

Getting it together

Avoiding conflict can poison marriage

It has been said so often about marriage that it has become a cliché. There are few endeavors that we take on in our lives for which we are so glibly optimistic and so poorly prepared.

Newlyweds and about-to-be marrieds are buried in gifts, good wishes and innocuous advice. But what they need most is what they get least: Realistic information about marriage. Not the over-emphasized rituals and proprieties of the wedding, but how to make their marriage relationship work.

They need to know, for instance, that the odds are not in favor of their living happily ever after, especially if they blindly believe their feelings will be strong enough to carry them through any future crisis.

The reality is that feelings are perishable and there are no guarantees of permanence. Love can be kept alive in marriage, but only by couples who recognize that such feelings are as fragile as they are precious and those who are devoted to nourishing their love with energy and passion.

THAT MEANS a priority on honesty, intimacy and mutual happiness, not just material decorations. Too many young marrieds have allowed their love to starve while they devoted their energies to building a home, acquiring possessions and status that they dreamed would make them happy.

Looking at marriages that have failed is painfully ironic, that factors which killed the relationship actually came from early conceptions of how to make a marriage succeed. The beliefs that let them as newlyweds are too often the main culprits in the eventual doom of their marriage.

No such belief deserves more credit for causing bad marriages than the conviction that marital success depends on constant harmony. In fact, the most common mistake made by newly marrieds is to avoid conflicts and to minimize incompatibilities.

Believing that arguing is bad, couples learn ways to prevent fights and to stifle anger. The marriage structure does become an instrument to facilitate comfortable, harmonious interactions. Partners choose separate areas of responsibility. He becomes the provider, she takes care of the nest. She makes the social decisions. He initiates sex. She gives in first when an argument is brewing.

LIKE TRAFFIC laws, these rules and rules prevent collisions at the intersections of marriage. Like laws, they become entrenched as permanent structures in the relationship. They become the standards by which the ongoing success of the marriage is judged. How well are we living up to rules of a good husband and a good wife? asks the young married people as they move along the path to divorce.

The fact that newlyweds should chew on is that the vast majority of marital unhappiness is not caused by a failure to live up to such role definitions.

On the contrary, these role definitions along with all the ways couples have devised to avoid conflicts, are deadly poisons to love relationships and severe obstacles to personal happiness.

Legal secretaries will honor bosses

The eighth annual "Bosses Night" dinner for the Oakland County Legal Secretaries Association will be held Monday, Dec. 8, in the Kingsley Inn, Bloomfield Hills. The event is open to all legal secretaries and their employers in Oakland County at a cost of \$15 each for members and their employers and \$18 each for non-members and their employers. Cocktails are extra. Reservations must be received by Nov. 29, will be limited to the first 250 received and must be accompanied by payment in full. For further information call: Sue Bourke at 435-2005 (after 4 p.m.) or Sharon L. Read at 879-1001.

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The trick to being successfully married is to look for conflicts rather than burying them. Incompatibilities are ultimately good friends to a relationship. They are the signals that something important needs to be discussed and worked out.

SOME OF THE BEST advice I can give a brand new couple is to look at your marriage as an instrument, your own personal creation. You have come together with an

other human being in hopes that the instrument you create will add to both your lives in very important ways.

So it makes sense that you will want to know as much as possible about each other's needs, the ones that are compatible and the ones that aren't. Settling differences prevents that understanding and eventually subverts your entire reason for getting married.

The marriage that truly succeeds is the

one which is really customized to the needs and personalities of the individuals who created it. There's no way this can be done without accepting the honest differences as well as comfortable fits.

Bob Trema is a Rochester marriage counselor and psychologist. Questions for Dr. Trema may be sent to the Rochester Eccentric, 418 N. Main, Rochester 43083.

By
BOB TREMA,
Ph.D.



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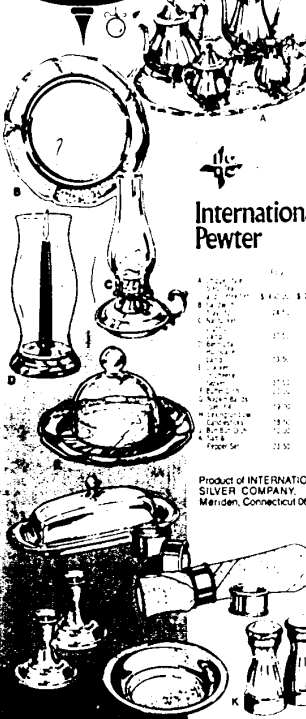
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