

The Newlyweds' Guide to a Happy Marriage

How to Keep that Honeymoon Feeling



Tim Spooner

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The Newlyweds' Guide to a Happy Marriage (How to Keep that Honeymoon Feeling)

*Dedicated to Lisa, my loving wife,
who makes me the happiest man on earth.*

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Why Listen to Me?

I'm just a guy who has a very happy marriage and wants to share with you a few of the secrets that have led to the on-going success of my marriage. I believe that role models are very important. I was lucky to have grown up in a home with a mother and father with a happy marriage. They were my role models. I have been very happily married to my wife, Lisa, since September 20, 2003. Now, I am making my marriage available to you as a model of what your marriage could be. I have identified some powerful secrets that can free you to have the happy marriage you desire.

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Disclaimers

Personal note

I am not a marriage counselor and this book is not designed to save marriages. This guide was put together for the newlywed couple without any problems yet. It is hoped that by following the advice in this guide, the couple can successfully keep any surfacing problems from taking over and becoming serious problems. I have done my best to provide accurate, helpful and complete information but I do not guarantee any of it. What works for my marriage might not work for yours. But, I figured it was worthwhile to put this guide together to have the chance of helping even just one marriage stay happy for the long haul. I hope, but cannot guarantee, that the happy marriage I speak of will be yours.

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When the Honeymoon's Over...

I have been asked by my readers: "How can we keep that honeymoon feeling after the honeymoon?" It's a great question. Usually when people talk about the honeymoon being over, they mean that the couple is no longer being affectionate and they are fighting. Something has come between them. The love potion has worn off.

Does it have to be this way? Can the honeymoon feeling be maintained indefinitely?

It is a scientific fact that the euphoric feeling new lovers have is tied to hormones that wear off two to four years into their relationship. It is also true that there is a big difference between the simplicity of sitting on the beach together in a sub-tropical paradise versus the complexity of juggling work, family, hobbies, and your new relationship.

But if the question of keeping "that honeymoon feeling" is about true happiness together and deep love for one another, then that feeling can absolutely be maintained and even improved upon.

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The Challenge

When Lisa and I fell in love there were cynical people on every side. Many said it was just a phase that we were going through and that our love could never last. Others said that the look in our eyes as we lovingly glanced at one another was sickening to them. Even the few who encouraged us to take the risk and get married said, "After all, that's what divorce is for."

Many marriages do end in divorce. And there are also many marriages that have not ended in divorce but are, nevertheless, unhappy.

Lisa and I went into our marriage very aware that many friends and even close family members expected our marriage to fail and that if we weren't careful it really could. But we stubbornly chose to buck the odds. We had found love. The most wonderful thing in the universe and we weren't going to just let it slip through our fingers.

After all these years, we remain just as in love as we were on our honeymoon. Probably even more so since we now know each other better, have been through more together, and have invested more of ourselves into one another than we had at the time of our honeymoon.

Happy, lasting marriages don't happen by accident and they aren't controlled by statistical odds. They are carefully cultivated by the man and woman who have

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committed themselves to the daily care of their marriage.

These happy couples believe that their relationship is the most important thing in the world. More important than any of their other goals is the success of their marriage and all the other good things in life naturally follow in the wake of their love boat.

Although marriages are fragile and easily broken, they can also be incredibly beautiful and extremely fulfilling. The couple who enters a marriage walks into a spectacular journey. As long as that couple does not lose sight of one another and they hold steadfastly to their relationship above all other competing goals, they can know true and lasting happiness together.

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An Unshakable Foundation

An architect knows that even the best building blueprint will fail if he does not build on a firm foundation.

Our goal is not just a lasting marriage but a **blissful marriage**. We want a truly happy marriage.

For a truly happy marriage, you need a strong, unshakable foundation. That foundation is found in your two hearts and minds. The good news is that each of you has power over your own heart and mind to create the strong foundation you need to be happy.

These six values are the key ingredients to your unshakable foundation.

Value 1) It Takes Two – Starting with Me

Sometimes you will have to be the leader and take the first step in your relationship.

After an argument, for instance, don't wait for him or her to be the first to calm down and apologize and admit that *they* were being stubborn. Instead, **be the leader** and be the first to reach out to the other person. Take responsibility for your relationship and hopefully the other person will follow your lead. But whatever they do, it is not *your* job to manage *their* behavior. You should

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continue to control your own behavior. That is all you can really control anyway. By setting the best possible example to follow, you can help lead your relationship to harmony and happiness.

Value 2) Unconditional Acceptance & Love

The keyword here is “unconditional.” And frankly, most of us never truly grasp the depth of that word. So, I want to be clear:

Unconditional acceptance and love means that, when it comes to accepting and loving one another, you can just drop entirely from your thinking words like IF, UNLESS, EXCEPT, IF NOT...

Your unconditional acceptance and love of one another is UNRESTRICTED, UNQUALIFIED, TOTAL, and ABSOLUTE.

Unconditional love and acceptance is *NOT* based on what he or she *DOES*.

Unconditional love and acceptance is *NOT* based on what he or she *LOOKS LIKE*.

It is *NOT* based on what he or she *SAYS*.

Your unconditional love and acceptance for him or her is based entirely on

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WHO he or she *IS*.

“Who he or she is” is a matter of being and belonging.

Being

You are amazingly complex organisms with incredibly sophisticated powers for thought, emotion, and creativity. You are amazing and beautiful people.

Belonging

You belong to one another. You are husband and wife and soul-mates.

Nothing should affect or change your love and acceptance of one another. If he or she said something stupid or isn't helping with the housework or keeps getting fired from every job they get...

...Your love and acceptance for one another is unwavering and constant. There is no connection between these behaviors and your unchanging love for one another.

Value 3) Building Lasting Trust

Trust is different than love and acceptance. Love and acceptance don't change.

Trust, however, can change in a flash.

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Trust is like a bank account that you deposit a dollar in each day. You deposit that dollar by being honest and reliable throughout each day. At the end of a day of honesty and reliability, another dollar is added to your "Trust Bank Account."

The more dollar-earning days you accumulate, the more trustworthy you are.

A single instance of dishonesty or of being unreliable will cost you dearly. The expense will depend on how serious the act of dishonesty or unreliability was in the eyes of your husband or wife.

If you have built up a large sum of trust in your bank account over a long period of time, then you will probably have plenty of trust left over at the end of that disappointing day.

But with too many costly days of being dishonest or unreliable, you can very quickly find yourself in debt. This is dangerous territory and a very serious crack in the foundation to your relationship. It is going to take time, but you can earn trust back by being honest and reliable day after day.

Since you are at the beginning of your relationship, I strongly advise you to carefully add trust to your bank account each day and do your best to never have to cash in. This is not meant to be spending money. The idea is to build up great riches of trust in your relationship for a strong foundation.

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Value 4) Respect for One Another

Just because you are married or even soul-mates, does not give you permission to leave good manners behind.

If you want something, say "Please." If he or she does something helpful (whether asked to or not), say "Thank you."

If he or she does not feel like doing something right now, respect their wishes. Don't be pushy. Respect how they feel. This goes for anything from taking out the garbage... to sex.

If she doesn't like you walking into the house with your shoes on, respect her wishes and take them off before coming in.

If he is trying to nap, then wear your headphones and keep it quiet for him.

Consider how you treat the people you respect most. How do you treat your grandparents? Professors? Pastors?

Well, here we are talking about the most important person in the world to you. More important than the president of your nation. More important than Gandhi. More important than any sports star. How would you treat any of these people?

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How much better should you treat the person you chose to marry!

Value 5) Bridging the Chasm

We all love to be right. It is a great feeling to say something lucid in a discussion with friends and to know that your point was made brilliantly and well-received.

And sometimes the discussion among friends grows heated and amid wild gestures and table banging there is a rush of excitement because everyone believes for a moment that they are a part of something bigger than themselves.

That is all fine and fun as long as everyone participating in this behavior feels like they are a part of an interesting discussion that doesn't put anyone down or make anyone feel uncomfortable.

But when you two are together and trying to make a decision, a radically different approach is required. Here the goal is not to be the loudest or the smartest. The goal is to work together to solve a problem and move forward together in a harmonious relationship.

The problem is that whenever one of you says "I'm right" or "You're wrong" there is an immediate and severe separation between you. You might as well have said, "I'm right here" and "You're way over there."

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As soon as one of you is right and the other one is wrong, you are separated people on two different sides of a great chasm. Your relationship is broken.

You might very well be “right” and in your mind you are of course absolutely right. But you have a choice here. You can choose to claim victory as the **one** who is right or you can choose to preserve your relationship as **two** people who love and respect one another.

More important than winning any argument should be preserving and nourishing your relationship. You should prefer to lose an argument in order to win another moment of joyful unity with the one you love. When you truly understand the importance of your relationship and the destructiveness of having to be right, you will no longer feel compelled to argue. Sometimes by letting go of something, you can gain something even better. When you let go of your desire to be right, you will gain a happy relationship.

Value 6) “Super Sight”

“If arguing is destructive, then by what means can we resolve our disagreements?”

The biggest problem with arguing is that when arguing we typically use about 80% of our mind’s resources to get our point across to the other person and

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only about 20% of our mind's resources to hear and understand the other person's point of view.

It is my experience that conflicts of interest in a healthy relationship can almost always be resolved without arguing. For those rare arguments that do take place, smart arguing strategies should be employed to make the argument worthwhile. Dr. David Witt at the University of Akron wrote an extremely valuable guide teaching how to argue effectively that you should read before your next argument: [Arguing Effectively](#)

The value I want you to focus on right now is Super Sight. What I mean by "Super Sight" is being able to see and hear what ordinary people don't – not because they can't, but because they don't try.

In your relationship, you want to develop Super Hero-like abilities to hear and see what is on the mind of the person you love. The trick is to listen not with your ears, or with your mind, but with the *other person's* mind.

When you listen, try to hear what is on that person's mind. Try to see through *their* eyes.

Disagreements are a perfect example of this. When we have a disagreement, we share a common problem. But we have different ideas about how to solve

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the same problem.

When Lisa and I have a disagreement, my job is to use my Super Sight to understand how Lisa sees the problem and how she believes her idea would solve the problem.

She, at the same time, is trying to really understand how I see the problem and how I think the problem could be solved.

We don't realize it but we see the problem from different sides and have different ideas about how to fix the problem. By carefully listening to one another talk about the problem and one another's ideas for fixing the problem and by asking questions to better understand what the other person is seeing, we begin to see a new, bigger picture of the problem. When this new, bigger, fuller view of the problem snaps into focus, we can both agree on the perfect way to fix the problem. In fact, after seeing our unified vision of the problem, we often see a third solution to the problem that we both agree is better than either of the ideas we had before when we only saw part of the picture.

This is Super Sight working for us. An analogy would be two blind people in a room with a giant, stuffed mammoth. The two blind people could eventually figure out what it is by feeling their way around the mammoth.

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If those two blind people were to work together, however, they would be able to figure it out much more quickly. If they would feel different parts of the mammoth while telling each other what they feel, they would be able to figure out what it is twice as fast as if they tried to figure it out alone.

By knowing what you know and also perceiving what the other person knows, you are able to see the big picture and then think of the best solution.

Super Sight isn't just for fixing problems. You should always listen to one another and try to understand what the other person is seeing, thinking, and feeling. In this way, you can take better care of one another.

It is as though you were two halves of the same body. After all, when you went to the altar to get married you "became one." So, Super Sight is the nervous system connecting the two halves so that you can operate as a unified body.

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The Honeymoon Was Great. What Changed?

The biggest change is that now there is more competition. When you were on the honeymoon, it was just you two. Your biggest worry was which wine to order.

All of your attention was focused like a laser beam on one another. And it was beautiful being so intimate and being in your own world together.

Your Relationship vs. The Competition

Now that you are home from the honeymoon, there is much more competition.

The competition includes your jobs, visiting family, personal interests and hobbies, friends, social activities, housework, paying bills, and so on.

This competition can easily consume all your time and attention.

Only by being careful to protect your time together and by making an effort to focus your attention on one another can you beat back the competition before it consumes your relationship altogether.

When you feel like you are too busy to give enough time to one another, take a look at what uses up your time and attention. Can anything be cut out of your schedule? It might be difficult to imagine your life without some of these activities. Chances are, though, that your life will feel more meaningful and

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more complete as you simplify your life. You will be left with what is most important – one another!

If your life is already simple, do your best to keep it that way. And make sure you enrich your life by selecting times when you can concentrate your attention, time and energy on one another.

“Us” Time

Stake out your claim of time in your daily and weekly schedule. For example, you could choose to always eat dinner together and then take a thirty minute walk together each evening. This is the minimum.

If you can also start the day with breakfast together and end the day with a movie or some other way of spending time together, then that is even better.

You should have a time each week set apart for a date. It can be every Friday night or every Saturday afternoon.

You can also do something extra special once a month (such as a candle light dinner at a nice restaurant) and something even more special once a year (such as a romantic vacation).

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Do You have Children? Thinking About It?

If you have children, that is a wonderful thing. Being a parent is very important and rewarding. I want to caution you, though, to make sure you get some time to just yourselves without the children. Parenthood is not a substitute for being married. You must make an extra effort to work on your marriage by spending time together. Don't sacrifice your close relationship with one another for the children. That doesn't help anyone!

If you can't afford to get a babysitter, you could arrange with another couple who has children to swap free baby-sitting services on a bi-weekly basis. One Friday you baby-sit their children while they spend some time together. The next Friday, they baby sit your children while you go out for the night.

You could also have a time in the evening when the children know that they need to let you spend some time alone together. The children can play in the other room after 8pm each evening while you spend that precious time truly being together.

Just please be careful not to give all your relationship time to the children.

If you don't have children, have you ever seriously considered your option to not become parents? I know this idea is unthinkable to some couples. And if that is you, then skip ahead to the next topic. I'm not here to push anything down your throat. I understand that most couples are meant to be parents. Do

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what makes you the happiest as a couple.

When Lisa and I got married the thought never crossed our minds that we might not have children. We had both grown up thinking, "Of course I'll have children someday!"

One afternoon, about a year after getting married, Lisa and I were taking a walk through the neighborhood thinking about our goals and dreams when Lisa voiced a thought that had suddenly popped into her mind: "We don't have to have kids."

We started thinking about that possibility and suddenly the idea of not having children filled us with an amazing sense of freedom and new possibilities began filling our minds.

We ended up making the decision to not have children. Instead we are now living on the other side of the world enjoying amazing experiences together.

Often it is assumed that after getting married the next step is having children. In fact, many couples are asked just days after their wedding, "When are you having kids? How many kids are you having?"

Despite these expectations, the fact that you married one another is only the

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choice to live out your life together. It is not necessarily the choice to rear children together.

In an earlier chapter, we talked about your relationship's competitors. We talked about your job, family, social activities, and how they are all competing for your attention. Any children you add to the mix will become huge competition for your attention and time – competition that cannot be ignored and will not go away. Once you are a parent, you are always a parent. It does not matter how old your children are!

So, there you go. Don't be offended. I'm just telling you that having children is a choice and you don't have to make that choice blindly. If you want to have children, do it and do it well! But make sure that you protect your time together. Too many couples get married and then become parents and they give all the time that used to go towards cultivating their marriage over to the task of parenting. Don't let parenting replace your relationship with one another.

If you choose to have children, you need to give your children a lot of time and attention. But remember to also take time out on a regular basis for just the two of you.

Here is a New York Times article that caught my attention. It is humorously titled, ["Till Children Do Us Part."](#) Hope you find it helpful.

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A Fragile Union: Keeping the Connection

Two hearts have been bound together in holy matrimony. This binding of hearts is by choice. Only by *choosing* to keep your hearts close will they *remain* close. Only by *choosing* to be one in heart and mind will you *remain* one.

Sometimes you will not feel close. In fact, sometimes you will feel angry and you will feel like giving each other the “silent treatment.” You may even feel like pushing each other away.

For a healthy, unified, and happy marriage, you must overcome those feelings and choose to do what is best for your relationship.

Even if you feel like the other person is being wrong-headed and that you have the right to be angry or that you should not have to be the one to reach out and make things right between you two... Even then, you should make the choice to take the action necessary to bring your hearts back together. And do it quickly!

You have heard that “time heals all wounds.” This can be applied to the splitting apart of two hearts. These hearts just an hour ago beat as one. But now, you’re hearts are temporarily split apart. They hurt. They are bleeding. They want to come back together but feelings of personal pride, anger and hurt keep them apart. Given enough time, these separated, wounded hearts will begin to heal. As the wounded hearts begin to scab over, it will become more and more

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difficult to join them back together.

You must not delay. You know that the best thing you can do for your relationship is to quickly make things right with one another and move forward with your life together. You are hurting because you feel separated. You need one another. Only by being together – one in heart, mind, and spirit – can you be happy together.

Keep the connection tight. It is a connection made by choices and actions you take – even when you don't feel like it.

Sharing a life together requires that you both be sensitive to the alarming sense of separation you feel when you are not close.

You might feel that aching void shortly after you walk out the room during a fight.

You might feel it while you are reading a book and your honey is watching a movie.

You might feel it as you are cooking dinner waiting for her to come home from work.

Reach out to your other half. Make the choice to stay connected. Let your

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hearts continue to beat with one beat and know the continuous joy of sharing life, hope, dreams, and love together.

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Experience Life Together to be Happy Together

This morning I saw a headline on CNN that says it all:

["Study: Experiences make us happier than possessions"](#)

It's satisfying to find that scientific studies now validate what I have discovered to be true in my own life. An experience creates more lasting pleasure than a possession.

Let's apply this concept to your marriage. Many couples get married with ideas of what their new life together will become. They imagine that they will buy a house with a two car garage, they will have one or two children, and they will make enough money to have a happy life. They imagine that having these things will make them happy.

The thing you should know is that *having* a house and *having* children and *having* cars will not ultimately be what makes you happy. What will make you the happiest will be the *experiences* you have in that house and with your children. You will be happy when you remember that romantic night when you ate that spaghetti dinner by candle light in your dining room together. That time when you and the kids were playing with your new puppy in the backyard. That time when you hiked along the Grand Canyon together and then watched the sunset while keeping each other warm in the cool evening air.

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Lisa and I are probably one of the happiest couples in the world. We don't have a car. We don't have children. We don't own a home. We don't have any pets or plants. Most of our possessions are in a storage unit we rent. The rest of our possessions can fit into a few suitcases.

What we do have is freedom to experience life together. We are not tied down to staying home to take care of our kids and pets and we don't have to worry about a car breaking down.

Last month, we were asked if we would like to tour Beijing for a week with a friend. We didn't have to decline due to not receiving enough notice to find a house sitter or baby sitter. We said, "Sure!"

The next week, we were having the time of our life climbing The Great Wall, exploring The Forbidden City, and meeting a Chinese man who raises prize winning crickets worth thousands of dollars each.

If you want a happy marriage, spend your time doing experiential activities. These activities don't need to be as extravagant as visiting China. They can be as simple as going out for a dinner and movie together or taking a walk together. The key to a happy marriage is creating a lifestyle that allows you to experience life together.

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Your Romance Toolbox

Simply stated, romance is showing the one you love that you truly appreciate and value them.

Here are some ways to kick the romance volume up a notch:

Gifts

The worst thing you can do is forget a birthday, anniversary, holiday, or some other special occasion. These are timeslots built into the calendar year to help you show your love and appreciation for your honey.

The minimum requirement is to remember and give a gift and / or do something special together. You can either meet the minimum requirement, or show extra thoughtfulness and effort to make the occasion extra special.

Surprises

Surprises are one of the easiest ways to be romantic. All you have to do is treat the day as if it were a birthday or Valentine's day without being prompted by the calendar. Give a gift or handwritten letter of appreciation "just because I wanted you to know how much I love you." Keep his or her interests in mind and surprise him or her with tickets to a concert or musical. Be spontaneous. Make a special effort to express your love even when your calendar doesn't tell you to.

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Affection

Walk up to her and kiss her or hug her. Sweep her off her feet.

Show him how much you love him with a hug and kisses. Give him a massage.

Combine your affection with the element of surprise.

Affirmation

Affirmation is like affection except that affection is *shown* while affirmation is *said*. When employing affirmation for a romantic moment, tell the person with words how much they mean to you.

Write a love letter telling her what you appreciate about her.

When he needs encouraged, encourage him.

When one of you achieves a goal, celebrate together.

Remind one another that your lives are complete and happy because you are together.

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Let Go and Be Free

You are starting your new life together. If you are carrying extra baggage around, now is the time to let it go.

The world is full of people who could be living a happy life but they aren't. Instead of living a happy life full of freedom and joy, they are carrying around big old bags of garbage. Rather than looking into the future, they keep looking through the trash they are carrying around.

If you are carrying around resentments or blame someone (perhaps a parent) for your hurts and problems, then you are one of these people who are carrying around extra baggage.

Resenting a person or blaming a person ties your life to that person in such a way that you cannot really move forward with your life. They may be out there living their life completely unaware of how you feel about them. Meanwhile, you are trapped by your own thoughts.

By blaming or resenting that person, you remain their victim. Only you can release them. Only you can let them go. Only you can forgive them.

When I say "forgive them," I do not mean that you deny that they did anything wrong. I simply mean that you let go of your right to be angry at them. You stop

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thinking about how they wronged you. Instead of thinking about them, you start thinking about how you can make your own life better.

Clean your side of the street. It does not really matter whether they reciprocate or not. The important thing is that you say what you need to say and forgive them. Apologize to them for holding onto anger and bitterness towards them. Apologize for how your feelings might have hurt your relationship with that person. Give them a call. If they have passed away, then write them a letter. Forgiveness is about your feelings, attitude, and beliefs. *Their* actions and words do not have to control *your* feelings, attitude and beliefs. When their words and actions don't control your feelings, attitude and beliefs – that's when you will know that you have forgiven them.

Don't let these people live rent-free inside your head. When you release the person who wronged you, you will be free of their continuous influence over your life. Stop holding them hostage in the prison of your mind.

As long as you are living each day with these events of the past, you cannot live fully in the present.

In fact, so long as you are holding other people responsible for your problems, you will not have the power to take charge of your own life and make it better. By believing that you are a victim, you give all the power to improve your life to

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the people you are holding hostage in your mind. What can these prisoners of your mind do? Nothing! Only you are free to create the happy life you wish for. Don't wait for them to give you a better life.

You are not a child under parental guardianship anymore. For much of your life, you did not have much power over your own life. That power belonged to your parents, teachers, and other authorities. But now you are an adult. Those people only have as much power over you as you give them. It is time to release those who shaped your life. It is time for you to take full responsibility for your own life. Take control of your life and make it what you want it to be.

Let all those people you used to blame and resent out of the car. Take the driver's seat and take the next exit. You are free to follow your life path and be happy.

Depending on the depth of hurt you have in your heart, you may need the guidance of a counselor to work through the steps of untangling yourself from the bitter roots of resentment and blame that have grown up in your heart. Do whatever it takes to get free. This is a critical step towards the happy life waiting for you. And, after all, a marriage is two lives joined together. The marriage will only be completely happy if both of your lives are released from the hurts of the past.

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Setting Boundaries

As you start your new life together, there will probably be family members and other people who try to interfere and overstep their place in your life. Parents can be especially bad about this. And it is understandable. After all, they were in charge of your life for quite some time and now one or more of your parents may continue to attempt to be in charge of your life in some way or another.

When this happens many couples find themselves feeling frustrated and angry.

What you need to do is explain to the person that their actions are troublesome. Let them know what you deem to be appropriate. Just as two people need to learn how to get along in their marriage, the newlywed couple needs to learn how to also get along with both sets of parents. Sometimes, you will have to help one of your parents understand your expectations.

As a couple, you need to decide how you want your parents to interact with you. Once you know what you want, you can talk with your parents about it.

It might take your parents some time to change. Give them a chance to adjust their behavior. It might take a few get-togethers with them before you start seeing the changes you were looking for.

Sometimes, a parent will not respect your wishes or they will not take you

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seriously enough to make the changes as quickly as you need them to. In these cases, you will have to set some ground rules with built-in consequences.

By laying down the line and saying don't cross this line or I will have to take this particular action, you are giving fair warning in advance of the next time the person does something that is inappropriate. By setting the boundaries ahead of time, you don't need to sit back and accept whatever is thrown at you. At the same time, you won't shock the person with an explosion of anger. You can be in control of yourself and the situation.

Let's look at a fictional example (any similarities to actual events or people are only coincidental):

Josh and Christina have been married for about two months now. Sometimes when Josh and Christina go over to the home of Josh's parents, Josh's mother makes cutting remarks about Christina. Josh and Christina are of course quite upset about this but they don't want to seem over-reactive and make a big scene. They also don't want to ruin Josh's good relationship with his mother. Finally, they decide that they need to set some boundaries with Josh's mother.

Josh takes his mother out to lunch. At lunch he explains to his mother that he has noticed that sometimes she makes hurtful remarks about Christina. His mother starts to protest saying that she never meant to hurt anyone and maybe

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Christina is being too sensitive.

Josh wants his mother to work with him on this. His goal is not to create an “us versus you” scenario. So, he gives his mother the benefit of the doubt and says, “I really don’t think you want to hurt Christina, but some of your comments really are hard on her. I’m worried that if you aren’t more careful about how you speak to her that it could hurt our relationship with you.”

Josh’s mother agrees to be more careful.

At the next visit, Josh’s mother is especially hard on Christina. On the way home, Christina is in tears. She and Josh decide that they will have to apply consequences in order to get his mother to change her behavior before she seriously damages her relationship with her son and daughter-in-law.

Josh contacts his mother to set the boundaries and consequences, “The next time you make a cutting remark about Christina, we will get up and go home. I’m not going to let Christina be treated like that.”

The rules have been explained. The next time Josh’s mother makes a hurtful remark towards Christina, Josh and Christina do not make a fuss. They simply get up and go home. They have kept their end of the agreement.

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When Josh's mother discovers that they are serious, she makes a better effort to be more appropriate in her treatment of Christina.

In this way, Josh and Christina are able to ultimately save their relationship with Josh's mother.

As newlyweds, you are trying to create a new life together. You have a vision of what that new life looks like. You cannot allow other people to interfere and get in the way of your happy life together. You are married adults and don't have to be the victims in your relationships with your parents or anyone else. You can tactfully set the groundwork for healthy relationships.

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Gratitude

The final secret to a happy marriage is gratitude. Whatever is happening in your life, you always have something to be thankful for because you have each other.

Everyday, I thank God for Lisa. By taking a moment each day to express my gratitude for Lisa, I am reminded of how wonderful she is and how important she is to my happiness.

I am encouraged to do whatever I can to protect the beautiful relationship we have together.

Often, I express my gratitude aloud in Lisa's presence (and she does the same). I might say, "Lisa, I am so thankful to have you in my life. You make me so happy and you are so sweet and wonderful."

There are a number of benefits to expressing your gratitude aloud. When I express my gratitude aloud in a way that Lisa can hear, I am able to build up her self-esteem. Also, when I hear myself giving thanks for Lisa, my heart is filled with joy and appreciation.

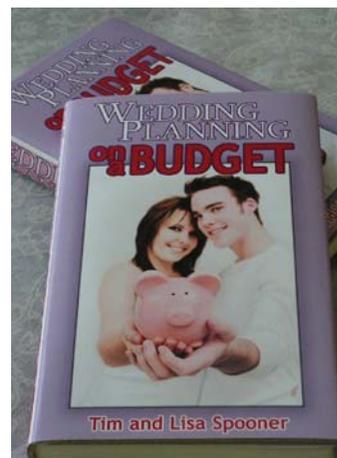
Thankful people are happy people. If you have a thankful marriage, you will have a happy marriage.

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Other Books by Tim Spooner

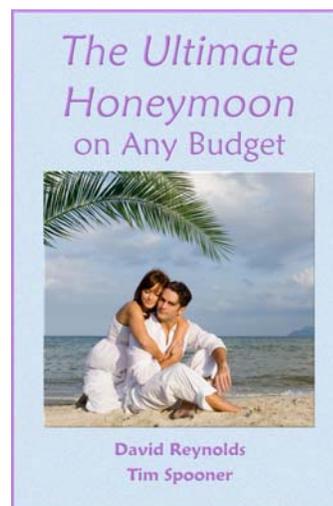
After planning their dream wedding on a budget of just \$2,000 (saving over \$22,000 in the process), Tim and Lisa wrote a book called ["Wedding Planning on a Budget"](#)

Their book reveals the strategies that can help any couple plan the wedding of their dreams on whatever wedding budget they can afford.



Tim partnered with budget travel expert David Reynolds to write a book that guides couples in planning their honeymoons.

["The Ultimate Honeymoon on Any Budget"](#) goes beyond giving planning advice to reveal the best honeymoon travel packages available for whatever honeymoon budget you can afford.



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About the Author

Tim Spooner enjoys traveling, teaching, and writing. He and his wife are English teachers in South Korea.

Tim and Lisa enjoy the freedom they have to travel to romantic locations all over the world.



We Want to Hear From You...

We wrote this guide for the chance to help newlyweds like you. You can really make our day by contacting us and letting us know how you found this book to be helpful.



[We would love to hear from you](#)