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Independence has played an important role in Nena and Mel Chudnof's relationship.

It was the first thing that attracted Mel to Nena when the two met as high school sophomores in Cincinnati, Ohio.

And it continues to be one of the traits that make the West Bloomfield couple's 15-year marriage strong.

Except for two years after the couple's first child was born, Mrs. Chudnof has maintained her career, giving her an interest and fulfillment outside her home. She teaches academically talented students at West Bloomfield's Roosevelt School.

Chudnof, a psychologist who has a part-time private practice and teaches at Oakland Community College, values that.

"You can't expect someone else to be your sole stimulation," he said.

Good communication and commitment have also contributed to the couple's success.

"I think too many people play passive, aggressive games," Chudnof said. "Marriage has become a whole system of get backs."

Rather than sulking to get back at their partners or keeping their feelings inside, he said, couples need to learn communication skills so they can express their needs and wants.

The Chudnoffs set aside time to talk to each other — both partners have to be ready to talk, they said.

Sometimes they go out for brunch while their children are in Sunday school and occasionally, they steal away for a whole weekend.

"Thank you for executing plans which made our rehearsal dinner all we could ask for."

- R.V.

"Thanks for making every detail of our wedding so perfect!"

- J.N.

"... and we couldn't have asked for a more luxurious honeymoon suite."

- J.W.

"The shower was lovely, from the food to the service and everything in between. Thanks!"

- D.I.



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