

WHAT KEEPS A MARRIAGE GOING?

excerpted from an article by Jeanette & Robert Lauer in
PSYCHOLOGY TODAY, June 1985

One out of two marriages ends in divorce. But what about those that endure? 300 couples with successful marriages explain what keeps them together. Here are the top reasons respondents gave, listed in order of frequency.

MEN

- 1 My spouse is my best friend
- 2 I like my spouse as a person
- 3 Marriage is a long-term commitment
- 4 Marriage is sacred
- 5 We agree on aims and goals
- 6 My spouse has grown more interesting
- 7 I want the relationship to succeed

WOMEN

- 1 My spouse is my best friend
- 2 I like my spouse as a person
- 3 Marriage is a long-term commitment
- 4 Marriage is sacred
- 5 We agree on aims and goals
- 6 My spouse has grown more interesting
- 7 I want the relationship to succeed
- 8 We laugh together
- 9 We agree on how and how often to show affection
- 10 An enduring marriage is important to social stability
- 11 We have a stimulating exchange of ideas
- 12 We discuss things calmly
- 13 We agree about our sex life
- 14 I am proud of my spouse's achievements

POSITIVE FRIENDSHIP "I feel that liking a person in marriage is as important as loving that person. Friends enjoy each other's company. We spend an unusually large amount of time together." "My spouse is my best friend." "I would want to have him as a friend even if I weren't married to him." "I have watched her grow and shared with her both the pain and exhilaration of her journey. I find her more fascinating now than when we were first married." "I am married to someone who cares about me, who is concerned for my well-being, who gives as much or more than he or she gets, who is open and trustworthy and who is not mired down in a somber, bleak outlook on life." "But I don't worry about her weak points, which are very few. Her strong points overcome them too much." LONG

LASTING COMMITMENT "I'll tell you why we've stayed together for 18 years, I'm just too damned stubborn to give up." "You can't run home to mother when the first sign of trouble appears." (35yrs) "Commitment means a willingness to be unhappy for a while." (20yrs) "I wouldn't go on for years and years being wretched in my marriage. But you can't avoid troubled times. You're not going to be happy with each other all the time. That's when the commitment is really important." SEX Fewer than 10% thought that good sex kept their marriages together. "Thank God, the passion hasn't died. In fact it has gotten more intense. The only thing that has died is the element of doubt or uncertainty that one experiences while dating or in the beginning of a marriage." (no sex for 10 years) "I was married once before and the marriage was sex and little else, so I suppose a kind of trade-off exists here--I like absolutely everything else about my current marriage. ANGER "Discuss your problems in a normal tone of voice. If a voice is raised, stop. Return after a short period of time. Start again." GIVE

AND TAKE "Sometimes I give far more than I receive, and sometimes I receive far more than I give. But my wife does the same. If we weren't willing to do that, we would have broken up long ago."

LOVE IS EFFORT OVER TIME

OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ARE FREQUENTLY A PERSONAL TRIUMPH OVER GOOD THINKING
YOU DEFINE REALITY BY WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU BELIEVE, AND WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT.

