

GUIDELINE TO A SUCCESSFUL MATRIMONIAL UNION

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INTRODUCTION

It was bestowed in every human being, the need to belong and the need to be loved.

It is seen even in infants, when they sense and know that they are loved, they are more effective, affectionate and cheerful.

It has been studied and proven that children who grow up without that assurance of being loved have a difficult time with attachment and loving the next person.

The same can often (but not always) be said about children who grow up with a single parent or in an abusive family.

They have never seen love and warmth displayed and thus creating a predicament for them to display it to the next person.

Be that as it may, that does not absorb them from needing and striving for a life companion. That can prove to be a difficult task if you have no point of reference of how that should be carried out.

In the society that we live in with the divorce rate at its highest, people wonder if it is even worth it. The marriage which is not proving successful tends to be carried straight to the mortuary which the divorce court provides, and in due course to be given an unceremonious burial.

Bad marriages have no doubt been ended in the divorce court in the best interests of all concerned, but with them thousands of potentially good marriages have been swept away without being given a fair chance. It is madness to rush the sick straight to the mortuary.

The obviously intelligent solution is to provide an efficient hospital service which will give to every marriage in trouble the best possible chance of recovery.

In South Africa the Western Cape and Gauteng are recorded to be the highest when it comes to divorce rates, peaking to 23.8% in 2019.

According to statistics 4 in 10 divorces came from marriages that did not reach their 10th anniversary.

The highest percentage of divorce is from the black African group. If that be a fact, could it be that growing in households headed by a scorned mother may potentially lead to resentment for the matrimonial union? Often there is no encouragement for marriage and thus leaving many children with no interest to even attempt going for it.

One may beg to differ as far as the above insinuation is concerned, with television programs like the famous Our Perfect Wedding on Dstv. There are other programs similar to these that show case weddings, but the question is how many fall in the 4 out of 10 statistic that end in divorce?

Hollywood which many young people rely to teach them about life and marriage is not helping to say the least.

The modern music that young people are dominated by does all but to promote marriage and settling down. Woman in music videos are used as objects for sex, in our tv ads they are displayed as instruments for sexual attention.

We thank God for the internet but at some extent it has also contributed to people being perceived as equipment's to satisfy their sexual edges. Porn has never been at the highest like it is now. And it can be viewed by anyone and everyone who can afford data including and more especially young people who are more infected with this pandemic than any age group.

A study says 53% of children aged 11-16 have been exposed to porn. The study further says these teenagers are at risk of being desensitised by these explicit images. Hence, I call it a pandemic...

If a young person has no one to tell them the sacredness of marriage and they have no one to look up to all they have is their phone and those pictures that they expose themselves to, soon enough those will be engrave in their minds and when they find someone the last thing on their mind will be love, let alone marriage because they don't know the importance of it nor have they seen it modelled for them. That is the worst injustice that anyone can subject themselves to, living and dying without ever giving yourself to someone the only way God had initially intended.

Love is something special, an instinct divinely bestowed within us by the almighty. it is not poured in us to be preserved but to be shared with your significant other.

when two souls intertwine as one the chemistry created constrains you to stay with that person all your life. But that can prove to be a very difficult task if you don't know how to go about it. many have really loved, but have not been able to maintain the relationships because they don't really know the principles necessary to sustain that union. as much as a relationship is an emotional activity, common sense should never be left at the door when you enter in to that journey.

This book is aimed at outlining some of the common mistakes that lead to people not ending at the altar or even worse, not being able to enjoy their matrimonial union.

This book however, will not claim to know all the answers to all human failures nor will it assume to know all the steps to be followed to a healthier and fruitful relationship because it clearly acknowledges that we as individuals are unique and we can't all be put in a box and be expected to

conduct ourselves in the same way. This book is based on years of observation of different relationships/marriages and own personal experience.

CHAPTER 1

KNOWING YOUR PARTNER

I don't know you very well, and I am almost afraid to know you better, maybe I love you because I don't know you. Maybe if I knew what you were about or what you wanted out of life and what you think is important, I would not care for you at all and this would be the end of this (author unknown).

It stands not to be argued that when you start a relationship with someone you have absolutely no idea who you are hooking up with, or what you're getting yourself into.

Regardless of how long you have known each other, whether it be from childhood or a few days ago, you have no idea what you will be dealing with.

If it has been long that you have known that person please bear in mind that the person that you knew then and the one you are getting ready to weave your life with are totally different. The truth of the matter is that we are completely different to the way we interact with our friends/family and with our partners.

Bishop T.D Jakes puts it like this, when you're dating someone you are actually seeing their representative.

This representative is given strict instructions to be at their best behaviour at all times. Unfortunately, the common mistake made is the assumption that this representative is the real partner, and hence the expectation that this is the person you're going to spend the rest of your life with. The truth of the matter is when you sign on the dotted line, you have no idea who you just got married to.

Matthew 19 verse 5 says "and therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cling to his wife, and these two shall become one".

The first thing you should strive to accomplish in the process of clinging is to get to know your partner, which will save you a lot of headache. Know what they like, what makes them tick, what ticks them off, what makes them sad, laugh etc however, this does not mean that you must go to the relationship with a private investigator mentality and try to scrutinize everything. That can be a huge turn off when someone senses that you are trying too hard to get to know them in a day. That should be a natural flow, as you communicate you will be able to learn more about the person effortlessly.

Let it be known that the clinging process is not an overnight thing, it even has a potential of taking a lifetime. Communication is very crucial in the relationship.

Try to listen as much as you talk. You don't want to be always talking or always listening in the relationship. When you still getting to know, a person avoid asking them about their family background and personal stuff, wait until they open up to you, they will say something that will alert you that they are ready to talk about such. The same should be said for everything else about them.

But what if they don't and we are already a couple of months in to our relationship? You can in that case peel off slowly the curiosity, because you don't want to find yourself in a situation where you fall in love with someone that you don't even know at all.

The key is to master a balance of these two.

Be warned though, you will not like everything you find out about your partner.

They will probably have some nasty habits that they embrace, that you can live with, you assess yourself and you determine that biting their nails, bad chewing or picking their nose is something you can live with.

The real test comes when you realise that your angel has a very bad temper, impatient as hell or realise just how high pitched their voice can get when their angry.

You didn't know they can sleep without saying good night? Or go on for days without talking because you made them upset?

We as individuals have different ways of handling anger. That is one of the things that you must learn when attempting to get to know your partner. However, with the above mentioned you must labour in evaluating if it is bearable and if you personally can handle it.

You must talk to your partner about it; let them know how it makes you feel when they act like that.

however, it would be advisable to wait until they have come down.

Nothing has ever been achieved when attempting to discuss issues while emotions are high.

Also let them tell you what irritates them about you, be willing to listen and not be defensive.

Avoid excuses like I acted like that because you.

however, you are allowed to ask for clarity on what you don't understand. Statements like "I have always been like this" "this is just who I am" can never be constructive in a relationship.

Always try to pay attention to what your partner is querying about. Chances are that they are bringing that to your attention because they care a lot about your relationship, and they don't want whatever they are querying about to become the reason that the both of you separate.

The next person needs to hear you take responsibility for your actions as much as you want them to.

Contrary to most men's belief in buying a present to say sorry, it means more for a woman when you utter the words 'sorry'.

Consciously or otherwise when you are progressing in knowing someone you are deciding whether you can live with this that you are getting to know or this that you now know.

It would be better if all the skeletons would come out of the wood work at once right?

Unfortunately, that's not always the case; they come out one by one. but if you have mastered the art of addressing issues as a couple then none of those will defeat you.

The bible refers many times when they would be intimate as knowing your partner.

There are phrases like Abraham knew Sara. That is the highest form of knowing your partner, being sexually intimate with them. Yet another balance should be attained in knowing your partner's personality and character to knowing their sexual preference. This will be discussed further in chapter 3. However, this cannot be over emphasized, the importance of maintaining a full knowledge of both spheres about your partner.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING YOUR PARTNER

Laughter is an important part of a good relationship, it's an immense achievement when you can move from your thinking that your partner is merely an idiot to thinking that they are that wonderful complex thing called a lovable idiot, and often that means that you must have a sense of humour about their flaws.

It's fun to have a partner who understands your life and lets you be.

Understanding someone who you have contact with on a daily basis is very crucial. Your boss at work or a parent because lack of that can have frustrating consequences in your life, even more if that person is your partner.

The second investment after getting to know their flaws and short comings is to try and understand where they are coming from. Some people act the way they do influenced by culture, environment or the society they were raised in; some is the past experienced that they went through that has contributed to the way they now view life.

Even though it may be disturbing and irritating for you as soon as you have established who they are and you have alerted them of what you don't like and they have assured you that they will work on their flaws, you must employ the spirit of patience with them. A drastic change doesn't happen overnight more especially if that has been the norm most of their life.

For example, if your partner has a temper problem and they have alluded that they will work on it, the next time you have a fight it won't automatically happen that their reaction will be one of the ways how you discussed that it should be.

It may even be the exact way how it has always been, but that doesn't mean that they don't seek the change that you discussed.

The last thing you want to say is 'I knew that you had not changed' that will divert the attention from the matter on the table to what you are proposing. It is advisable to raise your disappointment when you have fixed what the original problem is. What must be understood is that change doesn't happen overnight, you must remember that these are two people coming together with different values and morals.

The cleaving process will take time and you must be patient. You should also avoid thinking that your way of doing things is the correct one and that your values are the most appropriate. In fact, the two of you must come up with your own guidelines on how you want to run your family because as it stands you are both going on morals and values that have been deposited in you by your parents and external forces.

You should also understand the role that is designated to you in the relationship and maintain your position at all times regardless of how the atmosphere is. For example, when fighting most people forget their place and leave their position.

No matter how right you are as soon as your partner feels that their territory has been invaded, they won't hear what you are saying.

This can prove to be hard in carrying out more especially when you are angry. However, the remnant of calmness that may still be prevalent in you should prohibit you to speak when you're in that state.

Believe me as long as your partner feels that you are in their territory they will retaliate. It is crucial to learn your partner's love language and try by all means to execute it at all times.

The terminology 'love language' was coined by Dr Gerry Chapman in his book *the five love languages, the secret to love that lasts*.

The premise of the book is that people don't give and receive love in the same way, each individual has their own love language.

The love languages are:

- Words of affirmation if you love hearing I love you, compliments, meaningful words, and insults are specifically detrimental to your relationship, then this could potentially be your love language.

If you discover that this is your partner's love language make sure you give them genuine compliments and tell them you appreciate them often.

- Quality time those with this love language enjoy one-on-one sessions, going out, and undivided attention with no external disturbances like the television or the cell phone.

A partner who's perceived that their significant other embraces this language should avoid cancellation or postponement of dates, and should display that they are paying attention to their partner when talking.

Queues like nodding, eye contact or smiling are absolutely essential in this individual's life. As a partner you should enquire what your partner would like to do and schedule a date for it, you should avoid assuming what will interest them, having said that, it should not become a routine.

In a long run you should also outline that you have learned your partner's interests. And surprise them

- receiving gifts sure, we all love receiving gifts, but this kind of person loves receiving gifts above everything. It is never about the cost of the gift, but the thought that went in to the gift.

It could be something as small as a card, picked flowers, or note saying you love their eyes, but it is very meaningful to this person.

The saying 'it's the thought that counts' is a reality in this person's life.

A missed opportunity to give on special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries can tear this person apart.

- acts of service chores around the house, or errands that help to relieve household responsibility are some of the characteristics of this love language.

The partner is ecstatic that you took out the trash, washed the dishes, picked up kids from school, or paid the bills.

Broken commitments and laziness can make this individual feel unloved.

- Physical touch this does not necessarily mean sex, but hugs, cuddling, and holding hands are what encompass this language. to this individual, their partner's physical presence is extremely crucial.

Neglect or abuse for a person with this love language could be detrimental for them or the relationship.

It can't be over-emphasized that learning your partner's love language is extremely vital.

It will reduce if not avoid feeling that you are doing everything to show your partner that you love them but they still feel frustrated and unloved.

Speaking different love languages is like a French man trying to have a conversation with an English man, very little will be accomplished because they speak different languages.

However, this does not suggest that for the both of you to work you should have the same love language, but it merely pleads for one to strive in understanding their partner's language and execute it.

It is safe to assume that knowing your partner's love language may serve as a strong foundation in understanding who and what they are, the reasons they act the way they do.

At the end of the day we should treat others the same way we would like to be treated. If we required more understanding and patience, then that's what we should dish out too.

CHAPTER 3

The importance of intimacy

Affection is the podium of our love; we still hold hands

(Unknown)

They slipped briskly into intimacy from which they never recovered.

I love you too much once, it is not time or opportunity that is to determine intimacy, it is disposition alone. I wonder if this is how people always get close; they heal each other's wounds, and repair the broken skin.

Those who have never known the deep intimacy and intense companionship of mutual love have missed the best.

The bible puts it this way, 'the two shall become one'.

The process of intimacy is too deep to be explicated with words.

It's intense closeness that goes beyond the physical touch.

It goes without saying that it's never merely having sexual intercourse with someone.

Brian Adams attempted to outline it in his song 'have you ever really loved a woman'.

"to really love a woman, you got to let her hold you until you know how she wants to be touched.

You got to breath her, really taste her until you can feel her in your blood, when you can see your unborn children in her eyes, you know you really love a woman..."

Intimacy is the ultimate way of expressing how you feel about your partner.

Loving someone propels you to give all you have, and the best gift you can give your soul mate is yourself.

Unfortunately, men and woman interpret intimacy differently.

However, if you have mastered your partner's love language, it should not be a predicament being intimate with each other.

New moral theorists state that society is more accommodative to matters which were seen as taboo in the past.

Topics like sex, homosexuality, and cohabiting are openly discussed, although there are still certain individuals that find that uncomfortable. Sex is an important part of life and overall well-being.

In relationships, orgasms play a significant part in bonding. Physical and emotional benefits like reduced risk of heart disease, improved self-esteem, and more can come from having sex. A 2016 study found that sexually active people aged 50 to 90 years old had better memory.

However, there are some couples who decide not to engage in it for different reasons.

These reasons may include:

1. having a low libido (also known as "sex drive")
2. living with an underlying medical condition, such as chronic pain
3. wanting to date for a longer period of time before having sex
4. being unmarried and wanting to abstain from sex before marriage

If you don't fall in the remnant of this category, you must make sure that you do not slack in that department.

Slacking in the bedroom has been cited as one of the reasons why many marriages end in infidelity or divorce courts.

From the archives of sexual behaviour that recently surveyed over 14 000 couples, it was found that an average couple has sex 56 times a year, which is equivalent to once a week.

This is different to a similar survey in 1998 where an average couple had sex 67 times a year.

Could it be that we have become too busy and lazy to an extent that we neglect this important task of the relationship?

Lack of intimacy can cause havoc in a relationship.

If passion and intimacy are lacking you may see your partner as a friend, roommate or companion instead of a loving, caring spouse.

But while sex can be a great form of intimacy, it's certainly not the only way to be intimate with someone.

Affectionate touch, for example, can be a great way to be intimate.

Some non-sexual forms of physical intimacy include:

1. massages
2. kissing
3. cuddling
4. holding hands

Beyond physical intimacy, emotional intimacy — including honest, vulnerable conversations — can also be important to many people when it comes to relationships.

The inclusion of the partner if still dating in your future plans may also serve as form of emotional intimacy.

CHAPTER 4

THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

It's an incredible and unbreakable bond created by mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters.

Its comfort in a world of uncertainties, it's a shoulder to lean on.

There is no doubt that family is one of nature's masterpieces. Your character is sharply shaped by your kinship and those closely around you.

This strongly infer that family is not only those whom your blood related to.

Families are the compass that guide us, evidenced with sayings like *'an apple does not fall far from the tree'*.

We pave our direction in life highly influenced by our families.

Needless to say that, more especially in the black community, it becomes difficult for a child to detach themselves from their family and cleave to their partner.

In-law relationships remain among the vaguest and most challenging of family relationships all around the world.

The truth of the matter is as the one joining the family, you are bound to experience sentiments of being an outsider now and again.

This is even more prevalent when you have to reside with your in-laws, and they don't necessarily extend a space of welcomeness.

Extended family relationships are an important feature of Black South African families. After marriage, in-laws become significant as the extended family. Within the South African Black culture, the husband's family becomes the dominant in-law family. This has led many 'husband families' to channel abuse and disregard for the wife.

The husband's sisters have often been found to exercise disrespect towards the sister in law. This could be influenced with many reasons ranging from, feeling that this 'outsider' will now have full access to their brother's finances, expectations from the sisters for the in-law to turn in to their slave, to mention but a few reasons.

In a research done in Pretoria north, with 20 mothers in law and 20 daughters in law, whom all had been in an in-law relationship for at least 6 months, it was established that certain contributors play a role in the in-law relationship.

These contributors included:

- culture

Both mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law acknowledged that culture plays a role in in-law relationships. However, they emphasised that the role of culture is no longer as strong as it used to be due to the Western influence. Daughters-in-law articulated that culture plays a negative and positive role regarding the in-law relationships. Daughters-in-law were expected to do all the house chores for the in-laws when she is married because of cultural customs.

It also becomes problematic when the in-laws embrace different cultural beliefs.

The husband's family may expect the daughter in law to quickly adopt their culture, which may be almost impossible seeing that the individual would have been in practice of their own culture most if not all their life.

- Influence of ethnicity

In the past if a man married in to a different tribe or clan that would be somewhat of a challenge. Studies assert that when the man had very traditional parents and married outside the clan, the women would suffer much abuse.

Although there has been transformation in regard to this aspect due to modernisation, daughters in law outline that there are still certain expectations imposed on them, like learning the husband's language.

- Influence of religion

Religion has proven to play a more dominating role in the in-law's relationship, even so much so than culture does.

Mothers in law have this unwritten expectation that the daughter in law will be of the same religion as they are.

If it should be contrary to what they have predetermined in their heart, it can cause strife between the in-laws.

In India where parents are very opinionated about their children's life, including marriage, they clearly outline that their male child should marry a woman of the same religion. There

is also an expectation for the child to take care of their parents in the context of economic and social well-being.

Research has found that very religious parents, even though they can live with the fact that their in-law does not share the same religious beliefs or affiliate to any religion, will still find their lifestyle a bitter pill to swallow.

In a case where a woman stays with her religious in-laws who believe that the consumption of alcohol is unacceptable as a woman, she would then be constrained to sneaking around to execute her desire of beverage indulgence.

This is quite perplexing, considering that the husband would be well aware of his wife's social interests.

It seems that it boils down to living comfortably with not much responsibilities versus freedom and peace of mind.

The man may not perceive this in this manner, since his life routine is not really compromised with the new status that he has acquired.

However, for the woman the set up may be psychologically burdening, feeling that she can't even suggest moving out lest she is accused of not loving the in-laws.

If the parent's in-law fails to set up restrictions around their children's marriage, then the married couple should do so, clearly outlining to what extent the family's contribution will be welcomed in their marriage.

One of the most prominent way to enforce these regulations would be for the married couple to have their own place.

Not only will this display independence, but it will also avoid unnecessary turmoils amongst the in-laws.

As much as the time spent in the husband's home would bring some sort of intimate relation between the in-laws, the long- term effects of this arrangement are more severe than the prior.

- Influence of education

Is the hypothesis that 'in-laws respect you more when you are educated' true?

Research has found a correlation between education and having money.

In an observational research between a mother in-law and her daughters in law (both educated and working, and one with only matric and unemployed) I found that the above hypothesis can be accepted as true.

When asked, the matriculant daughter in law had this to say “*when you are not schooled much...like I...I can say mother-in-law belittles you...you know. She basically doesn’t think you can think on your own*”.

This is also evidenced when there are family gatherings or activities.

The elite daughter in law will do the highly visible and noted activities, whilst her ‘illiterate’ counterpart will be responsible for cooking and the likes.

Is it true, money talks?

If not, what can explicate the often perceived but not spoken about treatment of in-laws to their daughters in -law with different hierarchical educational scales?

In view of the points discussed above, it can’t be over emphasized that geographic distance is vital between the in-laws.

Failure to adhere to this results in mothers-in-laws meddling and intruding in the married couple’s affairs.

Having said that, how far the geographical distance is also serve as a determining factor of how the relation will be.

A study indicated that daughters-in-law who live closer to their in-laws may experience more conflict with their mothers-in-law.

Distance precludes the continuity that is necessary to maintain relationships as they undergo change and to resolve earlier conflict.

In the rural areas or villages, parents still believe in allocating a stand within the same vicinity as their own house.

In this manner, you have technically moved out, but still close enough to be monitored and dictated at.

Chapter 5

The influence of friends in the relationship

“There’s not a word yet for old friends who’ve just met.”

(Jim Henson)

“A friend is someone who understands your past, believes in your future, and accepts you just the way you are.”

(Unknown)

“A true friend never gets in your way unless you happen to be going down”.

(Arnold H. Glasgow)

It’s most people’s dream to marry their ‘best friend’.

These individuals would have cultivated a mental comprehension of the reality that when the butterflies in the stomach settles, and the honeymoon stage goes in to recess, you ought to have a companion whom you can keep up a conversation with.

“Ultimately the bond of all companionship, whether in marriage or in friendship, is conversation.”

(Oscar Wilde)

Be that as it may, does that then suggests that you then forsake all others to be only buddied with your life time companion?

For others this is the case, they feel complete only actively socialising with this one individual.

However, this has been found to be only a remnant in the population.

It is of great importance that communication is detailed in a quest to establish if both partners are on the same page as far as friends are concerned.

As a partner in a relationship it goes without saying that the elumination that you and your partner are different individuals should at all times be prevalent.

Meaning, you might enjoy being a couch potato over weekends, while your partner likes going out and mingling with friends.

There are two sides to this coin, Friends can be intrusive and invasive, or welcoming and positive, and depending upon the quality of friends they decide to be to you.

Your interaction with your friends will determine this factor.

If you're constantly bad mouthing and belittling your partner, that's no doubt an invitation for your significant other to be undermined and your relationship to be under invasiveness.

Friends play an extremely important role in our lives, and this remains true after we're married as well. We need to cultivate good, true, loyal, and honest friendship that not only bring out the best in us but also bring out the very best in our marriage.

On the other hand, we need to stay away from toxic friendships that have the potential to harm our marriage.

It is important to be able to identify toxic friends for your marriage.

Some of the pointers to help you achieve this are:

1. The friend who talks badly about HIS/HER spouse

If our friend consistently cuts down her husband, then over time we will naturally start to see our own spouse in an unfavourable light. In an effort to validate her or make her feel better, we end up hurting our marriage with the negative words we say and the thoughts we allow to take root in our mind.

2. The friend who talks badly about YOUR spouse

Allowing your friend to speak badly about your spouse is not only wrong but totally unacceptable.

We need to let our friends know that it's NOT OKAY to call our spouse names or complain about what he/she does or does not do for us. It perpetuates a negative cycle in our minds and hearts and creates an unhealthy co-dependent friendship that will harm our marriage.

3. The friend who is always trying to put you against your family

Our friends should never expect us to choose them over our family or try to stir up a fight because they're wanting more of our time. The bottom line

is that we definitely need to spend time with our friends, but that time can never be at the expense of our own family. If we are spending too many nights out with our girlfriends, our marriage will suffer. Too many nights out with the boys will lead to a lonely marriage. It's all about balance, but your marriage must always come first.

4. The friend who hates marriage in general

As individuals we will have friends from different walks of life than us, but we can't be close friends with someone who won't respect our beliefs or tries to belittle our values.

Chapter 6

Finances in the relationship

Money was designed to be our servant, never our master. It's to be used to build our marriage and family and to honour God. Getting a proper perspective on money is the first step to solving financial conflicts. [To the best of your ability] become equal partners. The second step relates to whether you handle money as partners or competitors. There's no room for competition in marriage; you and your mate are equal partners on the same team.

One word comes up when we talk about finances in the marriage or relationship, 'transparency'. You need to be open with your partner about how much you earn, your debts and financial goals and plans.

However, the question is at what point in the relationship does this topic come up?

Is it advisable to wait until you tie the knot?

Perhaps it can be introduced as soon as a person believes they have found their life partner?

Some may argue that they plan to marry out of community of property, that way it is not vital to know the other partner's financial state.

There is an incredible vulnerability that comes when we give another person access to our finances. The reality is they can now hurt us very badly by taking or misusing the information we have given them. Prior to marriage, many of us had to answer only to ourselves. A major shift occurred as we began our married life.

Whether to marry in or out of community of property is one's preference.

Be that as it may, weaving your life with someone directly or indirectly subjects you to their affairs.

Merely being intertwined with this individual prompts you to have their best interest at heart.

It is then in the couple's best interest to have an open atmosphere as far as finances are concerned, and whether they are in a joint financial relationship or not.

If one feels uncomfortable with total transparency, they can at least cover the basics, so as to avoid surprises and high expectations from the other partner.

However, each partner must clearly stipulate beforehand how transparent they intend to be with finances, so that the other makes an informed decision.

Money matters in a marriage relationship. Money may be an inanimate object, but we attach great emotional significance to it. Money only becomes our friend if we as a couple learn to partner around the decisions related to money. One of the prerequisites for partnering in the matter of money is an understanding of the meaning of money to each of us. (Dr David Stoop and Dr Jan Stoop, from the book, "The Complete Marriage Book")

Money indeed has different meanings for people.

To another it may mean power, to the other it may mean liberation and source of respect. Just as with the love languages, you need to learn your partner's financial language, and thus determining what money means to them.

I have often heard woman (more especially the older generation) complaining that their husband's never spending time with them makes them feel unloved and unvalued. The husband's response is frequently similar, stating that their providing should be proof enough of their love.

The inference that can be drawn in the above scenario is that the partners both have different meanings about money and the significance it possesses.

The man believes that by being a provider he not only gives of his sweat and time, but validates giving all he is to his family.

On the other hand, the woman does not interpret it that way; she would rather have the person as opposed to what he can offer.

It goes without saying that men and woman are opposite species in interpreting the matters with financial connotations.

Discussions of extended family's expectations should be clearly outlined.

Although it is also important that the married person communicates with the parents and siblings that they now have a family of their own, and therefore, there may be changes in their financial relationship.

A study conducted in South Africa, in the black community where it is the norm for children to be responsible for their parents, it was found that the mother-in-law's financial dependence on the son impacts negatively on the mother-daughter-in-law relationship.

The impact may be even more detrimental if the husband has not communicated of this dependence or the execution thereof.

Research has found that mothers-in-law that are financially dependent on their sons tend to have difficulty when the son gets married and becomes financially liable towards the wife. Daughters-in-law also indicated that this can create competition among the two women, which may result in conflict.

In a country stricken with inequality and poverty, this is a prominent factor, more especially (as fore-mentioned) in the black society.

Most black working class are subjected to what is known as 'black tax'.

This is the extra money that black professionals are expected to give every month to support their less fortunate family and extended families.

A discussion of 'black tax' should take place within a marital space, and if there is a need for adjustments, there be implementations.

Chapter 7

Conflict resolution

All war is a symptom of man's failure as a thinking animal...

(Unknown)

Peace is not absence of conflict it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means

(Ronald Reagan).

Conflict is not necessarily physical confrontation. It can be anything, from giving a cold shoulder to someone, verbal duel, mental subjugation, and many other emotionally distressing things.

As a couple, who are head over hills in love, you should not neglect the comprehension of the reality that you're both from two different worlds.

By virtue of this truth, it goes without saying that the couple will experience conflict.

In the beginning of a marriage not only do you not know how to live together, but you are also unaware of how to fight together.

The smallest spark of anger bears the potential of world war 3, the rehashing of past problems and mistakes taking centre stage.

For as long as the couple approaches the marriage as a two-way street, predicaments like the above will become the norm.

In viewing marriage as a one-way adventure, the couple will stroll down hand in hand cultivating lessons of how to deal and groom their family.

Conflict resolution is a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. Conflict is drama, and how people deal with conflict shows you the kind of people they are.

Communication in a relationship is very vital.

In the conduct of a robust interaction between the couple, each partner should be willing to listen to the other's opinions, and respect their feelings.

No doubt you won't agree on everything, and that's where the term 'compromise' comes in.

In as much as human beings are born in solitary form, their desire for interactiveness impels them to exercise compromise from time to time.

However, all compromise is based on give and take, but there can be no give and take on fundamentals.

These fundamentals may include someone's religious beliefs, and the decision to have or not to have children,

There is no need to prove your right when you have conflicts. The edge to win the fight fuels individuals to dish out insults, belittle their partner, and pull out archives of their failures and mistakes all in an effort to be victorious.

The truth of the matter is words are very harmful, and even if one apologises, they can never take back the impact of their oral communication.

Therefore, a relationship should be treated as a savings account, for it to be successful deposits must always exceed withdrawals.

Psychologist John Gottman's exploration of positive to negative ratio in marriages states that a couple must maintain a major ratio in a marriage, which means a constant 5. Meaning one ratio of positive to every negative statement.

In simple terms, for every withdrawal from the relationship by insults or criticism, you must deposit 5 positive statements or experiences to get back to where you started

At times, as a couple you need to take active steps into assuring that conflict in your relationship does not reach explosive level where a resolution would come at a high price. A prudent initiative could be having a rule that you never go to sleep without resolving your disagreements.

Each partner must take the vow to execute the 'rule' very seriously.

Although this may at times mean that you may have sleepless nights, it will be in the relationship's best interest.

An instruction for believers is 'let not the sun go down on your wrath' (Ephesians 4 verse 26).

Couples should look into ways in which they can empower their relationship.

Marriage enrichment programs have proved to be life sustaining for most relationships.

Marital education programs consistently lead to an improvement of communication skills and relationship satisfaction.

Chapter 8

When challenges of life arise

You don't build a bond without being present.

(James Earl Jones)

Just being there for someone can sometimes bring hope when all seems hopeless.

(Dave G Llewelyn)

There is nothing more vital to the bond you share with someone than simply being there for them.

(Suman Rai)

In as much as you become one with your spouse, you still individuals who will face life's challenges at different times in your lives.

How you respond to your partner's time of uncertainty will serve as an assurance of your love for them.

Suddenly, with no warning a chronic disease may come knocking at the relationship's door.

This means that the couple's routine will be somewhat disturbed, which will demand readjustment from both parties.

As the supportive spouse in this circumstance, you need to be patient with your mate.

Chances are that their personality will be affected due to this abrupt condition.

You should avoid blaming them for their symptoms, rather you should remind them that there is more to them than the current situation.

Making a research on the diagnosis will assist in educating you on what to expect and consequentially how to react to the change.

The current global economic state has forced a lot of people out of the labour force. The treatment of an individual who has just lost employment within the family will determine whether they fall in to depression or hold steadfast hope of getting another employment.

In the family, the negative impact of economic hardship may extend beyond the depression and poor mental health of the job looser.

Hardship may give rise to other negative life events contributing to growing frustration that may trigger and sustain a variety of destructive interaction patterns among family members.

The shift in the relationship may lead to a decrease in marital quality. A study by Conger and his associates suggests that the objective economic hardship of the family increases marital instability through a mediating chain of events that includes perceived economic pressure henceforth referred to as *financial strain*), which increases hostile and decreases warm styles of family interaction.

It all adds up to whether the partner will offer to their unemployed spouse social undermining or social support.

Whichever one they adhere to will be a determining factor of the direction the relationship takes.

Social support is defined as transactions with others that provide the recipient with emotional support, affirmation of the self, appraisal of the situation, instrumental support, and information.

While on the other hand, social undermining is defined as behaviours directed toward the target person that display a negative effect like anger, dislike, and negative evaluation of the person in terms of his or her attributes, actions, and efforts.

A death of apparent has to be one of the most painful things in the world.

This bereavement is not subject to one's age.

When a parent dies, most adults are seized by an unexpected crisis that can trigger a profound transformation.

Parental death and the period following bereavement has been regarded a traumatic life event that increases stress levels in children and raises their vulnerability to disease and illness.

A mother's death tends to have more influence than a father's death.

The influence is accompanied by whether the death was natural or unnatural.

In this period of your partner's life, you need to offer as much support and comfort as possible. Your support should be informed with the following facts:

- 1 There is no right or wrong way to grieve. ...
2. Grief may involve extreme emotions and behaviours. ...
3. There is no set timetable for grieving. ...

Being a comforting spouse, you need to acknowledge the situation, and allow the bereaved individual to talk about how their loved one died.

Be prepared to walk the journey of recovery with them, no matter how long it takes.

Let them know of this truth, and even more, let them see its manifestation.

The same principle of emotionally and physically availing yourself goes as well with a partner who is caring for or having a sick parent.

Caring, or having a sick parent in hospital can be a very draining episode in an individual's life.

The sight of them helpless, with you not knowing what to do to ease the pain makes you feel defeated.

It's at this time that your partner's support gives you strength to face another day.

It's true, sometimes you don't know what to do or say, sometimes being there is all that is needed. They may just need to hear that whatever takes place, you will face it together as a team.

Conclusion

Statistics have shown the high rate of divorce in South Africa more especially in the black community.

Today's high divorce rate highlights the difficulty many couples have in achieving a happy and lasting marriage. One possible solution to this problem is to improve couples' preparation for marriage.

The preparation may take the form of pre-marital counselling.

This could either be from a psychology counsellor, counselling pastor, or a matured elder in the community.

There was a time when it was a prerequisite from ministers that their soon to be weds had to attend counselling sessions prior to them tying the knot.

If it's still offered this day and age, it's a few hour consultation which does anything but to iron out the underlying factors between the couple.

This is the causation of perplexity experienced as soon as the masks come off.

There are other methods or techniques which are essential in rapport building in a relationship destined for matrimony.

Knowing your partner is not an overnight process.

It's probably the one on-going process which will constantly unfold itself for all the days of your relationship's life.

As a child who goes to school not knowing how to read or write, but driven with eagerness to learn is in no time able to display the fruits of their competency.

Likewise, a partner who is passionate about knowing their partner will exhibit zeal that will in turn make the process run smoothly.

The sequential proposition would be striving to understand what you're getting to know.

Understanding does not insinuate blind acceptance of the revealed information.

You're welcome to enquire, voice your opinion, and seek for a compromise where it's possible.

Understanding suggests that you treat your partner's vulnerability with compassion.

In simple terms, the very same understanding you require for those things you named weaknesses or falling short, is the same understanding that your partner deserves.

As fore-mentioned, for those things which require compromise let it be implemented, and for those that they are willing to change, offer them your assistance with patience being the modus operandi.

Another pivotal aspect pertaining to a successful relationship is the issue of intimacy. This refers to the bond or connection established through various activities between the couple.

Contrary to popular belief, intimacy is not only having sex, but is encompassed by a variation of activities.

The reasons why others choose not to engage in having sex particularly was outlined. At the same time the importance of doing so was also explicated on according to studies conducted, and from a psychological point of view.

Some pointers that a couple must be cautious of are the influence of family and friends in the relationship.

Geographical distance between the in-laws has both its advantages and disadvantages for both parties. Predetermined expectations about the in-law can create unpleasant interactions if there should be inconsistency with the precogitated.

The couple in agreement must either enforce new regulations as far as extended family is concerned or continue with the prior, as long as they do so in unity.

This refers mostly under the context of finances.

The issue of friends should be extensively laboured on in the relationship.

Are we enough for each other?

Do we continue with our separate friends, or must we now have couple friends we can spend time with?

If we continue with our former friends, do we uphold the lifestyle before marriage or commitment?

These are some of the questions which must be honestly answered to avoid unnecessary conflict. As an individual you ought to know what is good for you and relationship, and more especially determining if it aliens with where you are in your life.

Personal elucidation of the kind of friends you should keep will aid you in being very particular in your selection.

Influencers like the person's deposits in your life and relationship should be the driving force of your decisiveness.

A supposition between transparency and finances was launched; various premises were then laid up to expatiate on the hypothesis.

Being baffled as to when and how this topic can be addressed was unpacked.

This went along side with the different meanings that people assign to money. The importance of mentally grasping this construct will serve to be beneficial in your relationship. How you view each other in the relationship as far as money is concerned, will determine the magnitude of your financial conflicts.

An overview of the concept of conflict was given, including the ways in which resolution can be attained.

Is there such a thing as constructive conflict?

Can conflict be avoided all together in a relationship?

These were some of the questions which were a driving force in the chapter so as to show case the elements of conflict.

As a saying goes 'even the strongest have their moment of fatigue', this is every human's reality.

Merely being in the planet renders you susceptible to life's ups and downs.

Abrupt circumstances possess a potential of yielding unpleasant repercussions.

The bearing may not only be in the physical but also affecting their emotional and psychological well-being.

Everyone needs a shoulder to lean on when this hour of life comes, with some it could be a diagnosis of a compromised medical condition, loss of employment, and even the loss of a loved one.

Discussion on how you can overcome this period as a couple is scrupulously detailed, with the sensitivity of this period in one's life having a bearing on how it is accomplished.

Is it safe to assume that if you followed all the recommendations detailed in this book your guaranteed a successful matrimonial union?

Unfortunately, the answer is no, there is no one size fits all for the human species.

The information that may have been perceived as useful from the book should be used in conjunction with personal persuasion to strive to be the best life companion for someone.

Determination never bypasses an opportunity to attain a set goal.

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