

5 POST-WEDDING TIPS FOR NEWLYWEDS



By [Terri Orbuch PhD](#)

Adapted from her book, “5 Simple Steps to Take Your Marriage from Good to Great”

Congratulations! You’ve survived one of the most difficult and stressful events in your relationship: the wedding. Now the two of you are settling in for the long haul. If you’re like the vast majority of newlyweds, the next 6-12 months will be some of your happiest. Relationship researchers call this “the honeymoon period,” and it’s characterized by a sense of newness and possibility.

But how can you keep that freshness and optimism going after the initial glow wears off? Here are five post-wedding tips that have been shown to build and strengthen marriage bonds, derived from my landmark Early Years of Marriage (EYM) study:

Don't hide anything when it comes to money.

When happy couples in the EYM study were asked if their spouses were completely open and honest about money, their answers differed significantly from those of the unhappy couples in the study. Nearly 8 out of 10 happy couples said they "never" feel their spouse tells them things that aren't completely true about money, compared with only 54% of the other couples. The take-away: Money secrets and lies erode marital happiness.

Empty your "pet peeve pail" frequently.

My study found that couples who failed to talk about the small things that bothered them, letting those pet peeves grow into big resentments, were more likely to be unhappy in their marriages down the road. If you hate that she leaves her hair in the sink, tell her nicely. If you hate that he smokes cigars in the car, discuss it fairly. The take away: If you ignore small annoyances, they add up to major discontent over time.

Make each other feel appreciated—daily.

My research shows that the accumulation of small acts of kindness is more essential for building a strong marital bond than occasional grand gestures and big pronouncements. At least once a day, make your spouse feel loved, appreciated, noticed, valued, or respected. Give her a surprise kiss or ask her advice; make his favorite meal or give him a heartfelt compliment. The take away: Frequent acts of caring reinforce long-term intimacy in marriages.

Don't forget to have fun—together.

The happiest couples in my EYM study characterized their spouse as someone they enjoyed spending time with. Too often, as marriages mature, partners tend to look outside the marriage for friends and entertainment. Seek out fun activities to do with your spouse. Incidentally, studies show that doing an activity that's new to both of you re-stimulates the feel-good excitement associated with dating. The take away: Avoid relationship ruts by actively seeking fun, laughter, and novelty.

Make your circle bigger.

My research found that husbands, in particular, are happier when their wives have good relationships with their extended family. Also, the couples in my EYM study who made an effort to get to know—but not necessarily share—their spouse's friends were more likely to be happy in

the long term than couples who maintained separate friends. The take away: It takes a village to make a marriage happy.

Psychologist Terri Orbuch PhD, known as The Love Doctor, is a research professor, a long-time marriage and family therapist, and a popular love advisor on radio, TV, and peoplemedia.com, most recently seen on NBC's Today. Project director of the landmark, NIH-funded Early Years of Marriage Project, the longest-running study of married couples ever conducted, she is author of 5 Simple Steps to Take Your Marriage from Good to Great (Random House). You can find out more about her at www.drterrithelovedoctor.com.