



LOVE notes

Brought to you by The Alabama Community Healthy Marriage Initiative • www.alabamamarriage.org • 1-888-4TOGETHER

What Kind of Marriage Do You Want?

You've spent hours, days, and probably even months planning your wedding down to the tiniest detail. The gown is gorgeous. The flowers will be stunning, the food divine, and the guest list perfect. You've sampled cake and appetizers, listened to innumerable wedding songs, interviewed D.J.'s for the reception, selected the attire for the wedding party, hired a photographer, purchased gifts for your bridesmaids and groomsmen, made at least one hundred lists, and arranged a spa day so you'll look beautiful on your special day. In short, you've thought of everything. Your wedding will come off without a glitch. Can you say the same for your marriage?

Twenty-four Hours Leads to a Lifetime

Think of the energy and attention you've given one twenty-four hour period in your life. Granted, it's an important day, but what about the thousands of days you and your spouse will share as a married couple? Good marriages are created through intention. Are you willing to invest that same energy and time to create the marriage of your dreams? If your answer is "yes," then read on for some tips to help get you started.

- Talk with your spouse about the expectations each of you bring to this marriage. Make sure you're being as realistic as possible.

For example, some people think happy couples should never have conflict. Others may think that if those early feelings of passion change or lessen somewhat, it means they're no longer in love. Unrealistic expectations can lead to frustration, anger and dissatisfaction – and who wants to start married life out with those?

- Think of yourselves as a team. In marriage you move from *me* to *we*, and become a dynamic duo ready to take on the world and its challenges.
- Develop a mission statement for your marriage. Talk about what you want, how you will treat each other, and what you'll do to keep your marriage strong. Write your mission statement on nice paper and post it where you'll see it every day.

Develop an attitude of gratitude for your spouse. Make a list of what you love about him or her, and look at it when you've had an argument or feel frustrated. Remember, nobody's perfect. Learn to forgive and focus on positives.

- Keep asking your spouse about his/her thoughts, feelings and experiences. While you may know a lot about each other, there is always more to learn. The better you know each other, the stronger your friendship becomes. And friendship is the true key to a long-lasting healthy marriage.
- Show your husband or wife in small ways every day how much you care. Research

shows that healthy couples have at least five positive behaviors for every one negative behavior. Think small – say goodbye when either of you leaves the house; give a spontaneous hug, kiss or backrub; plan a weekly date with each other; talk about how your day went at the end of the day.

- Be as good a listener as you are a talker.
- Learn to handle conflict in ways that bring you closer instead of create distance. You may not always solve your issues; what is most important is that each of you feels heard. Apologize when it's called for – an apology is a powerful communication tool. Use kind words and tone of voice. Once the problem has been discussed, drop it. No grudges allowed. Don't give the "silent treatment." Instead, talk things out. Try to say something positive before you make a complaint. Call a time out if you need to cool off. Be careful of the words you use because they don't go away.
- Actively seek out resources that will help you create the marriage you want. Take a class, read books about healthy relationships, hang out with friends who support your marriage.

Go to www.alabamamarriage.org for valuable information and tips on many aspects of healthy marriage. Download a copy of the Alabama Marriage Handbook online: www.alabamamarriage.org/resources.