

MARRIAGE:

קשר של קימא

Yaakov Zvi Nierman

Love--should grow all of the time, but like anything else that grows, it needs to be “fed” constantly. Its food may, but need not, be material (tangible); it can and should be emotional & spiritual. The following suggestions may help enrich your feelings and devotion for each other and עבודת הבורא, ית' :

1. Every morning after you say מודה אני, thank the רבונו של עולם for giving you such a wonderful and precious spouse.
2. Often, *each and every day*, tell your spouse (As the years go by, you'll think of innumerable ways.) how fortunate you are to be married to him/her.
3. If possible, husbands should take their wives out for diner (or prepare dinner at home) on ראש חודש, your anniversary, birthdays and other special occasions. Both of you should try to remember these. (If necessary, keep a calendar or make notes.)
4. Try to spend as much time as possible time together doing things you enjoy, but do not discourage your partner from learning, studying or going to activities s/he enjoys even if they are separate from you.
5. Communicate your feelings *openly* with a smile and *without rancor even if you are upset about something*.
6. “A happy wife is a happy life!” Aryeh Pamensky
7. **Remember: “to husband” is a verb, “to wife” should also be a verb!**
8. **When you read these pages apply them to yourself. NEVER say my spouse doesn't do this or that. For these ideas to be helpful you must think of them as applying to you alone, NEVER to your spouse!**

בחירת גילך, בתן dear מזל טוב, you have found the. May you delight in her, and may your happiness grow over the decades.

כלה, dear מזל טוב, you have found a wonderful soul mate. He is a husband who will cherish you and make you the happiest of women.

A Perspective (to think about every day especially during davening and benching)

Shlomo Hamelekh tells us: (משלי פרק יח) ממצא אשה מצא טוב ויפק רצון מיקוק: a good wife is an emanation of the will of the Even Ezra רבונו של עולם for in the words of the Even Ezra שהיא תבקש להיות עזר She will be his “helpmate against himself,” [encouraging his positive מעשים ומדות and working cooperatively with him to bring a תיקון המדות as necessary]. A husband should work on himself to appreciate these endeavors. As his הכרת הטוב grows, so will his value of her true worth. her worth and he will cling her ever more closely, and she will bring him goodness.

Conversely, the Medrash Tehillim (29) informs us בלא שמחה, בלא אשה שרוי בלא ברכה בלא חיים, בלא טובה בלא שלום. Anyone who is without a wife is immersed in a world without brocha, without life, without simcha, without needed help, without good and, consequently, without a peaceful existence.

R' Moshe Alsheikh adds that finding a wife should immediately place an individual in a restful euphoric state for “goodness has entered his life.” Later as their relationship grows because of what she has brought him, that husband will emanate the רצון ה' and they will be judged in the eyes of Hashem as *one entity*.

Daven during שמנה עשרי that you will love and appreciate your wife/husband more every day. for having a good wife applies especially during ברכת המזון when we praise הקב"ה for giving us the good food that customarily is prepared by our wife! She sustains us and brings us בריאות. We sustain her through our appreciation, support and love.

On Entering Marriage:

1. Look to give to your partner *more than you will ever receive in return*. Appreciate everything s/he does for you and always express your הטוב, your “Thank you,” in a meaningful way. (הר"ר משה שטרנבוך, תשובות והנהגות כרך ב סימן תפא) שהתורה הקפידה על הכרת הטוב, [For the Torah is so concerned about appreciation that we are mandated not to denigrate the Egyptians for we were strangers in their land.]

2. Adopt the attitude that *nothing is “coming to you” from her (from him)*. Whatever s/he gives you is special and wonderful. On the other hand, look at whatever you do for or give to him/her as “no big deal” and *expect nothing in return*. [Then you’ll appreciate everything that you do get!]

Prince & Princess:

1. Each of you should look at the other as his princess (or her prince). A prince/princess is always treated royally. Look for excuses to fete each other.
2. A princess/princess behaves royally in interacting with others. In this context royally means “being a mensch,” learning from each other, appreciating each others מעלות, and refraining from commenting about each other’s faults except in a *quiet constructive manner*.
3. Encourage each other’s growth and maintain a real (not feigned) interest in the things your spouse is doing. When possible, help him/her with his/her work (or at least with the house work).
4. When you help, help with a smile (not a growl). The Talmud says we should show the “white of our teeth” to those we meet in the street; how much more so should we show them to our spouse! {If you really don’t like helping or doing a particular chore there are several options:
 - a. *convince* (not brow beat) your spouse to do it him/herself or at least split it up with you
 - b. talk yourself into the idea that this chore isn’t so bad after all
 - c. (if you can afford it) hire someone to do the chore.}

Spheres of Influence:

1. Ordinarily (but not always), in a family there are certain areas that become the primary responsibility of the husband or wife. It is common for the wife to have primary (but usually not total) responsibility for food preparation. On the other hand, often the husband is responsible for auto and home repairs. Each couple should work out these arrangements based on:
 - a. the amount of time each spends learning, studying, working, taking care of the house, and caring for children
 - b. the skill, knowledge, and interest of the husband & wife in each of these areas
 - c. future expectations based on projected accomplishments in each of these areas.

Usually greater responsibility is accompanied with greater input. (Unless the husband is a professional chef or the wife trained in construction techniques, it is not expected that the husband determine the size, colors and type of pots used in the kitchen or that the wife select the type of tools used in home construction or repairs.) Of course, if the other partner feels strongly about something not normally his/her sphere, s/he should express his/her feelings and the input should be considered rationally. (Naturally, rejection of this opinion should be done tactfully, and sometimes a compromise is the better solution by far.)

2. In the Mishna in Avos [פרק א, ו] רבן גמליאל אומר עשה לך רב והסתלק מן הספק Rabbi Gamliel says choose a Rabbi (a master or teacher) and questions or potential conflicts will depart from you. In the Jewish home the husband (in consultation with his wife) *usually* selects the פוסק (or גדול) who will be consulted. If that פוסק is not available and the wife has a pressing שאילה she should have the right to consult someone else. (This principle applies especially in matters of טהרה.)
3. If the husband has a מנהג that is particularly objectionable to the wife, they should discuss it calmly (possibly with the input from a פוסק) and reach a mutually satisfactory arrangement.

Surprises:

1. These should *always* be pleasant. They should be frequent, different and as creative and innovative as possible. Surprises need not be expensive in money; they can be an extra thoughtful act or word, a beautiful flower picked from your garden (not necessarily purchased in a store), a smile, an unexpected pickup from work. Do not expect that your spouse will be “bowled over.” If s/he is, great; if not, you’ll do better next time.
2. As the recipient of a surprise, smile, laugh, be grateful & appreciative of:
 - a. the thought and the meaning
 - b. the act (gift) itself
 - c. the attention your loving spouse is showering upon you.
3. If you do not like the surprise:
 - a. never condemn the giver/doer (Remember s/he was trying to please you. Even if it didn’t work, it’s the **thought** that counts.)
 - b. express everything stated above in #2
 - c. later in a calm, subdued, and still appreciative manner express your preference to exchange the item, or work out a plan to do the act differently in the future.

Parents & In-Laws:

1. They can be the best of folks; they can be the worst of folks. Like everything else, both of you must be careful in dealing with them.
2. There are *no secrets* between you and them that will not be shared with your spouse.
3. You must have דרך ארץ for your parents, but על כן יעזוב איש את אביו ואת אמו ודבק ביה. Yes you’re מחויב כבוד אב, but ordinarily your spouse comes **first!** [If there are extenuating circumstances, hopefully, s/he will understand and be cooperative.] *Each of you is also מחויב כבוד אב to the other’s parents.*
4. If there is an issue with them, “blood” speaks with “blood.”
5. Don’t let them manage you or your relationship with each other. This is inimical to a marriage.
6. Even when you have a concern, **NEVER, say anything negative about your spouse to your parents or to your spouse’s parents.** Such a comment can only rebound to the detriment of your relationship with each other and with your parents. On the contrary,

defend your spouse to them. {It's foolish on the part of parents to say negative things about their children's spouses, but people do make mistakes & they're still your parents and entitled to **כבוד אב**.} When you are alone with your spouse discuss the issue with him/her quietly and calmly and **together** devise a plan deal with the issue (and with your parents/in-laws).

Trust & Openness--Communication:

1. You and your spouse are an inseparable unit. What each of you does affects the other intimately (even if it's done with/to a third party).
2. There should be **NO** secrets between you (except for innocuous things such as a surprise party) and even then...
3. Between yourselves there is no such thing as a "white" lie. You must be **totally truthful** with each other. Your wife/husband must know with certainty that you'll always "level" with her/him even when it may be difficult to do so. (Regardless, of what you may think at the time, eventually an untruth will become revealed, and once it does, the unique bond of trust will never be quite the same again!)
4. On the other hand, if your husband comes in looking totally disheveled, or your wife looks like the "wreck of the *Hesperis*," you should tell him/her **tactfully**, "You usually look so handsome/ beautiful. Today, you'd look a little/somewhat/a lot better if ..." {Most women want their husband to tell them if their makeup is not on (or messed up) or if their slip is showing, *etc.*. Some women believe that if the husband *fails to tell them*, it shows he's not attentive to the way they look.} The husband should look at his wife and the way she looks, and the wife should look at the husband & the way he looks.
5. For a first marriage when you will accumulate assets together **בע"ה** in virtually all instances except for possible tax consequences all accounts should be joint, and all property held in common. He is working for the two of you; she is working for the two of you.

Tact:

1. Good manners are not reserved for strangers; ***courtesy between a husband and wife is more important than courtesy towards strangers, friends or people in the workplace.*** When you speak with each other, use **לישנא מעליא** consistently. If you slip in this (or any other) area it's best to apologize immediately, and to be sincere in that apology!
2. If your spouse says or does something unpleasant, never respond, "Why do you behave this way?" or "Why are you so... [with a pejorative]." Rather say: "It would be better if it were [such & such]. {Keep the word "you" out of any negative comment [and insert in in any positive comment].}
3. Never accuse your spouse. Rather phrase a pending issue in a question format. *e.g.*, Don't say, "Why didn't you take the garbage out before you took your shoes off." Rather in calm pleasant tone, "Honey [or 'Dear'], the garbage needs to go out, would you mind?" If s/he responds, "My shoes are off already," an answer might be, "Could you *please*

[emphasis] take care of it this time?’ and after s/he’s finished, “Thanks a mil; I really appreciate it.” or כדומה. [Don’t always stick him/her unless you’ve agreed on this, and, even then, being a מוֹתֵר is a very big מדה.]

Confidences:

1. They are a wonderful bond builder between husband and wife. Sharing ideas and things that no one else knows are one of the most beautiful and wonderful aspects of marriage. Treasure them and keep them. (If you’re going to consult with a professional who will probe your conscious mind, obtain your spouse’s consent in advance.)
2. They are kept forever (not for only six weeks, six months or even six years) and *never ever shared* even with the closest friends and relatives. For s/he is your closest relative, bar none! If you wish to reveal a confidence, you must get permission **in advance!**

Negative Surprises:

1. Avoid them! Certainly, neither of you should knowingly commit an act that will upset the other. Good communication will help prevent this problem!
2. Some are unavoidable. These include: G-d forbid, accidents, traffic tickets, thefts, fire, illness, *etc.*
3. Purchase adequate insurance, but if you don’t have it (for whatever reason) don’t cast aspersions at each other. Accept it as מן השמים and a כפרה!

Problems that Arise:

1. Put things into perspective. How important are they *really*? Will they matter in a week, a month, a year, two years, five years? If they won’t matter in more than five years, are they really worth a dispute? Will they **really, really matter** in five years? (In other words, most “problems” really *aren’t* problems.)
2. Talk things out, try to weigh the importance of the issue to each of you. How can you compromise? Will spending/saving a little money solve the problem? (During these discussions, **never** say, “If you really love me, you’ll do this.” Of course s/he really loves you; none of these things is a “test of love.”)
3. Don’t consult a third party without prior agreement from your spouse. It’s much better to solve things between yourselves. ***Solving problems together is a way of building mutual love and trust.*** Needing to resort to a third party means that, at least to some extent, you could not do this together.
4. Of course, if a problem is festering, and you feel you just can’t table it, then you should agree to speak with a particular third party and consult that individual. Before you make

this consultation decide *in advance between yourselves* with whom you will consult and the degree to which his/her advice will be binding.

The “Little Things” (that aren’t so little):

1. Help each other with a smile on a daily basis. Search actively for opportunities to render this help.
2. *Anticipate* each other’s needs, and fulfill them whenever possible. This *daily activity* should become fun for each of you.
3. You’ll get used to doing this, and it’ll become (semi-)automatic.
4. More importantly, it will draw you together magically as it adds up over the years.
5. Try to eat together as much as possible. Meals are a good time for bonding. G-d willing when you have children, at least one (and preferably both) of you should eat together with them. If one of you eats super with them without the other it is a good idea for him/her to eat only a small part of the meal and to finish the meal when his/her partner comes home. Then you can still eat your meals together.

Anger & Hurtfulness:

1. Forget about it! **Never, never** (regardless of how upset you may be) say anything calculated to hurt your spouse. If, accidentally, you say (or do) something that causes him/her discomfort or pain, apologize *immediately*. A truly big person knows how to apologize gracefully and quickly, before the hurt has festered.
2. If you do get angry do the *hardest thing in the world*, **keep your lips shut and your mouth closed until the anger has subsided**. (תלמוד בבלי מסכת עירובין דף סה:;) בשלשה דברים אדם [My parents were very happily married. The night before my חופה my father, ז”ל, gave me one piece of advice. “If you leave the house angry, make peace, and calm yourself down before you come back. Never return angry or prolong the argument.” At times this advice has worked wonders!] והוי דן את כל אדם לכף זכות. **Always** זכות, למען יעבירו מן השמים על פשעיך וידונו אותך לכף זכות. **ספר היראה** זכות.
3. *Never* accuse your spouse of anything. If it appears s/he has done something that causes you aggravation, ask a calm question and learn the entire story from his/her side, from your side and (if necessary) from a third more objective side.
4. If s/he has really done something that displeases you, respond calmly and pleasantly. (תורה) והכונה לעולם יספר אדם בלשון נקיה היכא דאפשר (גמ' פסחים ג:) **from תמימה הערות ויקרא פרק טו הערה פח וסגי בלשון זה**. ויש להעיר למה לא הביא תנא דבי ר' ינאי ראייה שצריך לספר בלשון נקיה, מהא דעיקם הכתוב שמונה [The Torah added extra words rather than use derogatory expressions.] You might say, “Perhaps it would be better if ...” “Maybe we can look at it this way...” Even better would be to say, “I think you’re trying to do this, perhaps...” “A wiser way to say [do] this might be...”

5. Nothing is worth a fight, and, besides that, you can't win a fight with your spouse. (If you "win" a fight with your spouse, you'll only need to bend over backwards to repair his/her feelings. In simple English, **it isn't worth it!**)

דברים שבצנעה:

1. This מצוה should entail a deep mutual expression of your spiritual and physical love for each other and for the בורא עולם.
2. Each of you should endeavor as much as possible to assure that the מעשה is truly pleasurable to the other from his/her perspective (not simply to please his/her partner). Take the time to "woo" each other and coordinate this activity so that both of you are "on the same page."
3. Neither of you should ever attempt to coerce the other in this area. A husband must be careful to avoid generating fear in his wife. There are horrific stories of events that occurred when fear of her husband led to a wife submitting improperly to his demands.
4. *Never* carry an argument into the bedroom.

Thoughts to Remember & Ponder:

1. The more you do and give to someone, the more you'll love them. The ספר החיים (מרבינו ר' בצלאל מפרידבורג נאחי המהר"ל מפראג) explains that a mother loves a child with a greater love than anyone else because for nine months she is the sole sustainer of that child's life. She gives it everything it needs. She gives it more than anyone else ever can. That act of giving generates tremendous love. The more you give to your spouse; the more you will have invested in him/her & the more you will love him/her.
2. מצוה דאורייתא! Maintaining it is a *continuous* (24/7 365 day a year) effort that requires attention to detail, perspicacity, a good heart, self-control and many other מדות טובות. It is the **husband's responsibility** to make his wife feel appreciated and loved! It is her responsibility to be reasonable in her expectations, to appreciate his efforts, and to reciprocate as much as possible.
3. You're married 24/7, thirty days a month. Although physical expression of affection may not be permitted at certain times, nevertheless, warmth, cheerfulness and good companionship are not only permitted, they are mandatory. Such interaction will go a long way in preparing you for more other affection at the proper time. A husband loves his wife even when she is a נדה, and there are kosher ways of expressing this sentiment verbally and otherwise.
4. When people get up in the morning, they don't look the same way as they do while they're attending a חתונה. {Your wife is beautiful/husband handsome, even when s/he is not dressed up, for his/her inner beauty (מדות טובות ואהבה) radiate out to you 24/7. }
5. Be sensitive to each other's moods; know when to comfort and when to step back. In the beginning each of you must communicate this to each other openly until you have learned to "read each other" and react appropriately.

6. Don't **ever** use an accusative tone or word when speaking with each other, and don't raise your voice to each other. Never yell, scream or shout at each other. Never tell your wife that she's "ugly", or your husband that he's "cruel." Never say to each other that s/he's "unappreciative." Rabbi Avigdor Miller, זצ"ל, stated that if a husband tells his wife in anger that she's "ugly," she will never forget it; and, whenever in the future he tells her she's beautiful, she'll always remember his "real" thoughts, that she's ugly, were revealed when he was angry. *Of course, in reality, none of these negative epithets is correct anyway.*
7. האוהב את אשתו כגופו והמכבדה יותר מגופו והמדריך בניו ובנותיו בדרך ישרה [Concerning a person who loves his wife as much as he loves himself, who honors her more than himself, who teaches his children to go in the straight path and who marries young,] the Torah {איוב, ה, ה, וידעת כי שלום אהלך ופקדת נוך ולא תחטא: } says: "Know that your home will be filled with peace, and you will guide your home in the proper manner, and you will not sin."
8. If you trip because your foot has slipped, do you take a hammer and hit that foot hard to "punish" it? If you make a slip of the tongue, would you take hot coals or a burning match and apply them to your tongue as "punishment?" You and your spouse are a unit. If he's hurt, you, the wife, are hurt! If she's hurt, you, the husband, are hurt! If your foot has been banged, you apply a balm and bandage it. If your tongue has been burned, you treat it. If your spouse has been hurt either emotionally or physically, it is you who *must* and *will* give him/her succor. G-d forbid, that you should be the cause of any pain, and, if you are, it will be you who must undo that pain! Such a palliative requires overwhelming warmth, love, concern, and apology, combined with a genuine commitment/effort not to repeat the act.
9. Treasure each other's accomplishments! You are **never** jealous of each other's achievements. One way or another, she has a חלק in all that he does, and he partners in all she attains.
10. All money comes from הקב"ה. All you have is השתדלות. And maximal השתדלות increases with mutual encouragement and support.
11. Follow the laws of יחוד scrupulously, *especially at work*. Even if you're involved with a very important project **never** be alone while you're working with a person of the opposite gender! הלכות יחוד also apply with the *internet*. Chat rooms should **always** be off limits. If you need to chat with someone, *talk to your spouse*. (If you feel uncomfortable talking to your spouse about a particular issue, work on yourself until you reach a point that you can have such a discussion, or, if you can't get to that point, seek דעת תורה of assistance from a **frum** psychologist.)
12. איש ואשה should be an inseparable unit, but when חס ושלום, the יו"ד & the ה"א (for G-d) are removed, all this is left is אש ואש, an all-consuming fire that may destroy a relationship חלילה.
13. A woman's tears go straight to the כסא הכבוד and *this would be a very not good thing for both of you!*
14. Learn מוסר with your wife for at least a half hour twice a week (or one hour once a week)!
15. **A great marriage will bring נחת to both of you as you grow together בעבודת הבורא and build a true בית נאמן בישראל, a בית whose positive השפעה will increase מדור לדור as it is emulated by generations yet unborn.**

קב הישר: פ' כד

צריך האדם להתפלל על זה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא, אשר הוא
בידו להטות לב האדם פראונו להיות האדם ותרו בממונו פראוי לו,
ולא יהיה קמאן...

פלא יואץ: מדת ותננות

ומדת התננות בפית צריכה רבה, והיא גזרת יהלום לענין
השלוש, ואכן טובה לענין האהבה. מה טוב התננות לכל אשר אתו,
משום שלום בין אדם לחברו ובן איש לאשתו; ומברית קטטה ואיבה;
ועל כל פשעים תכסה אהבה.

קשה זוגו של אדם כקריעת ים סוף

Developed from the expression in the Gemara Sotah 2A

What happened in **קריעת ים**? The water formed walls and protected the **בני ישראל** as they walked through--step by step! Thus it is with marriage. Throughout life there are countless events and forces that can render a marriage asunder. But if both of the partners trust completely in Hashem and each other, the **חסין קדוש**, the Holy Protective Presence of G-d, will bind them as one allowing them to partake fully of the delectable fruits of Torah and Mitzvos as they pass though life together.

*These ideas are the building blocks of a **בית נאמן בישראל**.*

At the conclusion of the *צעטעל קטן*, a primer for developing קדושה in our lives, its author, the *איד הקדוש*, recommends that readers review it daily.

**בקטנותי, I suggest that new couples should:
Review these ideas until both of you have internalized them and learned to
carry them out automatically.**

**Older couples should read them every few weeks or
*whenever there's a trying time in the family.***

May *הקב"ה* bless both of you ביחד ימי חייכם ביהודים!