



# **DATING IN MARRIAGE**

A GUIDE FOR SUCCESSFUL COUPLES

# MARRIAGE IS SUPPOSED TO BE GREAT

If you asked most people, they would say the happiest days of their lives were those their children were born, and their wedding day. We've all seen pictures on Facebook and Instagram of an elderly couple holding hands with a caption that reads something like, "In our day we fixed things and didn't leave them when times got tough." We look at those pictures and think, "Aw, isn't that sweet?"



Is a relationship like that still attainable today? Are there still couples out there who have been married for 30, 40, or 50 years?

I'm not sure about you, but I want that. I want to be married to my wife for the rest of my life. I want to share the joys of seeing our children and grandchildren grow up. The type of social media post I just described got me to thinking about what a "successful couple" looks like. I had to ask myself, "Is this something that I want for my wife and myself?" A resounding "Yes!" echoed in my heart, because I've decided I want us to be a "successful couple."

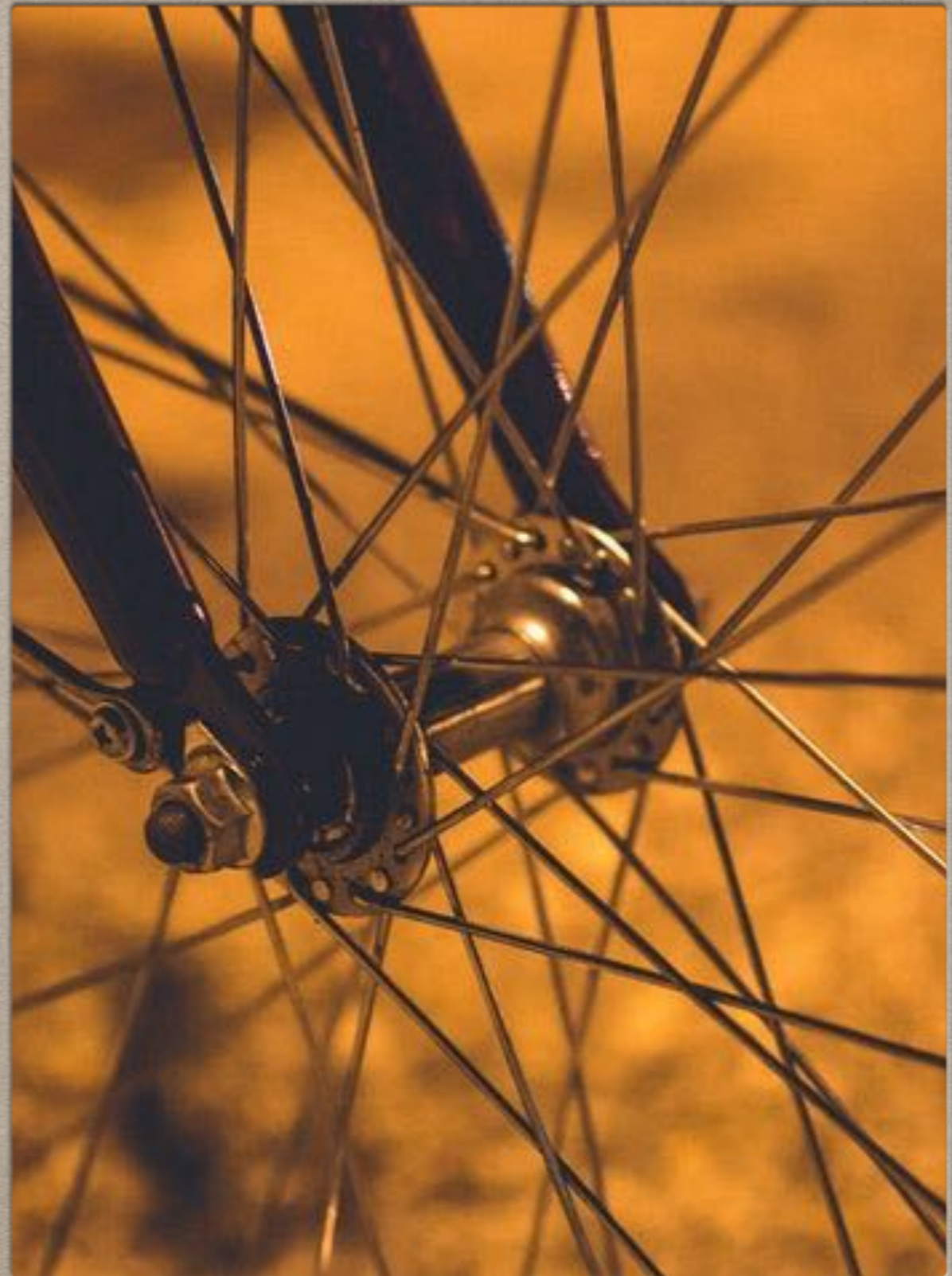


Most of us, when we said our vows, had so much love in our eyes. Our hearts were overflowing and we couldn't wait to embark on a journey with our new spouse. Then, BAM! Life hit us square in the face and suddenly we were scrambling to keep ourselves and our family together.

Some couples live from crisis to crisis and get comfortable with constant turmoil. Before they know it, they've been married 10 or 20 years or more, maybe with children, but living without investing quality time in each other. If we're not careful, there will come a time when we look at our spouse and not even recognize them anymore. How do we fight against the routine that can set in as our marriage starts to take shape?

The routine of life can happen without us fully recognizing it. What does the routine look like? For most of us, we get up in the morning, have breakfast, go to work, come home, watch some television and then sleep. Only to do again and again. The amount of time that we give to these things changes, but it becomes a routine nonetheless. We may work 50 or 60 hours a week. So the time we would give to something important is taken up by time given to our jobs.

Our lives are like a bicycle wheel. With what is most important in the center. We may like to think that our spouses, or children are in the center of the wheel, but our actions would indicate that we have different priorities.



I believe successful couples aren't just defined by income, career, or social status, but through their impact on each other and the world around them.

Here are five traits of successful couples that we can all learn from. At the end of each will be a Date Challenge. Use them as opportunities to strengthen your own marriage.

# THEY'VE LEARNED TO LEAN ON EACH OTHER

Successful couples don't give into selfishness in their relationship. They've learned to be there for each other, to comfort, support, and provide counsel for their spouse. They can respect each other's opinion and trust that they are being heard.

If she is having problems, he's there to help her through her thought process in any way possible. If he's in a family argument, she's there to help him wade through the complications that can make up family relationships.







*Date Challenge:* Go out to dinner in a restaurant or plan a picnic where the two of you can have uninterrupted quality time together. The best way to learn how to support your spouse is to *ask* how you can support them. Discuss, listen, then do!

# THEY DON'T COMPARE THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THOSE OF OTHER COUPLES

One thing that can kill your relationship before it ever gets a chance to succeed is comparing it to other couples. Facebook and Instagram can be great for destroying your relationship. People get to see the “perfect” picture. We shouldn’t judge how good other relationships are based off of a picture. Even couples that we know, we shouldn’t compare ourselves to. Looking other places can make it hard to see and value the relationship that we have in front of us. Successful couples love the inside jokes and cherish the idiosyncrasies and layers of their relationship. These things are not typically posted online, but are key to keeping love alive in the relationship.



*Date Challenge:* Share a new experience.  
Try a dancing lesson, or take a painting or  
cooking class together.

# THEY USE EACH OTHER'S LOVE LANGUAGE

I'm a big fan of *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman. We have to understand that not everyone gives and receives love the same way we do. Successful couples have learned their partner's love language and speak it as much as possible.



*Date Challenge:* Take [The 5 Love Languages Quiz](#). Discuss the results with your partner over coffee or during a quiet evening at home. To get a better understanding of The Five Love Languages, read the book together. Make time to talk after each chapter.

# THEY HELP EACH OTHER GROW

What is one of the most potentially hurtful things in the world? When a person you love takes no interest in your hopes and dreams. If your spouse is exploring an exciting job opportunity, support them . If your partner is training hard to become super fit, cheer them on. Be as excited for your partner's achievements as if they were your own.

We all have days when life gets the best of us and we feel like we're just going through the motions. That's when we need our spouse to remind us of our heart's dreams. When done in a loving way, they can get us back on track to pursuing our goals.



*Date Challenge:* Get a journal and write down your personal dreams and goals. It may have been a while since you've done this, so give yourself time. Share the result with your spouse. Tell them why these things are important to you. As your spouse shares what they've written, remember that they are being vulnerable. Encourage and support them.



# THEY MAKE TIME FOR EACH OTHER

No matter how busy you are, your relationship has to be at the top of your priority list. Does that mean placing it above your kids, jobs, and friends? Yes! I'm not saying to neglect those things, but understand that one day the kids will leave the house. One day you'll either retire or move to a new place of employment. When these things happen, the one person who will be there through it all will be your spouse. Just as a plant will rot without water, your relationship will grow stagnant without quality time.



*Date Challenge:* It's time to step it up. Pull out your calendars and sit down with your spouse. Clear out some time and plan two to three dates (with different activities) over the next month. Groupon is a good way to change things up at a low cost. Use this time to create great memories together.

No matter where you are in your marriage relationship, if you work with your spouse you can have the best marriage possible. It is my hope that this manifesto will encourage you to strengthen your relationship, to get to a place where you make time for your marriage and build something that will stand the test of time. Our marriages can be an example for those around us. An example of not just being married, but of being in a successful and happy marriage.

For more date ideas, encouragement and ways to strengthen your marriage go to [www.leonardmcelveen.com](http://www.leonardmcelveen.com)