

Sure fire ways to ruin your marriage

by

Dr. M. Rivest, Ph.D., D.S.T.

Counseling Solutions at SMI

“I love you so much dear. You let me go to the bar with my friends and say nothing when I return at 2 AM. You hardly ask me to do anything around the house, including picking up after myself. You are the greatest.”

I hope that bit of monologue disturbs you as much as it does me. It illustrates four all too popular relationship busters, 1. dishonesty, 2. annoying habits, 3. independent behaviors, and 4. the lack of good conversation.

Dishonesty: Commission, omission, and “little white lies” can kill the greatest of relationships. I once knew a gal who would destroy people with the bluntness and cruelty of her remarks. Then she would say, “Well I was honest!” We did not remain friends for long. Honesty is best served with thoughtful humility coated with mercy and kindness.

Commission is right- out lying. That can never be good. If I have to tell the truth then I am apt to be more thoughtful in my words or deeds. The pay-off is peace within myself and with others. I find that if I address an “issue” quickly and softly it gets resolved much more easily than if I wait.

Omission is perhaps the worst. I want to say something but don’t. I might be afraid of the immediate outcome. So I stuff it in, let it build and later disproportionately explode. Or I might say it through a “dry sense of humor” and do my “attack” dishonestly.

Little white lies are not really little. It is a double lie actually. I lie to myself and to another. Lies are lies and they all break the trust.

Annoying habits: The example in the introduction is not cleaning up after yourself. But it could be the toilet seat or tooth paste, making body noises, having strange odors about yourself, dressing sloppy in the house, uninvited sexual groping, talking while eating so everyone can see masticated food, chewing gum at anytime, or trying to have a conversation while the BIG game is on TV.

I once saw a newlywed taking his bride out to dinner. He wore his hat through the entire meal. I wanted to slap them both silly. He for doing it and her for letting him.

I also don't like watching people publically scratch, rearrange or whatever to their private parts.

Women should wear clothes that make them look good. Men should do the same.

Independent behaviors: I see this all too often. Married people want to behave as though they are adolescent singles with the liberty to do whatever they wish. Sorry, you are married now and have the responsibilities and joys of that union.

Don't misunderstand. I am not speaking about occasional responsible independent behaviors. I am not saying that a husband and wife have to be joined with shackles. But...in thriving marriages couples do spend about 80% of their waking non working time together.

And they do not hide out at work, being a workaholic to avoid their responsibilities to their mate and family.

For example my wife and I require quiet alone time, exercise time, and some social time with our friends. We schedule these events so "me time" does not take away from "we time."

Good Conversation: Every time I think of good conversation I think of T.S. Eliot. The question is what is good conversation? Certainly it is not texting each other several times a day, emailing, Twittering, Facebook, MySpace, cell phoning, our any of that "stuff."

Often I speak with couples and they swear that they talk a lot. "Really," I ask, "What do you talk about?" Inevitably the response is, "children, work, money, and friends, like that." These are important enough topics but not really disclosive or intimate. As far as building their relationship this is trash talk.

Good communication would be dialogue on self revelation, growth moments, and inspirations that happened throughout the day. Detailed expressions of affection, more than the quick, "I love you, baby." Disclose who are you today, who you want to become in the future, and how you and your mate can do this together.

I have had several couples attribute the success of their marital counseling to the gentle face to face conversations they would have after dinner when the house was quiet.

And so...it seems that if we are honest, nice to be around, have team spirit, and speak transparently to our mate things might just work out fine.

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