



## FINDING JOY IN YOUR MARRIAGE

Marriage is a choice and an ongoing commitment. There will be times when you question being married. These doubts are normal and need to be looked at...instead of acted out.

Marriage takes work. Consider what would happen if you gave as much effort to your marriage as you give to your job? The fun, joy and fulfillment of marriage comes from devoting time, attention and direction to it.

If you're experiencing marriage difficulties, define the issue and identify your feelings about it. Share your concerns with your partner so you can work together to solve the problem. The "Couple Care" techniques bellow can be used to make your relationship more satisfying.

### COUPLE-CARE TECHNIQUES

The following are some simple - but not easy- techniques to inspire you to experience life and your partner at new levels:

- Make your marriage a priority. The art of relating is a never-ending process. It doesn't come naturally and has to be learned. There are always challenges as well as joys.
- Treat your partner with as much politeness, respect and importance as you would a stranger, business contact or friend. Make appointments to get together and keep them.
- Don't avoid relationship challenges. Face them head on. Learning to get through adversity leads us to joy.
- When something isn't working in your relationship, make a plan and agree how you will both handle the situation. Make adjustments when needed.
- Take responsibility for your own behavior instead of trying to change the other person. You have no control over your partner's behavior, you can only change yourself.
- Cultivate contentment and gratitude by giving your full attention to your partner when you spend time with them. This will help you recreate your love for one another each day.
- Learn to be patient with your partner.
- Support the other person in doing things their way, even if you don't agree.
- Ask for what you want assertively. Learn the difference between commands and requests. Use them appropriately to get your needs met.
- Give yourself permission to get outside help when necessary.

### MARRIAGE IMPROVEMENT CONTRACT

Transform your relationship by practicing on of the following for six weeks:

To create joy in my relationship, I, \_\_\_\_\_, commit to:

- Catching my partner being good and praising them for it.
- Creating non-negotiable couple time (connecting time, talking, activities, etc.).
- Letting go of things that bother me one day a week (I will not yell or nag).
- Keeping my promises, especially the little ones (getting off the phone when I say I will).
- Refusing to use "red flag words" ("You never", "You always", etc.).
- Doing what I want my partner to do (I will walk my talk).
- Laughing every day with my partner.

*By Michele Blair, Marriage Family Therapist, Laguna Beach, CA.*

**Outcomes, Inc.**  
**Employee Assistance Program**  
**(505)243-7145 ✧ 1-800-677-2947**