

Successful Couples Keep It Positive

Researchers studying marriage and relationships at the University of Washington report that happy couples in stable marriages don't allow their relationship to be overrun by negative feelings. In fact, say the researchers, successful couples maintain a healthy balance between their positive and negative interactions with each other.

Interestingly, a very specific ratio exists between the number of positive and negative interactions in a successful relationship. That ratio is 5 to 1. In other words, stable couples have at least 5 times as many positive interactions with each other as negative ones.

According to the researchers, a healthy dose of positive interactions builds up an emotional "savings account" that helps to pull the couple through difficult times. Specifically, the researchers say successful couples balance out any negative interactions with positive feelings and actions like showing interest, being affectionate, showing they care, being appreciative, smiling, paying compliments, laughing or showing concern.

Successful Couples Keep Arguments from Getting Completely Out Of Control

Additionally, the researchers report that stable couples still have disagreements and arguments just like all married couples. The difference, however, is that happy couples keep their quarrels from becoming too negative and destructive. Successful couples know how to repair the situation before an argument gets completely out of control. Positive repair attempts include:

- Using humor to break the tension in an argument (like making a silly face or bringing up a private joke)
- Stroking your partner with a caring remark ("I understand that this is hard for you")
- Acknowledging your partner's point of view or feelings ("I'm sorry I hurt your feelings")
- Making it clear you're on common ground ("This is our problem")
- Taking a break if an argument gets too heated and agreeing to approach the topic again when you are both calm.

Your EAP Is Here to Help

Some relationship issues can be too hard to solve on our own. If you need help with a particularly difficult marital or relationship issue(s), contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. Why not call an EAP counselor today? We're here to help.

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