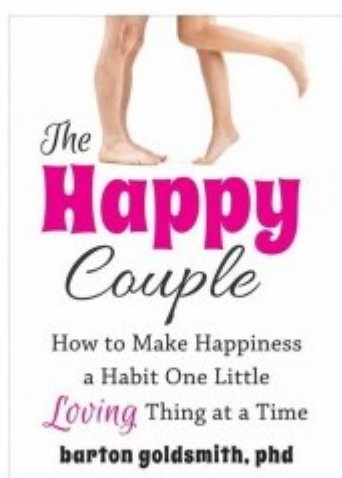


# Dr. Barton Goldsmith Discusses How To Become 'The Happy Couple'



By Priyanka Singh

When it comes to being happy in a relationship, Dr. Barton Goldsmith, a multi-award winning psychotherapist, believes that little things can go a long way. In his new book *The Happy Couple: How to Make Happiness a Habit One Little Loving Thing at a Time*, he discusses how couples can transform their bad habits into good ones, just by doing simple tasks such as talking for 20 minutes a day and asking clarifying questions to resolve conflicts. It all boils down to communication. We recently chatted with the author about how to strengthen and rebuild a relationship from the ground up. Here's what he had to say:

**How do bad habits start in relationships?**

It starts by people being complacent and not really talking about things that are bothering them. Bad habits develop over a period of time, and if someone doesn't say something that makes you aware of it so you can change it, the bad habits continue. They happen within every relationship. You get used to your partner doing something nice for you, like bringing you a cup of coffee in the morning, and then you forget to thank them for it – that's a bad habit!

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**Do couples take each other for granted after a period of time?**

That's something that does happen for many couples and also something that you want to prevent. No one wants to feel that way. You need to be reminded by your partner that you want to be in this relationship every day. That comes from the little things: the hellos, the goodbyes, the kisses, the hugs. All of that's going to make a difference.

**What if your partner struggles with communication? How do you get them to open up to you?**

I think the thing that I would say to my partner is, "Look, I've read that communication is the most important thing in the relationship, and if we don't get it together, we're going to be in trouble down the road." In the end, communication is all that you have, so I would approach it very seriously and say that we need to work on our communication. We can either do that on our own or with books; we can go to therapy or watch self-help videos on YouTube. There's a lot of things we can do, but we have to start communicating! We can set up our own time to talk about our days – maybe 30 minutes after dinner or even during dinner. Then, you create communication as a habit.

**Many women say they have a hard time getting their guys to open up. Why's that?**

It's a learned thing. A lot of guys wouldn't know how to respond. Emotional communication is something that takes time to develop. By opening up to her man, a woman is setting the example.

There's a very simple exercise in the book to teach your partner how to communicate. You ask them a question; they ask you a question; you ask them a question – and you do that for a half an hour. Ask questions like: What's your favorite movie? What's your favorite color? Tell me about the nicest thing your mother ever did for you. If you're not a communicator, it takes a little practice to get there. The first chapter of the book is on communication, so I would say read the chapter together and do the exercise as a couple.

Also in that chapter, it talks about learning how to ask clarifying questions. That's a very important part of communication, especially for guys, because when a woman presents a problem, the guy goes right to solving it. What the guy needs to do is ask clarifying questions to learn more about the problem before he dives right in. A lot of times, a woman doesn't even want the man's solution; she just wants to talk about what's going on. Guys have to learn how to listen.

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**Let's say you have a hard time coming up with creative and fun things to do for and with your partner. What are some go-to suggestions?**

If you just put a smile on your face, in the beginning, that's going to make a big difference, and that's a very simple thing. You need to change negative thoughts to positive ones. Take a walk; read a light book; write down your feelings; play with the dog; play with each other; give each other a massage; do something outside of the house, in the house, with the house! Do things that add to your environment. Do things that are light and easy that are going to make what surrounds you

better.

One of the things I tell couples that get into a negative feedback loop is to be nice. Remember what it was like when you were dating, when he would pull out the chair and open doors for you. Go back to that, and do those nice things for each other again. That creates a lot of positivity in a relationship.

**Sum up your best relationship advice in one sentence.**

Keep it simple: Love each other every day, and don't be afraid of saying "I'm sorry."

*To purchase The Happy Couple, check out Amazon or your local bookstore.*