



Ridiculously Simple Secrets to Great Relationships

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<http://www.HappierRelationships.com>

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(All of the secrets revealed in this paper are fully explored and explained, and the skills are taught in the e-books available on the <http://www.happierrelationships.com> web site.)

Ridiculously Simple Secrets to Great Relationships

Attraction

Most relationships begin with attraction. One person is attracted to another. Attraction doesn't need to be mutual. It's a nice bonus when it is. Couples in which neither party found the other attractive upon first meeting have still been able to achieve great relationships. What makes one person attractive to another is unique to each individual. What and whom you will find attractive is imprinted on your brain at a very early age, and reason plays no part.

Attraction is almost useless after a couple advances into a relationship. Some experts suggest that attractiveness is a negative factor, because of the higher incidence of outsiders "hitting on" an especially attractive man or woman who is married. If an especially attractive person ties his or her self-worth to being attractive, it can cause that person difficulty as age diminishes attractiveness.

Ridiculously Simple Secrets

Don't limit your search for a life partner to people who are especially attractive.

Don't think you won't find a life partner because *you* don't think you're attractive. You *will* match the imprinting for somebody who finds you uniquely attractive. You won't understand why and neither will your partner, but it's still very real.

If you keep finding yourself attracted to individuals who are wrong for you in every other way, ignore the attraction and run swiftly the other way.

If you find a great person, and that person isn't attracted to you, it doesn't mean any future great relationship is doomed. Just skip attraction and go on to courting.

Attraction isn't love. Don't marry too soon after meeting. Attraction will fade. Love will grow.

Courting

Most relationships advance by the use of courting behaviors. One party or both express their interest in, or attraction to, the other by using age appropriate courting behaviors. In teen-agers, these may include teasing, bumping, touching, being attentive and often around.

In adults, courting rituals may include flirting, frequent phone calls, dating, flowers, gifts, dancing, and other outward demonstrations of interest, attraction and affection. Once the relationship is confirmed by marriage or living together, the courting behaviors and rituals gradually (or quickly) fade away.

Ridiculously Simple Secrets

Don't think your partner's love has faded because courting behaviors have faded away.

Romance, moonlight, special music, are part of courting. They aren't love either. They merely advance the relationship toward love.

Don't judge a potential partner based on his or her courting behaviors. Courting only serves to advance a relationship; it is quickly left behind.

Infatuation

If you are lucky, you may experience infatuation on your way to a bonded relationship. Infatuation is a temporary state of madness in which your partner can do no wrong, has no faults, and is perfect in virtually every way. Infatuation is the stuff that poems and songs are written about. Infatuation feels so good, and so "right" that it is very easy to make really unwise decisions. During infatuation, nothing else matters very much. School, goals, dreams, family, friends and work all fade in importance relative to your partner.

Infatuation is not love. Infatuation isn't necessary to achieving a great relationship. It's fun, magical, exhausting, and very temporary. It will fade away. It will soon be gone and gone forever. You can't get it back. You can't have it again with that person. It feels so good that a few people become addicted and change partners frequently so they become "serial infatuators." Again, infatuation is not love.

Ridiculously Simple Secrets

You can have a wonderful, loving, lifelong relationship without ever experiencing infatuation. So, don't think you settled for the wrong partner just because you never felt infatuated.

If you're in a bonded relationship, and find yourself feeling infatuated with somebody else, run like the wind. Don't turn around and don't look back. Infatuation is a form of madness and will make you act crazy. If you give in to it, it will soon leave you, and you'll find you've been a perfect fool.

If you already have a relationship, even if it isn't magical at the moment, infatuation with somebody else is your enemy, not your friend. It is your downfall, not your way out. You can take that to the bank. If your relationship is bad, fix it. If you can't fix it, move on, but deal with your relationship first, and resolve it totally before you give in to attraction or infatuation with someone else.

Reality

Reality is what comes right after infatuation. Reality is where the madness of infatuation fades away and you once again have access to your senses. You see your partner in a new light. Compared to your view during infatuation, the new light is glaring and less pleasant. Many people go into denial of reality because they prefer the distorted wonders of infatuation. But, gradually, even denial can't protect you from the realities of your partner.

Reality is the source of "cold feet" and "second thoughts" that often occur just prior to marriage. To successfully survive reality, the relationship requires that one or both of the partners have "coping" skills. When neither have the skills, the relationship will likely be short lived, with marriage or not.

Ridiculously Simple Secrets

Your partner is not who you thought he/she was when you were in the throes of infatuation.

Your partner is just a normal human being, with the normal number of human flaws and idiosyncrasies.

When reality hits, you're wrong to think that love is gone, or your partner has changed. All that has happened is the madness has faded away.

Bonding

Bonding refers to the bonds forged by shared experiences. All that may be left from the courting and infatuation phases are the memories of the shared experiences. The strength of forged bonds depends on the strength of the emotions felt during the experience. Infatuation is valuable in that it arouses enormously strong emotions, so the couple share many experiences made extraordinary by being shared while feeling powerful emotions. It is these bonds that — forged during all phases of the relationship process — make up the initial quantity of “Love” felt by the couple. Finally, we have *real* love. And, for the rest of the relationship, that love can be enhanced and will grow through sharing experiences, while feeling positive emotions together. Or, it can be diminished and eroded by sharing negative experiences while feeling emotional pain and hurt.

The bonds of shared positive experiences are the basis of real, adult, mature love. Remembering and replaying the positive bonding moments again and again throughout the duration of the relationship will strengthen those positive bonds, and result in a stronger feeling of love. Love will grow, because each replay of the loving experience adds another bond, and the total grows.

Ridiculously Simple Secrets

Attraction can feel like love, but isn't. Infatuation can feel like love but, because it always goes away, it can't be love. Courting, dating, flowers, songs, and romance can feel like love because they are forging positive bonds of shared experiences during moments of powerful emotion, but romance is not love.

Love is the sum of all of the positive shared experiences, heightened by powerful emotions. When the relationship is confirmed — by marriage or living committed to one another — the couple has a pool of love which they will increase, or diminish by their future actions.

Issues

As the relationship proceeds, “issues” will arise. Issues are points of difference between the partners that create bad feelings for one or both of the partners. The partners easily deal with most issues. He puts the toilet seat down because it upsets her to fall in when she backs in, in the dark. She stops hanging her lingerie on the shower curtain rod because it gets in the way when he showers. These are the normal, natural, changes people make when the change doesn't affect deeply held opinions, self-visions, goals, or life decisions. (In other words, the cost of change is low.)

A second set of issues always arises. These issues are not easily resolved, and in fact, may well be irresolvable. To over simply somewhat, the way the partners deal with the irresolvable issues will determine the long-term fate of the relationship.

Irresolvable Issues

Irresolvable issues typically stem from ‘life decisions’ or ‘self-images’ that causes the partners to be or behave in ways that conflict with each other. Several examples may help clarify the kinds of issues that are irresolvable.

The class/no class example

Both partners grew up poor, in trailer parks in the South. Her mother taught her that poverty was a burden that could be handled with dignity. Their trailer was always neat as a pin, and the yard was immaculate. In her early teens she vowed that she would handle life with “dignity and class,” regardless of what her life brought.

He grew up proud to be a “redneck.” He aspired to a truck, a dog, a wife, lots of kids, and a ‘working man’s’ job that would give him time to fish and hunt on the weekends. He held the “suits” in distain, and he ridiculed anybody that acted like a “yuppy,” or wasn’t a loyal American “working man.”

He and she married, had a few kids, and ran smack into their primary irresolvable issue. She wanted nice things for the house, a neat yard and garden, good manners for the kids, and a mini-van. These were things that she equated with having ‘class’ and living with dignity. These things were important to her because they stemmed from a life decision about who she was and who she always would be.

He thought she was trying to “put on the dog” and “live above her station.” What she wanted conflicted directly with his life decision to be who he was and live the way he thought was ‘right.’ Their individual life decisions were at stake. What made the issue irresolvable was that neither was going to change. The ‘cost’ of change was too great.

The spend/save example

She grew up in a family that always lived on ‘the edge.’ They lived paycheck to paycheck, and always ended up with more bills than money. Her father spent money on liquor and poker, and the family suffered. She decided that her life would be different. She would always spend less than she earned, and save diligently for retirement, college for the kids, and a “rainy day.” She vowed never, ever, would she have to deal with bill collectors in her life.

He grew up in a family with a father who was the opposite of hers. His father pinched every penny until it squeaked. The toys, fancy sneakers, and gadgets that his friends had were “unnecessary extravagances,” according to his father, so he had none of them. He couldn’t wait to leave home, earn his own living, and get whatever he wanted and needed, without having to explain or defend his purchases to his father.

When the couple fell in love and married, they both had good educations, good jobs, and earned good incomes. Their irresolvable issue had to do with his spending. He spent more than they earned between them, and ran up big debts with mortgages and fancy cars. She wanted to spend less than they earned and save for the future. They were in constant conflict over the money issue, and it was irresolvable because of their conflicting life decisions. Neither would change, and neither wanted to change.

Some issues are irresolvable

Even if you and your partner can't imagine that you will have irresolvable issues, you will. Some won't show up until events occur, like having a child. Issues around the child can seldom be anticipated, but there will likely be some, e.g. how to discipline, etc.

Or, some may occur with the incapacity of a parent. One may feel like they have to take a sick mother to live with them, the other may not.

Ridiculously Simple Secrets

Identify the irresolvable conflict issues that are, or will be in your relationship. Make a go/no-go decision on that issue before marriage, if possible. If you marry in spite of being aware of the issue, then cope with it and don't waste your breath arguing or fighting about it. In other words, **NEVER FIGHT OVER AN IRRESOLVABLE ISSUE.**

The duration of your relationship will depend largely on how well your partnership can resolve or accept your differences over issues, whether changeable or irresolvable. So, if you can't learn to fight successfully, **DON'T FIGHT AT ALL!**

Coping

Coping is the process of dealing immediately with bad feelings (so they don't fester and grow), and deciding whether the issue can be resolved with action, or resolved with negotiation, or whether it must be accepted and/or forgiven. If you learn to cope successfully, you will have bad feeling episodes less often, for a shorter duration, and they erode your collection of loving feelings less.

Shifting from strong negative emotions immediately into a questioning mode, where you engage your mind with questions, will allow you to cope successfully with issues, rather than allowing emotions to rule.

Effective coping will enable you to have fewer, shorter, and milder episodes of bad feelings about your partner.

Ridiculously Simple Secret

Protect your collection of loving feelings about your partner by quickly coping with and resolving any episodes of bad feelings.

Marking

Marking is a process whereby you remember a positive experience shared with your partner, recall it vividly, re-experience the good feelings you had at that time, and engage as many of your senses as possible in marking your memory. You mark it by reminding your partner about it, or telling someone about it, or if alone, just laugh, and smile, and tell yourself about it.

Ridiculously Simple Secret

Figure out a way to keep those happy memories alive.

Marking takes a loving shared experience and makes it larger, or stronger. Marking reinforces the bond, and increases feelings of love for your partner.

A Truly Magnificent Relationship

You can create a truly magnificent relationship by resolving all bad feeling episodes as quickly as possible, and marking all present and past good feeling episodes as strongly as you can. By making a habit of coping and marking, you maximize the benefits of shared good experiences and minimize the damage of shared bad experiences.

The net effect is to enable the bonds of love to grow over time and get stronger and stronger.

Ridiculously Simple Secret

Have as many positive shared experiences with your partner as possible before you marry or commit to live together. The bonds formed by those good, shared experiences builds the bonds of love that will give you something to build on, and protect you from the hazards of reality.

(Everything to this point is covered in excruciating detail in my six e-books in the Metamating Series. Everything from here forward is digested from the extensive research done by the absolutely best expert on Marriage, Dr. John Gottman and his colleagues at

the Gottman Institute in Seattle. Dr. Gottman can predict with astounding accuracy how long a marriage will last and whether and when it might end in divorce.)

With apologies to Dr. Gottman, and with the deepest respect for his many books and endless research, I will attempt to make his extensive findings ridiculously simple.

Positivity

Positivity refers to the ratio of positive to negative messages one partner gives the other. The messages can be verbal or physical. Messages can be given by gestures, attending or just listening. Successful marriages, with a very low risk of divorce, maintain a positivity ratio of at least 5 to 1. Negative messages are so damaging that it takes 5 positive messages to repair the damage; seriously negative messages will require even more.

Ridiculously Simple Secret

Give your partner at least 5 times as many positive messages as negative.
(Assuming the messages are at the same weight.)

Start and End “Issue” Discussions Positively

Couples with high positivity should find it easy to start ‘issue’ discussions respectfully and with a positive tone. Discussions that start positively have a much better chance of actually achieving a good result. Whether the discussion achieved a successful result or not, it is important that the discussion also end on a positive note.

Couples would be wise to avoid “issue” discussions about issues that are irresolvable. Irresolvable issues are best treated with humor and acceptance, rather than ‘discussions.’

Ridiculously Simple Secret

If you’re determined to have an ‘issue’ discussion, start and end it on a positive note.

Marriages

Half of All of Them End in Divorce

Divorce is an enormous penalty to pay for marital mistakes. Divorce affects far more people than just the two in the relationship. Families, children, neighbors, friends and co-workers are all affected negatively when a marriage breaks up. Sick marriages can be revived. The skills that it takes to make a great marriage can be easily learned and made into habits.

Marriages in Decline

Relationships decline when there is low positivity, and when ‘issue’ discussions start poorly and get worse.

If one or both of the parties are volatile and explosive, issue discussions turn quickly into fights. Fights turn quickly into hurtful, exaggerated, insulting, and degrading affairs that create a very negative, powerfully emotional shared experience.

One partner or both can make the damage worse by replaying the experience over again in memory. In the same way that it is valuable to “mark” good, loving experiences to build loving bonds, it is damaging to ‘mark’ bad, hateful experiences by reliving and remembering them.

Ridiculously Simple Secrets

If your ‘issue’ discussions are hurtful and unproductive, don’t have them.
(Duh)

If you have a really negative emotionally charged shared experience, resolve the bad feelings as quickly as you regain access to reason. Coping effectively can minimize the damage and slow the decline.

If you’ve been in a fight, and expressed damaging messages, get busy as quick as you can to give enough positive messages to repair the damage.

According to Dr. Gottman, volatile couples who fight explosively with damaging and hurtful messages and strong negative emotions are on track to divorce within 3 to 5 years ... or maybe in the first year.

Marriages that are “Cold” Last Longer But Still End up in Divorce

Sometimes one or both parties will attempt to get back at their partner for negative messages or hurtful ‘issue’ discussions, by withdrawal or withholding. One way to stay out of fights is just not to talk to your partner. Another way to fight without seeming to fight is to simply withhold affection, services, attention, or sexual participation.

Withdrawal and withholding will protect against damaging fights, but they are both negative and defeat the positivity required to make the relationship nourishing and rewarding.

This kind of marriage is most likely to divorce around 12 to 16 years.

Ridiculously Simple Secrets

DON'T FIGHT means more than just avoiding loud and hurtful discussions. It means wisely accepting the differences between you and your partner. Acceptance and forgiveness are the wisest way to cope with 'issues' that won't be resolved by action or negotiation.

If your fights are explosive, emotional and hurtful, you'd better hurry and change things around. You don't have much time.

If you become aware that you are in a partnership where there is a lot of withdrawal and withholding, you've got more time, but you're still headed for disaster.

How do You Turn a Sick Relationship Around?

Turning a sick relationship around is easy to describe and hard to do. It involves four steps and enormous commitment and persistence.

- Step 1. It may be useful to tell your partner that you recognize you have problems, and you are going to take some steps with hopes of making the relationship better. Tell your partner that you are doing this out of love, and hopes for a better future. Ask your partner to recognize that you will make mistakes and stumble and fall from time to time, but you intend to persist and make the relationship work. It is valuable to free your partner from any blame and take all the responsibility onto yourself.
- Step 2. Begin immediately to practice being positive. Give your partner at least 5 and maybe 8 positive messages for every negative message.
- Step 3. Identify all of the irresolvable issues between you, and practice handling those issues with acceptance, forgiveness, and humor. If your partner demands changes from you, on an irresolvable issue, treat your partner respectfully, decline to discuss it because you are convinced it is irresolvable, and up the positivity and humor level to show an effort to make amends.
- Step 4. Mentally commit to start the relationship over. Remember the love with which you two started out. Mark the bonding experiences that once held you close. Cope wisely with any negative feelings that arise because you are doing all the work. You can restore the relationship to a healthy, loving state — if your partner is willing — with high positivity, few if any negative 'issue'

discussions, and by marking and helping your partner re-experience the positive experiences with which you bonded.

Conclusions

- It must seem easier to let a sick relationship slip away to divorce than to turn it around by yourself. That may be why 50% of all marriages end in divorce.
- Divorce is a lousy experience and a terrible answer. Divorce doesn't teach you the skills you need to make a relationship work (coping, marking, positivity, and identifying irresolvable issues). As a result, you're not likely to make your next relationship work either. (The divorce statistics for second marriages are even worse than for first marriages.)
- Everything you need to learn, and everything you need to practice has been brought together for you, in one place, along with the experts who can help you if you get stuck. You also have access to a bunch of other people (in the Forum) who are mastering the same skills along with you and understand what you are going through ... and the gift you are giving your partner. (Click here to learn more at <http://www.HappierRelationships.com/>)
- If you learn these skills, and practice them, and your partner still is steering your relationship toward divorce, you will be incredibly well equipped to make your next relationship succeed.

Summary of All of the Ridiculously Simple Secrets

Don't limit your search for a life partner to people who are especially attractive.

Don't think you won't find a life partner because *you* don't think you're attractive. You *will* match the imprinting for somebody who finds you uniquely attractive. You won't understand why and neither will your partner, but it's still very real.

If you keep finding yourself attracted to individuals who are wrong for you in every other way, ignore the attraction and run swiftly the other way.

If you find a great person, and that person isn't attracted to you, it doesn't mean any future great relationship is doomed. Just skip attraction and go on to courting.

Attraction isn't love. Don't marry too soon after meeting. Attraction will fade. Love will grow.

Don't think your partner's love has faded because courting behaviors have faded away.

Romance, moonlight, special music, are part of courting. They aren't love either. They merely advance the relationship toward love.

Don't judge a potential partner based on his or her courting behaviors. Courting only serves to advance a relationship; it is quickly left behind.

You can have a wonderful, loving, lifelong relationship without ever experiencing infatuation. So, don't think you settled for the wrong partner just because you never felt infatuated.

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If you would like to explore any of these secrets further, or learn the skills necessary to use them confidently, go to <http://www.happierrelationships.com/>