

Getting it together

Marriage partners may need a contract

By
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A Farmington woman recently wrote Dr. Trenz. Always, always, articles are written on how women should keep their husbands happy, how to keep your husband interested, prevent your husband from having a heart attack, keep your family from pressuring dad, etc. etc.

"What I want to know is where do women stand? Exactly what are men supposed to do to keep their wives happy? It seems a paycheck is the only thing a man understands and that's his only function. I know many, many women who are very lonely in their own homes—myself included."

"Don't say 'communicate,' talk this over, tell your husband how you feel—because nine out of ten husbands will tell you to 'stop complaining' or 'you are never satisfied.'"

"So do us a favor. Tell us just how should a man keep his marriage growing and how to make his wife happy."

Sincerely,
A woman

SUCH A LETTER could have been written by any of millions of women who are experiencing an "I've had it" frustration with their marriage. Feeling that they are doing their part by devoting themselves to child care and domestic duties, women expect more than just a passing "Hello" from their husbands.

They are painfully disappointed by spouses who come home to crash exhausted into a favorite chair with a newspaper.

Needing to feel loved and appreciated, the frustrated wife soon comes to feel that for granted. She comes to see her husband as a selfish person who is insensitive to her emotional needs. When she asks for more love, she gets tokenism or scorn for being so demanding.

Even more often, she does not express the full intensity of her needs to her mate, fearing to "rock the boat." After all, she considers, she is financially and legally bound to preserving her marriage, no matter what personal costs are involved.

MEANWHILE, her husband is experiencing similar trapped feelings. Whether he likes it or not, he is the financial foundation of the marriage. No matter how boring or frustrating his job may be, he does not have the freedom to stop working. His family depends upon him.

So when he drags himself home with his paycheck, he feels perfectly justified in expecting to be fed and allowed to rest. He is preoccupied by his wife's needs for conversation, for romance, for appreciation. Can he bring the best possible husband? How can he be so insensitive to his feelings? Women, he concludes, are over dependent and emotional.

Men, she decides, are selfish and insensitive.

BOTH ARE ABSOLUTELY wrong. Human beings of both sexes have strong emotional needs and are capable of responding to the emotional needs of others. For most people this is the primary reason

that they got married. They were in love with their chosen mate and wanted to be a part of each other's personal happiness.

Pushed aside by the requirements of financially supporting their marriage, running a household and raising a family, love soon takes a secondary role in the marriage. Personal happiness, emotional sharing, and romance are shoved into the background. They are left for rare moments of spare time after the kids are in bed, Sunday mornings, or on vacation.

Given the current pressures of traditional marital roles and expectations, this is a natural inevitable chain of events. It can only be stopped or reversed when both partners actively work to prevent it.

Quick cures and things that "a wife can do" or "a husband can do" to make a spouse happy are not the answer. A whole new attitude towards marriage is needed.

SOME MARRIAGE experts suggest that a couple should actually draft a written contract which explicitly defines the marriage relationship. It's a good idea.

It doesn't have to be treated as a legal document. It should be seen as a current description of the purposes and expectations of the marriage relationship.

Each couple has its own unique set of needs, but I believe that a marriage contract should start with words like these:

"We are married to each other for many different purposes, but foremost is personal happiness. Our marriage is the primary source of love, emotional support, companionship and personal security for each of us as individuals."

We recognize that making this source work for us requires an active participation by both partners. We give this purpose the highest priority in our lives."

Nature photos seminar topic

One-day seminars on nature photography, led by Stan Oostinski of Livonia, are scheduled Saturday, Feb. 20 and March 8, in the studio of Mervin Photo, 5711 John R. Troy.

The sessions, co-sponsored by Mervin Photo and Oostinski, will begin at 9 a.m. and cost \$5. Registrations can be made with Oostinski, who lives at 10377 Suburban, or with the studio.

The classes will begin with a slide show and discussion period, with special emphasis given to special problems of nature photography during the winter months. Each day will conclude with a field trip to a nearby park, where participants will have the opportunity to use information from the class.

Volunteers

This column describing volunteer needs in Oakland County is co-sponsored by the Junior League of Birmingham and the Oakland County Volunteer Bureau.

Inquiries regarding volunteer needs listed here should be made to the Oakland County Volunteer Bureau at 663-7777. Requests for volunteer listings also should be made through the Volunteer Bureau.

MICHIGAN CANCER FOUNDATION, North Oakland Unit, needs a volunteer activities chairman to recruit for their activities. The foundation also needs a volunteer public relations worker. Some background in public relations work would be helpful. Both positions require one day of volunteer time from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The amount will taper off after the volunteer is familiar with the position.

CRANBROOK INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, Bloomfield Hills, needs non-professional volunteers (high school age to senior citizens) interested in working along with teachers of botany, zoology, ornithology or any science-related areas. Volunteers also are needed to assist in the gift shop, the library or with exhibits, such as the Indian culture or Eskimo exhibit.

CHILD DIVISION CENTER, Southfield Public Schools, needs volunteers of any age to assist teachers in classroom activities and to interact with children. No formal training is required but good health, a calm disposition and the ability to cope with active children are desirable qualities. The center operates daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and a commitment of 24 hours each week is desired.

Harper shows nursing program

The Harper Hospital school of nursing will hold an information session for high school students and others interested in careers in nursing at 1 p.m. Tuesday, March 2, in the auditorium of the hospital, located at John R. and Alexandrine in the Detroit Medical Center.

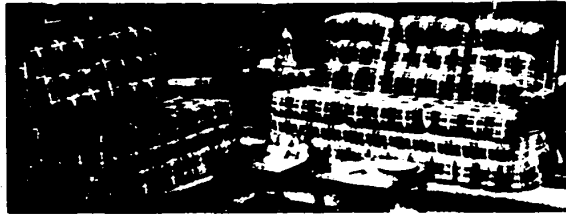
Harper's school, founded in 1882, accepts men and women students age 17 and older. The school provides a 40-week curriculum for regular students.

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