change the constituents of weekends. Chances are they will become more hectic than even your weekdays. But this scenario isn't so overwhelming if you plan them properly. Make a check-list of pending chores and strongly practice division of labour. While one of you can fill the fridge up with the bread and the butter, the other one can take the car for servicing. Plan it so none of you is sitting idle when the other is dug deep inside the mundane tasks. That way, when you both get free from the all-ticked checklist, weekends are bliss! They are truly the times you look forward to as you have both of you to each other, taking care of your home, catching up with friends and recharging each other for the coming week.

Did I forget to tell you that Sunday afternoons, due to some strange cosmic calculations, become times when one of your relatives will want you at their place for a 'family lunch'. Not too bad though if you use even that time stuck to each other and simply spending every minute - together!

Don't marry the person you think you can live with; marry only the individual you think you can't live without.

- James Dobson



If you grew up in a happy family, it doesn't  
mean you will have a happy marriage

This analogy is as weird as saying that if you like to eat oranges, you will also like to get them squeezed in your eyes. While growing up in a happy family makes you a secure, positive and a responsible person, how does it ensure that you will have a happy marriage too? I have come across many marriages in my family and outside where a perfectly normal person, with an even perfect family, has ended up in a bad marriage just because of the person he/she married.

If you have had a happy life so far and you have respected your parent's marriage to the core, it makes sense to apply all the positivity to this new relationship you are getting into. But if you realise that things aren't as hunky dory as you assumed them to be, do not start blaming it to something you must have done wrong. It takes two to tango in a happy marriage and every marriage has its unique circumstances which each couple has to go through. Your past can determine your future only to a certain degree. Beyond that, don't make unrealistic assumptions about always being as happy. Take for instance the superstar who recently got divorced to his wife of 17 years. He did grow up in a happy family where his parents are still going strong in their marriage, where money and comforts were in abundance, where opportunities had been limitless. But clearly this person did not have a happy marriage as how your upbringing and values shape you depends on a lot of individualistic factors too.

Hence go that extra mile to keep your marriage happy. Make the same efforts that others are making. It is same for everyone!



*Learn from your parent's marriage.  
They have not been married all this  
while without a reason*



There are two kinds of people in this world. Those who grow up loving the relationship their parents share and others who learn how not be with their spouse because they have seen their parent's chemistry.

Whatever category you belong to, the truth is that how your parents lived with each other definitely shapes how you will live with your partner. A good marriage is usually the combination of the good points picked by both the partners from their own parents' experience. Often they are the best people to go to for advice when there seems to be no way ahead in an argument. And on occasions you do not even go to them for advice, they will anyway know that there is something wrong. You can fool most of the people all of the time and all the people most of the time but you can never fool Mom! If they detect your uneasiness and offer help, do not shut your doors to their help. Every marriage may be different but usually the tricks to keep them together are counted.

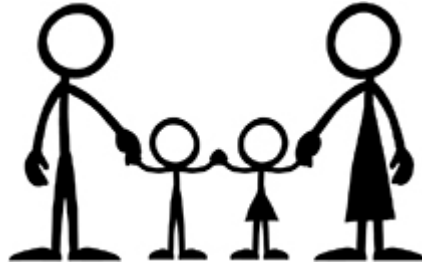
This also works fine in cases when children have not appreciated their parent's marriage. A good learning often comes from bad experiences. I know two brothers who grew up under a strict father and a submissive mother. The authoritarian father was used to having his way and the mother was known around the social circles for always giving in to his temper and often illogical asks. As the brothers grew up I felt that they became their mother's shields. Every time their father raised a voice on their mother, they would confront him and ask him to speak properly. People around this family welcomed this change in the family's dynamics as no man has the right to subject his wife to a life of disrespect just because she is branded as the weaker one in the equation of marriage. Both the boys now have wives and children and it is indeed wonderful to see them treating their partners with so much love and equality. What their parent's marriage taught them was the key to a happy marriage - the fact that if the two individuals are not on the same pedestal, their relationship is never a happy one.

What is important is to take cues from whatever your case may be and make your own marriage either like theirs or unlike theirs!

Parents have been there done that, and thus counselling coming from them proves beneficial most of the times. Firstly they never wish ill for you and secondly they will not judge you. For a married couple, that is a deadly combination. Since they have raised you, they are aware of your strengths and weaknesses as an individual and hence their advice will be customised to the uniqueness of your situation.

*I love being married. It's so great to find that one special person you want to annoy for the rest of your life.*

*Rita Rudner*



Children are not the extensions of  
your marriage. They are just children.  
Children can wait. They should never  
happen because your neighbours think so

It is amazing how society nags you to get married and then reminds you that if you will not have children, marriage is of no use! We are citizens of the most populous nation on this earth and this shows how much we respect our elders. How? Because we contribute to the population, listening to our elders who ask us almost every morning if we feel like vomiting, and then seeing if they can relate it to the arrival of a stork who will mysteriously drop a cute little thing on your terrace. That cute little thing will then keep you awake for endless number of nights, shit across the house especially when the parents are eating a meal, fall ill at the beginning of every season and you will wonder where the cuteness has disappeared.

Please don't think that I am asking you to not have children. I am only recommending that you make an informed choice. Being one of the younger ones in my family, I hadn't seen many cousins being born around me who would wreck havoc in their parents' lives. For me, kids were just cute! Even after marriage I was open to having them as they came because I thought kids had no other business in life but to remain cute. The trouble thus came unannounced. When I did not sleep for 45 days in a row after my first born, I sat down with my husband and asked him if he knew this was the norm? To my surprise, he said: YES.

So it was my unpreparedness which made me take time to understand that small children are moody, arrogant, incorrigible and stubborn. I urge you to get kids into your marriage when you are convinced that you are ready to commit yourself for at least three years to their needs. This commitment needs to be both personal and professional. Ask yourself if you have a social support system in place. Are you both settled in your relationship with each other? Will your office allow a break that you need? If you are a woman, stay prepared that leaving your job might also be an option you would want to explore - how ready are you for that?

Trust me people, how babies and their parents look on your Facebook timeline is totally different from what this process entails in real life. It requires patience the size of the River Nile and effort the depth of the Pacific Ocean. Let the neighbours wonder when you will have a baby. They are often jealous than concerned!

*A journey is like marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think you control it.*

*- John Steinbeck*



Your best friends are not his best friends



Both of you could be hanging out with the same bunch of friends before marriage but there is always that one person who is your spouse's friend and you don't like him (or her). When unmarried, taking a dig at the expense of that friend was fun but suddenly after you are married, things change. You cannot understand why one particular friend is an eyesore so bad that your partner just doesn't seem to adjust with him or her. I will tell you why. Marriage brings with it a closed door. A feeling that now your life is around your spouse and thus everything related with the likes and dislikes of your spouse is something you need to live with. When it comes to things about choice of food or clothes, one can work around a way but with living beings, who are not even family, things automatically start looking like roadblocks. We attach meaningless fears like that person will influence my partner wrongly or my partner might depend on that friend more than on me.

It is simple! You are two unique individuals. You strike friendships for your own reasons. You gel with some people because of some personality traits that your partner may/may not have. Get this in your head from the beginning - When your partner comes out of the friend's zone to enter, well.... the partner's zone, you cannot expect them to be pally with your friends.

But does that mean that there is no solution to this dilemma? There is! All your partner wants you to do (even when he/ she isn't saying so) is that you do not let that particular friend or group friends have a bearing on the beautiful life that you both have between each other. Do not expect your partner to be equally warm and chatty with this set of your friends. Do not force friendships on your partner because you clearly do not own them. Hear out each other's reasons of why they do not like these people and respect those reasons. If you follow this, I guarantee you two things:

- 1) You get to enjoy with the people you wish to, without bearing the guilt of a sulking partner.
- 2) Sooner or later, if you really nurture these friendships over some good and bad times, your spouse will come around these people. Give them time and space.

*A happy marriage is a long conversation which always seems too short.*

*- Andre Maurois*



Your exes do not exist now.  
They are extinct forever

The phrase - Let's just be friends - is probably the winner of the 'world's most clichéd statements' already. When you are parting ways with your loved one, this status is a convenient way to leave things open ended. It is like a guarantee, a sort of an assurance that if we do not find partners that suit our new found expectation levels, we would always have each other. But marriage changes this. No, it needs to be changed by you once you are married. Texting, chatting, meeting or goofng around with an ex is inviting disasters. You will have to lie a bit, hide a bit, end up comparing a bit and suffer a lot. Social media these days has made this task a lot more difficult now. In a weak moment you will be tempted to find out on Facebook what your ex is doing in life now. Who did he get married to? Where does he/she live? It is not a crime to find that out. But if you do it at a time when you have a lot of complaints from your marriage, well, that is not right. Do it at a time when you are planning a holiday with your partner. When you are in a comfortable place in your current relationship, you will be happy and not jealous of your ex's life. Be mature about this because you must know that the harm you are doing to yourself (and your marriage) by envying your ex's life is actually not being done by your ex. Cherish good memories. Why build bad ones all over again!

I am not being a moral police here suggesting that you should be fair and just and what not. I am just saying this -Let's un-complicate everyone's life by closing these open ends. Let's just clog those memories with your commitment to this relationship that you have entered into for a lifetime. When was trying to lose my pregnancy weight, I was on a strict diet. had three major occasions of the year in those six months. My birthday, my child's birthday and my wedding anniversary. My husband got my favourite chocolate cake from our favourite bakery on all three occasions, I cut them too, but I did not have even a teeny-weeny bite of any. That's my integrity to my will of getting fit again. Be the same sort of a gatekeeper for your marriage. Guard it with building trust in your partner.

When they advise you to move on, the relevance of moving on becomes highest after marriage. Take their advice.

An ex is an ex for a reason - think of all those reasons and stay focussed on the now.

*It's tough to stay married. My wife kisses the dog on the lips, yet she won't drink from my glass.*

*- Rodney Dangerfield*



Money is a very important thing

“Oh, I will never marry for his money,” said a smartass to me a few years back. Today I see her married for exactly that one reason! At some level I think what she did was right. She had no brains ever to earn on her own, so it was better to marry someone who already has some or can assure a constant flow of it.

Money is important. Do not think that you are shallow if you attach importance to it. Money cannot buy you happiness for sure but it does let you buy stuff that makes you happy. It can buy you travel, a house, a car, dinners, hummus with bagel chips, vodka, shower foams, lingerie and other such stuff which are important (Really? Well, certainly a bit) for a happy marriage.

married V and N's Papa when he and I were working in the same company, at the same package. He does not belong to a super-duper rich family who made him spend all his summer vacations in exotic South East Asian locales. He belonged to a family like mine where parents struggle but ensure a comfortable (and a better than theirs) lifestyle for their two kids. What married him for was the future I saw with him. I knew we shared similar love for our food, films and vacations, and with the fire to live a life that has all of these things in abundance, we will both strive to have enough money to ensure them. It worked and I don't regret my decision.

When we had our babies and we together took a decision that I will take a break from professional life and thus curtail the income inflow by 50%, then too we knew that maintaining a certain lifestyle is a necessity and not a selfish thing to do. We never said to each other - 'Oh, We will love with zero bank balances'. We know that if that time comes, we will still be together but we will both work together to fund ourselves enough that we live comfortably.



So if you cannot decide if money should be an important factor in choosing the guy or girl, don't make it an overriding factor, but understand that it will be important. It makes life comfortable and less stressful, and both these aspects are required for a happy marriage. And money can be made. It doesn't have to top the list of must-haves in your partner. The right partner will )) collaborate with you to make money buy its true worth.

The majority of husbands remind me of an orangutan trying to play the violin.

- Honore de Balzac



There are three rules to a happy marriage.  
For every marriage they are different.

While reading articles as part of research for this book, most that I came across were centred on the thought: “Golden Rules for a Happy Marriage”

You are tempted to go through them and find out if there is indeed a magic potion which you can drink and leave the rest to figure out itself. I wish I could tell you that something like this exists! And trust me if it was true, I would have named this book Follow these rules and have a happy married life.

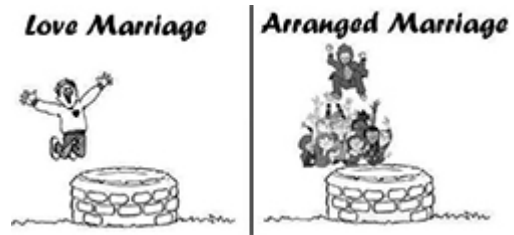
I have realised that no marriage can have the same rules. These rules are made by the couple based on their own needs and expectations from their partners. These rules are also the result of individual strengths or weaknesses and also of the kind of cultures we are raised in. In fact, the rules that my parents applied to their marriage will not work in mine. Take for example the most abused rule of all times - The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach. For this seasoned assumption, daughters in Indian families are expected to make the rotis round, stop calling Maggi a full meal and at least learn how to make tea. The first question a woman would ask her prospective daughter-in-law in our country is: “Beta Khana banana aata hai?” If the girl says “No”, it is blasphemous. If she says “Yes”, she scores 95% marks. So what if ideally she should answer: “Aunty aapke bete ko aata hai?” How true is this rule? If it truly worked, won’t the majority of marriages in our country (especially from our parent’s generation) be perfect? I have seen the most dysfunctional marriages in that generation and therefore I refuse to apply it to mine.

The gist of the matter is, observe, learn, appreciate rules that may have worked for other couples but do not go about applying them to your own. At the same time, do make some rules for your marriage and stick to them, respect them. These rules could be as simple as who is responsible for all the gifting that will happen to relatives to as complicated as how you will stick to your ground of having only one child, irrespective of how much your mothers want you to have a second!

Also keep in mind that the rules that applied to the first two years of your marriage may become obsolete in the next two. Break the rules that aren't working and make fresh ones. Rules are only required to have better understanding of each other. If anything starts to suffocate either of you, it's not a rule. It's a sign that change is inevitable.

I'd marry again if I found a man who had fifteen million dollars, would sign over half to me, and guarantee that he'd be dead within a year.

- Bette Davis



Love marriage does not mean-  
Half job done. They are in fact starting  
from 10 steps behind an arranged one.

One should always be in love. That is the reason one should never marry.

-Oscar Wilde

The only debate which will exist even when human race has been wiped off the face of this earth is this one - Love versus Arranged marriages and their respective success rates. I think it beats the 'Who came first - Chicken or the Egg' debate by a decent margin. I could compare these two types of marriages to Shashi Kapoor and Amitabh Bachchan in the cult scene from the movie Deewar. Amitabh Bachchan depicts love marriage which claims to have passion, compatibility awareness and extra doses of romance, and when he asks Shashi Kapoor, "What do you have?" Arranged Marriage a.k.a Shashi Kapoor replies, "Mere Pass Ma Hai"

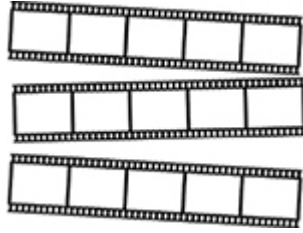
I have had people around me who assumed that since I had a love marriage (among the firsts in my family and my husband's), will have a smoother ride than them because they were not the ones who 'defied' their parents and chose Arranged ones. To such people I have only one thing to say - Come back to the real world!! Not only are these people immature, selfish and dumb, they are also insecure. A marriage is a marriage and nothing else. The point of entry into this complex yet beautiful union is immaterial as long as the fundamentals are same. It has to be nurtured, sustained, maintained, worked upon and respected in exactly equal measures or it will fall apart.



If yours is a Love marriage, never believe when they say that you will have it any better than those who are getting together through their parents. Common arguments in favour of the latter are that you get support from family, a fall back option, a researched partner and an opportunity to explore/discover, hence Arranged Marriages tend to last longer. Trust me, I had similar teething problems as all those cousins of mine who were waiting for my marriage to show some signs of discomfort because I might have not seen that crucial point which could break my belief in love. In fact, I was more disadvantageous as I had to prove to my family and to my husband's family that we got together after enough thinking. Expectations may be low from my in-laws' side because I was not their choice (in the traditional sort of a way) and so I had to bring them all to a point where I could give them reasons to trust and love me as much they would have if they had met my parents first. If you are the type who values the role of your partner's family in making your marriage happy, then Love marriage requires tremendous efforts. The fact that your partner knows you well and thus supports you in the 'settling in' process is too glorified to be true. The onus is entirely on you as an individual as even your partner cannot predict reactions of his/her family to the new-found dynamics of his/her status in the family after marriage.

*Marriages, like careers, need constant nurturing . . the secret of having it all is loving it all.*

*- Joyce Brothers*



Aditya Chopra, Sooraj Barjatya and  
Karan Johar show unreal marriages  
in their films

What did Karan Johar do to us?

That last sequence in Kuch Kuch Hota Hai totally ruined generations for many years. Imagine you are getting down the stairs and your Ex stands where the stairs end. He is crying. You are wondering whether to cry or rather get married first. And then, all of a sudden, you give up on the man who stood by you all the horrendous years when your life was messed up because this particular Ex had gone about marrying (and even having a daughter) with the hottie of your college. Huh? Who would have thought all this was even legal.

What did Sooraj Barjataya do to us?

You can call a million relatives to your house for a wedding and each one of them will dress up nicely, right on time and play Joota Churaai with you without any family animosity! Those million relatives and another million guests can roam around freely around your house, in all the rooms of it without any disruptions to the proceedings which need attention of the hosts.

What did Aditya Chopra do to us?

The man who did maximum damage to our notions about marriages is this one! His 'perfect' love stories, be it in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jaayenge or Vivaah, have made us look at our own love stories with such disgrace that it is not funny.

What are Marriages in the real world?

From shopping to inviting relatives to choosing what to wear to planning your honeymoon to getting the right mehndiwala to booking the salon - Marriage is everything but the picture that the above mentioned three Bollywood directors have gotten us to believe. I clearly remember watching Madhuri Dixit and Salman Khan get absolutely mad over their siblings' wedding and so wanted to replicate it at a close cousin's marriage (who happened to have a brother-in-law, almost my age). Not only was I warned of dire consequences if I tried to appear 'over-excited' during any of the rituals, as it may send inappropriate signals to the boys' side, but was also hidden behind some older brothers when the DJ played Didi Tera Devar Deewana.

However, these days couples do get the whole pre-wedding shoot done, post pictures (read selfies!) of over-enthusiastic cousins in all wedding ceremonies, get candid photography done of guests and all the other jazz, still do we as families come up with original song and dance when we get emotional about leaving our parents' house? Get real!

Marriages, my friends, are not what you see in films

*When a marriage works, nothing on earth can take its place.*

*- Helen Gahagan*



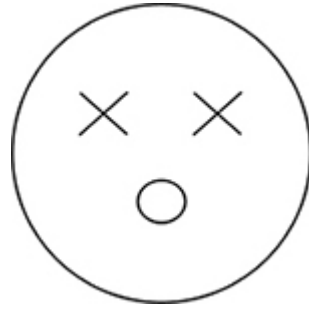
It's okay to have a husband who  
doesn't dance or wife who doesn't cook

have never understood people who stay glued to the ground even when the most foot-thumping song is playing in a club. Or people who stand on the edge of the crowd in a baraat. And really how can you not keep your shoulders steady when the chartbuster item song plays in the Cinema Hall? But that's just me. If I look at myself from their perspective they are bound to call me utterly stupid and what not! Now suppose you are type A and you get married to someone who is Anti-A type. Not only do you look silly to each other all the time but also need to maybe lessen your A-ness. Not necessarily if you understand that it is not the end of the world if your partner isn't like you. In fact life presents so much to explore if he/she isn't like you! And if you are the type who wants to mould your partner in a particular way because of social pressure, then it's a futile and unworthy thought. While it is best to find out and share stuff the person you are getting married to likes or hates, let it not be a deal breaker if it does not match you. Unless of course, he tells you that he does occasional drugs and you tell me that you accepted it simply because I asked you to. All I am saying is - get real with expectations. If someone else's husband dances like a dream guy on the dance floor, maybe he sucks at other things that your husband does best. Or if your colleague gets the best Rajma Chawal in his tiffin cooked by his able wife, maybe she has no sense of colours and insists on painting the room purple! Do not make abilities and physical looks the centre of everything that your marriage is made of. Also do not go about changing yourself to match your partner. Continue to be what you are as your happiness is the centre of the marriage, nothing else. Next time you are in the club, get up and join your friends on the floor. Find your partner who has chosen to remain seated on the stool. Look into his eyes and show him you are dancing for him. If he does not get up and join you, change my name!



*In a happy marriage it is the wife who provides the climate, the husband the landscape.*

*- Gerald Brenan*



To realise that he/she isn't the person  
you married, is natural

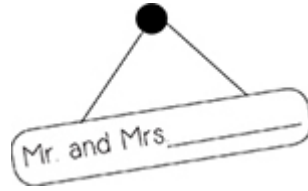
Human beings do not come with a life time warranty. If how you got them and how they look after a few years has marked differences, where will you go and lodge a complaint? There is something you can do right? Before you nod in agreement, consider this. Are you the same person you were in college? Remember how much you hated romantic films then? Haven't you now started enjoying them? What does this say about you? Have you evolved as a person or degraded? There is no definite answer, right? This works exactly like that in your spouse's case. What we must not forget is that our partners are human beings. They live and breathe the same air. For them too, time moves at similar speeds. All the cosmic energies that are affecting your growth (or de-growth) are acting upon them too. They aren't characters from a Christopher Nolan film where they can control how they will turn out as human beings as time goes on.

I have a friend whose husband is known for his short-temper. All of us know that the guy needed slight triggers to lose it on random people who weren't following traffic rules or were throwing garbage on the road. When the two were dating, this girl was so proud of her boyfriend. She would tell us tales of how her righteous man taught lessons to errant people. I met her after a couple of years of their marriage and we were in the parking of a busy market. Her boyfriend-turned-husband had just picked up a fight with the parking attendant on the latter's overcharging of fare. My friend looked at me apologetically and said, "He has become extremely angry now. I guess it's his work load." I looked back at her in sheer astonishment. I wondered why she was fooling herself when we knew all along that this guy had serious temper issues. I realised then that it wasn't the man changing. It was the changed situation. When they were dating, she would ignore or take pride on such stands. The man would also calm down in a jiffy because they were still building impressions on each other. But when married, stakes are far lesser. We do not realise that we married these people with all the shortcomings but we either did not pay heed to them or they weren't given opportunities to come out.

I am going to tell you what I told my friend: Don't say that circumstances have 'changed' the person. It is just the circumstances that change. Responsibilities, liabilities, commitments and new roles bring with them situations where we think that we married someone else and they have turned out the opposite. Take ownership of your decision and talk it out.

*Marriage is an attempt to solve problems together which you didn't even have when you were on your own.*

*- Eddie Cantor*



What doesn't break your marriage  
makes it stronger

Divorces are becoming as common place as marriages these days. It is not even funny how young couples do not think twice before taking this plunge. I have known people around me who gave me lame excuses for their divorces. One girl even told me that she and her husband agreed that they could 'only' be friends (as they dated two years before getting married) and realised after their marriage that they cannot be a couple. I wondered what the difference was, as surely factors like compatibility, comfort, attraction would have been checked before they decided to spend their lives together. When I probed further, she insisted that there was a difference in how she perceived him as a friend and then how she saw him as a husband. Strange, but well, I am sure the real reason was something else. The point is that efforts of keeping the marriage intact are either lesser now or are half-hearted.

Every marriage has that one moment when either or both the partners have felt that it will collapse. Then for some reasons things work out, one of you negotiates, things start looking better, compromises are struck, apologies are given, misplaced trusts are mended and life comes back on track. When a marriage successfully comes on the other side of one such incident, that marriage then consists of two stronger individuals in an even stronger relationship.

Infidelity, financial loss, issues with certain people in a family, job loss, miscarriages, mistakes, anything could come in the way of a smooth marital alliance. Chances are that most marriages do not withstand these obstacles and succumb to the repercussions of such events. But a marriage that strides through this phase is unlikely to be broken again easily. The worst situations bring out the best of our character. In a marriage when every decision or act of one person affects the life of another, the responsibilities are greater and thus the effects are manifold. The only thing that brings these two individuals back together is their love, values, understanding and the strong resolve to stay with the other one, by giving them one more chance. This, my friends, is a mark of a long-lasting marriage.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

He has not read any drafts of this book. He wanted to read all the points just when the world reads them. This confidence comes only when you are sure of yourself. Also, when you trust your partner. That's my husband-Saurabh. This book wouldn't have been possible without this confident man who has made me believe in marriages, relationships, friendships and partnerships. Thank you V and N's Papa for making this journey the one I will undertake only with you, in all other births too.

The next person should be Sachin Garg who said: 'No one can write this better than you' once and rest is history. You are a great support, even when we are arguing why some cover images will work and others will not!

The contents of the book are all heartfelt. It did not require many beta readers as there is nothing right and wrong about what I have written. Ashna Banga from the Grapevine Team, helped me with Editing and her abilities made me believe in the book more. Thanks Sulagna for infusing life into the pages with your design.

Thanks to the never ending support of my parents- To you guys I owe the will and reason, to take my own decisions and see them through to success. My marriage being the biggest decision you absolutely trusted me with.



## LEDGMENTS

Cannot end without mentoning Rahul- my brother who I treat like a son and who treats me back like his daughter! You are my first reader and if I have revealed too much- Saurabh will catch you.

Lastly thank you for constantly nudging me- Nishita, and Surabhi Di, reminding me nonstop that you are waitng for my book more than I am!

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A list of '69' points that will throw light on what to expect, what to accept so all you see is ascent in marriage and not eject out of it!

*just  
married*



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