



Marriage Resources
from the Marriage and Family Ministries Office, Archdiocese of Chicago

Books

For Better, For Worse, For God by Mary Jo Pederson

Holy Sex by Dr. Gregory Popcak

His Needs, Her Needs: Building An Affair Proof Marriage by Willard Harley, Jr.

Sex Begins in the Kitchen by Dr. Kevin Leman

The Intentional Family: How to Build Family Ties in Our Modern World by William J. Doherty, Ph.D.

A Lasting Promise: A Christian Guide to Fighting for Your Marriage by Scott Stanley, Ph.D., Daniel Trathen, Savanna McCain, and Milt Bryan

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work by Dr. John Gottman

The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman

The Smart Stepfamily by Ron Deal

Pamphlets available from www.usccbpublishing.org

Love and Life in the Divine Plan, in English and Spanish with study guide

Familiaris Consortio: On the Family. Pope John Paul II, 1988. Publication #833-9.

DVD's *Six Dates for Catholic Couples* and *The Beatitudes, A Couple's Path to Greater Joy*
by John and Terri Bosio

Movies Fireproof
 Courageous

Websites

marriageandfamilyministries.org	Marriage and Family Ministries Office, Archdiocese of Chicago
foryourmarriage.org	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
wwme.org	Weekends to enrich marriage
retrouvaille.org	For struggling married couples
susanvogt.net	Marriage Moments and Parenting Pointers

Combat Negativity: Be Positive

Our spouses need our encouragement. If we don't build each other up, who will? By Kim Hagerty

Who will be encouraging to Pat, my husband of thirty five years? Our children? They think we're idiots.

"Oh my God," says my daughter Kelly, "Dad is trying to text message me and he keeps sending things to Pat! He tries to use his camera on his phone and takes pictures of his pocket!"

Patrick, my son who works construction for his father, also named Pat, (just to make life more complicated), tells me, "Oh my God, Ma, he's trying to speak Spanish to the workers! It's embarrassing!" They don't think of us as real people. They are surely not going to encourage us much.

Will our neighbors encourage Pat? They might encourage him to mow the lawn more or quit parking his truck on the street, but that's about it.

His employees? They'll encourage him to pay them more and maybe learn Spanish better, but he can't count on encouragement from them.

As his spouse, it is my responsibility to build my husband up instead of tearing him down. By becoming an encourager, I can positively affect my own life and make a big difference in that of my spouse. You can, too.

Claudia and David Arp, in their book, *10 Great Dates to Energize Your Marriage*, have three suggestions for becoming an encourager: Look for the positive. Develop a sense of humor. Give honest praise. These are all small things we can easily do.

Look for the positive

When we are first married it's easy to look for the positive, but after a while, that starts wearing off. Little habits that seemed cute at first can become terribly irritating. "Isn't it nice that she's so involved with her family?" becomes "Did she have to tell her father that I bounced another check?"

How do we try to find the positive? It takes a lot of practice. In my experience as a counselor,



when you have to deal with difficult people, you might want to consider the idea of reframing.

Reframing means trying to put a positive spin on things, and then just not letting yourself look at the negative. Instead of saying he's obsessive-compulsive, we say he's detail-oriented. "She's not sloppy, she's artistic." My personal favorite is, "He's not crazy and impossible, he's eccentric."

If you're having trouble with this concept, think of the excuses you can make to yourself for your kids when you get a bad report from someone about them, and you can see how easy it is to reframe thinking.

My mother-in-law is concerned about skin cancer, so she tries to stay out of the sun a lot. A few years ago, she started wearing a hat every time she went outside. Her kids would tease her a lot thinking that the hats were a little much, yet her husband, Hal, always put his arm around her and said, "I think she looks cute!" and he meant it. I thought he was a good example of someone being able to turn turning something potentially negative into a positive.

Quirks

I use my husband, Pat as another example of how things need reframing. He will not throw out an empty wine bottle. He'll drink the wine and leave the bottle on the counter, completely empty, one foot above the recycling bin. It's twelve inches away from the bin. If it started rolling it could land in the bin. Why doesn't he throw it out? How hard can it be to throw it out? It's a very odd quirk and an obvious one for me to focus on negatively. Is he waiting for Jesus to stop by, change the water into wine, and refill the bottle?

And yet, when I try to reframe to look at the positive, I come up with this list.

Pat:

- *Works sixty hours a week*
- *Would never cheat on me*
- *Warms up the car in the morning*
- *Eats whatever I cook*
- *Brings home his pay check*
- *Throws out dead mice and birds from the yard*
- *Says nice things to me*
- *Fixes the washer and dryer and furnace when they break*
- *Takes out the garbage*
- *Pays the bills*
- *Loves me*
- *Loves the children*
- *Was good to my Dad*
- *Hired my no-good relative (twice)*
- *Is good to his mother*
- *Lifts heavy things*
- *Brings in the groceries*
- *Doesn't complain about "The Young and the Restless" being on TV at dinner time*
- *Is cute!*

On the other hand, he doesn't throw out a wine bottle. Am I more apt to nag about throwing out the wine bottle, or to thank him for any of the myriad good things he does? What's wrong with me?

Five times more positives

What a difference it makes when we start focusing on the positive! Dr. John Gottman, a well-known marriage researcher, has been studying what makes a marriage work for a long time. He even calls his research lab "The Love Lab." He has identified and studied and quantified traits of good and bad marriages and he says that there needs to be five times as many positive interactions to each negative interaction to keep a marriage stable.

How many positive interactions did you have with your spouse today? You need five positives to every one negative just to keep your relationship stable! It's more like seven-or-eight-to one to make it a good or great marriage!

Learn from our elders

Don't we all want a more positive relationship? What's more wonderful than looking forward

to seeing your spouse and spending time with them?

Each year my office (Marriage and Family Ministries of the Archdiocese of Chicago) sponsors a Golden Wedding Anniversary Mass, where couples married 50 years come together to renew their vows. Over 600 couples came to last year's event. They are quite the example to strive for in marriage!

When I see some macho old guy standing there with his good suit on holding his wife's pink purse while she is in the bathroom, it makes me feel like crying. That's what I want for my marriage. Someone to grow old with and be married to me 50 years and who won't worry about losing his masculinity by

carrying my purse. I am moved when I see a couple, with one in a wheelchair using oxygen, and they hold hands while



they renew their vows. Or maybe one has some dementia, and is looking around, as the other repeats once again, the vows their marriage is based upon. That's true love. These are true soul mates!

True soul mates

A lot of people think they marry their soul mates; that there is a perfect match of a person waiting for them somewhere and that they will find this person before marriage who understands them and who has a deep spiritual connection with them and then they'll marry and this wonderful soul mate will automatically understand them. Then, when their "soul mate" forgets that it's the third month anniversary of their engagement and goes out after work to a bar with his friends to watch a game, they get disappointed in their marriage and mate and think maybe they picked the wrong soul mate and start looking for a new one!

You don't marry your soul mate, you earn your soul mate and you do it by slogging away year after year and working together and growing up together and sacrificing and caring for each other and thinking of the other one more than thinking

about yourself. You become soul mates when you stop worrying about getting everything you want and you deserve, and start putting the other first and working as a team. Becoming soul mates is easier if you have positive interactions with each other.

My parents used to tell the kids about the time the flu was going through the house and they had three kids that caught it together. One kid was throwing up in the toilet, one in the sink, and one in the bathtub, all at the same time. They would look at each other and laugh and say, "That was such a romantic time!" And my mom would say, "That's when I was so glad I married your father!" in a kind of sarcastic way.

At the time I thought that was disgusting, but now I look back and think that that was really a defining moment in their marriage. When three of their seven kids were all throwing up and making terrible disgusting messes that they would have to clean up they were working together supporting each other in taking care of us. They were also expecting the other four to get the flu so they could do it all over again, yet they remembered that time with fondness and laughter. They were earning their soul mate status. That's what we have to do, also.

Give honest praise

You have to be sincere in your compliments. Pat saying, "Honey you look like a size 2 in that outfit," is not pleasing to my ears because it is a bad lie, and I can take offense very easily even if he's not lying. But if he says, "Honey, I like how you look in black," that's okay. He really means that. If Pat takes out the garbage I can genuinely say, "Oh, Honey, it's so nice of you to do that; that is such a help; I feel so much better when the house is clean and I didn't have to go out into the rain." So much better than saying, "And did you put that empty wine bottle the one foot into the recycling before you finally took the garbage out?" Which, while it might be what I'm thinking, will not help bring us closer, nor will it encourage him to do the chore again.

Be sincere and be specific and be honest and say

it out loud. "I liked when you cuddled up to me last night and I couldn't help but notice you were naked!" That always works well with the men, ladies. Or, "Thanks for listening to me complain about my mother. I feel better that you let me talk."

Say it out loud

How many times have you thought nice things about your mate but never said them out loud? When some idiot passes on the right and your husband doesn't go chasing after him you can say, "It's nice to drive with a man who is so concerned about my safety than you ignore idiot drivers." I think you will be surprised at what a big change being more encouraging to each other can make in your marriage.

Ladies, you've heard the saying, "If Mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy?" Men, this is true. When you have a happy wife life is good. When she feels loved and cherished she wants to do nice things for you. It's easy to reciprocate.



The Jubilarian men, the ones who've been married 50 years, always say the same thing about their secret to a happy married life, "Just say, 'Yes, dear.' " When times are tough we want to turn toward each other, not to other people. It's easier to do that when we can be encouraging to each other.

Turn toward each other in difficult times

A few years ago it was a very hard year for our families, both on Pat's side and my own. My widowed Dad had COPD and was on oxygen, getting weaker and needing more help. He relied on me a lot more, for shopping, doing his bills, and taking him to the doctor. At the same time, Pat's step dad was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. And there we were, with both dads sick and needing our help, and we were being pulled in different directions because we wanted to see both men too. We felt we understood what the phrase "sandwich generation" meant during this time.

What made this easier was turning to each other.

I tried to look out for Pat as he helped with Hal and Pat did the same for me with my Dad. We certainly could relate to what the other was going through. At the same time, we could try to encourage each other to eat right, sleep, etc. We had to just let some things go that we would have done together, and make the dads our priority. We had to support each other, not make it more difficult.

I am so glad we did. At a time like that, when we knew Pat's mom was soon going to lose her husband, and ironically, Dad and my father-in-law died one day apart, it reminded us that life is short and in the end we only have the love from each other. We reframed it so it wasn't a burden to care for the dads, it was an honor. It's what good children do, and maybe our children would learn from our examples. I think I got to see a lot more of the goodness in Pat's soul when we were taking care of the dads and I tried to say that to him.

Sense of humor

The third thing the Arps recommend to help you to become an encourager is to develop a sense of humor. Life is hard. It's really, really hard. Horrible things happen and they will happen to you. People you love are going to get sick and die, you are going to lose money, you will not always get what you want, you cannot do whatever you want, you may not be able to attain all your goals, and your children will disappoint you. You will be passed over at work. And at the end you die.

That said, let's have a little fun with our lives. What better way to encourage each other than to share a laugh together? We can laugh or cry. Let's try to laugh a little more. Laughter provides a connection and bonds us. It's also good for our health. There are studies about how laughing can heal you and it actually has been shown to be good for your heart. It does something with the blood vessels, something good... since I was an art major in college, I can't remember the details, but I know it was good. Laughing together breaks tension and helps you grow closer.

Hands on!

Sit next to each other and watch a movie together. If you normally sit in separate chairs, watch a TV show sitting next to each other. Touch

each other at the same time. Touch bonds you. The kids will be appalled but it will help you grow closer. Watch a funny movie, watch a funny show, read the Onion, watch YouTube, or get some funny friends.

In their book, the Arps talk about a couple that were so serious and intense they encouraged them to have some funny friends to hang out with to loosen up and help them enjoy life in a different way. Remember my parents laughing together when the kids were all throwing up? It helped relieve the tension and bond them together.

Just do it

Becoming an encourager to your spouse will be nothing but good for both of you. You won't believe the character flaws your spouse will overlook when he or she hears nice things from you. And looking for something positive to say to your spouse gets easier and easier as you do it more. Often it's just saying out loud what you're already thinking.

Have your kids help you with this. Now when I speak to Pat I occasionally hear a "Positive!" or a "Negative, that sounds like sarcasm!" or a "Quick, say five good things fast!" from my kids. They love to catch us doing something wrong. When they find someone to marry some day maybe they will remember to say positive things to each other.

Now you, too, have to try to use encouragement. For the next few days, try to make sure you have

five positive interactions for each negative. If you think something nice about your spouse, say it out loud. Say something complimentary that's true to them. And do something that makes you laugh! Go forth encouraging each other and start earning your soul mate status.



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Be Positive Worksheet

Name five positive qualities about your spouse.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Name five negative things about your spouse.

1. - _____
2. - _____
3. - _____
4. - _____
5. - _____

Spin the five negatives into positives. (Example: "Sloppy" becomes "Comfortable with chaos.")

1. + _____
2. + _____
3. + _____
4. + _____
5. + _____

Pay attention to the positives. Forget the negatives. Shred them and throw them out. You are thinking in a different manner now.

Discussion Items

Fill this out separately; then share with your spouse. Remember to be positive!

One reason I would marry you again is _____

I love it when you _____

The nicest thing you did this week was _____

You can encourage me by _____

True Soul Mates

The following are excerpts from *True Soul Mates: Couples married 50 years share advice for successful marriage*, a booklet put together each year from surveys sent to couples celebrating 50 years of marriage. No one knows the true meaning of “for better or for worse” than these couples. They have earned the status of soul mate and have plenty of wisdom to share with those of us who hope to one day be where they are now.

How did you meet?

A very close friend of mine was dating her close friend and he introduced us. I thought she was the cutest girl and although she ignored me, I prevailed. *Ric*

I met my wife at her high school dance. I tried to set her up with friend of mine but thought she was too cute for him and decided she was for me. Best decision I ever made. *Robert*

We were introduced at a mutual friend’s home party. Then we were paired together for the first dance. He stepped on my new shoes. We’ve been dancing together ever since. *Bernadette*

On our very first date she handled an unusual and difficult situation so well I was convinced she was the “right” one. Was reluctant to commit to marrying me, but I was able to convince her. *Raymond*

What were some of the difficulties of marriage?

Raising a large family and living with a tight budget to provide a Catholic education, braces, etc. for the children. Looking back after 50 years, we can’t think of too many difficulties we couldn’t handle with the help of God. *Joan*

Adjusting to different backgrounds. I’m from the city. My wife is from a small town and is an avid outdoor person. She taught me to enjoy hiking and fishing. *James*

Having three children in less than three years. And also working part time. Cooperation of my spouse made it so much easier. *Patricia*

We were very young when we got married and had five children in the first seven years we were married; one of whom died a few minutes after his birth. We had another child eight years later. Our income was not too high and we moved many times over the first ten years. *Margaret*

Learning to live with someone else. Learning the art of compromise. Learning to love someone else more than you love yourself. *Marilyn*

When we came from Mexico it was difficult to adapt to a new country when we came from such a different culture with different traditions. *Minerva*

The most trying times were raising teenagers, trying to keep them close to their faith, and away from trouble situations. *John*



Did your faith help you through the years?

Very much. When we were broke or short on cash somehow God always provided what was needed.
Leroy

Our faith has been the cornerstone of our marriage. It enabled us to raise our children with a deep sense of moral values. *Rosemary*

For some reason the Lord always looked after us. And prayers always helped.
James

We could never have raised five great kids without at least a million prayers. Yes, our faith has made us grateful for every small and large blessing. *Charlotte*

Through hard times and good times our deep faith in each other and God have kept us together knowing whatever the future holds, we will be together some day in Paradise. *George*

It helped tremendously that we shared our Catholic faith. We were glad to do parish work together.
Martha

When we lost our son to lymphoma he was only seventeen and had his whole life before him. I believe that it was faith that kept us together and helped us raise our other children. *Mary*

I couldn't have made it without my faith in God and the support of the Church and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. *Mary*

Always! We asked God before our wedding, at our wedding Mass and after our wedding Mass, through our years to be the third partner in our marriage. There was complete trust in this Trinity and "divorce" was not a word in our vocabulary. Marriage was a sacred vocation to us. *Nancy*

Last words

Marriage is wonderful. *Rena*



Prayers

Scripture

Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, as indeed you do.
(1 Thessalonians 5:11)

For if I inflict pain upon you, then who is there to cheer me except the one pained by me?
(2 Corinthians 2:2)

The Lord is gracious and merciful. Slow to anger and of great kindness. (Psalm 145:8-9)

Prayer for Married Couples

Lord, you showed your support of marriage by performing your first miracle at the Wedding Feast of Cana. Help us work together as a couple so that we may grow in love together, serving each other and you. Strengthen us, O Lord, against hardening our hearts and help us to truly repent and ask forgiveness of each other, and you, when it is needed. Help us to be more positive and always see the best in each other. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Prayers of a Husband and Wife

O Lord, let us be thoughtful in word and deed. Keep us from pettiness. Help us to face each other in deep trust without fear or self-pity, and put away pretense. Help us discover the best in each other and in every situation. Guard against fault-finding. Encourage us to take time for all things, to grow calm, serene, and gentle. Guard us from ill-temper and hasty judgment. Help us be generous with kind words and compliments. Teach us never to ignore, never to hurt, and never to take each other for granted. Engrave charity and compassion on our hearts. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord Jesus, grant that we may have a true and understanding love for each other. Grant that we may both be filled with faith and trust. Give us the grace to live with each other in peace and harmony. May we forgive each other's failings and grant us patience, kindness, cheerfulness, and the spirit of placing the other's well-being ahead of our own. May the love that brought us together grow and mature with each passing year and bring us both ever closer to you through our love for each other. Amen.