

10 Little Things That Can Make a Big Difference in Your Marriage

A strong, supportive relationship is built from a couple's words and actions. With work, children, and other responsibilities, sometimes it is easy to take your spouse for granted or forget to do the things that strengthen the marriage. Here are some little things to do that can have a big payoff for your marriage.

- 1. Give your spouse a compliment.** Better yet, brag about your spouse to others when your spouse is in earshot. It will boost self-confidence, and your spouse will want to continue making you happy and proud.
- 2. Find something to laugh about.** Laughter helps us cope with stress and the pressures of our busy lives. A sense of humor helps marriages survive problems, large and small.
- 3. Have a shared activity both of you enjoy.** It can be anything from going out to dinner, dancing, or gardening. You may need to make time to do them together, but this is a great way of keeping intimacy alive and well.
- 4. Treat your spouse the way you want to be treated.** Be respectful if you want to be respected. This approach helps establish the fact that both parties have a responsibility in the marriage.
- 5. Take time to touch. The value of human touch is amazing.** Eight to ten meaningful touches a day help you maintain physical and emotional health.
- 6. Be willing to compromise.** Give up some of your wants for the sake of what your spouse wants. Identify the situation as a compromise to avoid having unresolved anger or resentment later.
- 7. Give a smile.** An easy but powerful way to value your spouse is to smile and tell your spouse how you feel.
- 8. Discuss the things that bother you.** Letting things build up day after day without discussing and resolving them leads to anger and resentment that hurt your marriage. The more quickly something can be addressed and taken care of, the more time you will have for the enjoyable and healthy parts of your relationship.
- 9. Communication is key.** Without communication, any team is in trouble. It is important to communicate your thoughts, plans, ideas, and opinions on a consistent basis. Equally important is communicating your feelings—the joys, sorrows, and frustrations we all experience.
- 10. Chart your course.** Charting a course establishes a shared vision for your marriage. It also can be useful to establish some markers to ensure you are moving towards your goals.

For more information about strengthening marriages and families, visit the websites of the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education (www.smartmarriages.com) or the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (www.okmarriage.org).

