

1. It is important that you both agree to the amount of money it is okay to spend on your own without checking in with the other. In this way, you feel a measure of freedom, but also an acknowledgment that you are in a marriage and your decisions effect you both. One way to decide this is to write down on a piece of paper what amount that both of you agree not to go over unless you check in and then compare the numbers and see how close you came and then negotiate if they are not the same.

2. As a way to simplify finances, sometimes it works to set up a joint account where a percentage of both of your income automatically goes into that account and pays for all joint expenses including rent, utilities, house, projects etc. and then a savings account to save together for trips. Then, you would both have your individual savings and personal accounts that you could choose to spend however you like. This way, you are not operating as though you are renters in the same home splitting expenses but actually creating a joint account to cover the expenses for both of you.

3. Giftgiving is a wonderful way to let your partner know that you were thinking of them even when it is not a time for gift giving. A wonderful rule of thumb is the Platinum Rule, (unlike the Golden Rule), which says "give unto others as they would have you give into them". So choose a gift that you know your partner would like and not one that you would want to get. This seems like such obvious advice, and getting to know what your partner loves will help you to hit the mark. So it helps to pay attention to what they like, their desires, etc.

4. When our spouse does something that confuses us, often times we will create a story about what they did and why they did it which then generates feelings, usually negative, and then we act out on those feelings as though the story we told ourself is true. It truly is a wise thing to be able to identify our own stories, and go and ask our partner about their confusing behavior instead of either accusing them or assuming that our stories are true and right.

5. "Do overs" are fabulous ways to get a second chance to say something or do something different. The person who wants the "Do Over" is the one who asks for it and then the couple just replays the conversation while the requesting spouse gets a chance to say or do something different than they did the first time.

6. In an adult relationship, our partners will ask us to do things at times and sometimes we may not want to, but are we willing? The difference is that I can recognize that I don't want to but I am willing because either I know how much it would please you or I know how much you want to do it or how important it is and so I am willing to put aside my dislike in order to participate in an adult way without punishing you by pouting or withholding or holding it against you when I do this thing you want.

7. Since we are going to be in a marriage, there are going to be times that I need to say no to you and so can I learn to do it well which causes much less strife. Saying no well means that I have taken time to really understand what you're asking of me and I've made sense, that from your perspective, I can see why you are asking me what you are, and then I gently tell you that that is not going to work for me. I might give you an alternative but the main goal is to not dismiss your partner for asking nor shame them for asking. Such as telling them they are silly for wanting that.

8. Studies have shown that relationships that are the most successful have a 5 to 1 ratio of five positive words, gestures, behaviors, to one negative one.

9. The adult way to take responsibility for our behavior in the relationship is to be partially responsible for how something happened versus taking the blame or being at fault. Blame and fault are all or nothing and so if it is all my fault, then it is all my responsibility to fix it and if I am partially responsible for how something happened, then I can take some responsibility for repairing it. Most ruptures in a relationship are a co-creation. Therefore, the repair is also a co-creation. In this way, both partners have some power to help manage then health of the couple.

10. There's a big difference between expectations and desires. Expectations are things that we decide are supposed to happen and therefore set us up to feel disappointed when our partner does not meet that expectation. A desire is something that we would like to see happen and is a more gentle way to invite your partner to fulfill that desire if you can express it in that way versus expressing it as an expectation. For example, " on our vacation, it would be really great if we could...."

11. Giving appreciations to one another is a very important way of building trust and goodwill between us. A good way to give an appreciation is to keep it in the positive and add a bit about what it meant to you that person did that. So for instance, saying something like, "I really liked the good dinner you made because usually your dinners are so bad", is not a positive appreciation. Versus, "I really enjoyed your dinner tonight because I feel so cared for when you cook for me."

12. Get really good at finding lots of ways to express love and caring to your partner. If you think about all the negative ways we have of relating to each other: blame and criticism and accusations and withholding and yelling and griping then it would make sense that we want as many if not more ways of showing love. These are some of the ways to show love: acts of service, praise and appreciations, gifts and surprises, physical affection, saying "I love you" or what you love about the person. Notice which avenues you are best at giving love and then try to stretch into the others. Being a well-rounded and balanced sharer of love will really help your relationship in the long run.

13. Many times we say to our partners, "you made me feel angry when...". To be adult about it, our partners can't make us feel a certain way although they can influence how we feel. Our perceptions, our histories, our relationship with our partner, and the kind of day we are having, can all influence how we experience or receive what our partner is saying or doing which then results in how we feel. So when you feel feelings towards her partner, just consider that they did something and you felt this way and so then you get to decide whether to share that with them respectfully (to help them understand you, not to punish them) or just work it out yourself.

14. Have an honest and open conversation about what kinds of parameters you want to put on your relationship together around computer use. Such as Facebook transparency, texting and what happens when one of you contact an old flame or an old flame contacts you? Co-creating these parameters for your relationship will keep it safe from the myriad of outside forces that are present in today's cyber world. None of us want to believe when we are first married that our spouse might stray. Certainly none of us want to believe that is possible but it is also important to lay the groundwork for a strong equal trusting relationship.

