

Ten Commandments for a Happy Marriage based on Jewish Tradition

For those preparing for marriage, as well as those already wed, Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald, director of the National Jewish Outreach Program (NJOP) who has officiated at hundreds of weddings, offers ten tips-"ten commandments," if you will-for a successful marriage. The advice, based on the 3,300-year-old Jewish tradition, is timeless and applicable to modern couples of all backgrounds.

1. Marriage Unplugged - From sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, observant Jewish families turn off the TV, shutdown the computer, ignore the phone, and spend time together without the distractions of daily life. Set aside a night each week to tune out the world, tune into each other, and focus on the reality of your own lives.

2. United We Stand - The chuppah, or canopy, that a couple stands under during a Jewish wedding ceremony signifies the home they will build together- symbolically reminding all present that the couple is becoming a unit. It's okay, even healthy, to have differing opinions from your spouse, but when dealing with outside challenges, remember that you're a team.

3. Marriage Ain't All Wine and Roses - During a Jewish wedding ceremony, wine is sipped to symbolize joy; later, the ceremony concludes with the breaking of a glass calling attention to the fact that life is not always joyful. Yes, your wedding day should be one of the happiest of your life, but keep in mind that you're sure to face tough times, both big and small, too-from lost jobs to clogged toilets. The good news is that when the proverbial glasses break, you can pick up the pieces together.

4. Save it for your Spouse - Ever notice that religious Jewish men and women dress very modestly? It's not because they're ashamed of their bodies, but rather because they save their sensual side for their spouses. Keep that in mind the next time you dress for a night out with your pals. Yes, you should look your best, but reserve the seductive stuff for those nights you stay at home alone with your spouse.

5. Thou Shalt Not Embarrass Thy Spouse - Ok, so it's not one of the original commandments, but Jewish law does forbid people from embarrassing others. It's equated with theft, since embarrassing someone is like "stealing" his or her dignity. Jewish tradition teaches, "Let your fellow's honor be as dear to you as your own."* In other words, treat your spouse with respect and admiration in public, as well as in private, and you can expect the same in return.

6. Don't Carry a Grudge - A marriage's foundation can crumble under the weight of too many grudges. You've heard it a zillion times-"don't go to

bed angry." Jewish tradition builds this age-old-and excellent-piece of advice into prayers said before going to sleep at night. But even more than that, in Judaism, Yom Kippur-the Day of Atonement-is the holiest day of the year. The catch is, however, that Jews can't ask God for forgiveness until they've asked for forgiveness from the people they may have wronged. Take note-offer and accept apologies often!

7. Meaningful Conversations Encourage Meaningful Marriages -

Remember when you were dating and you had in-depth conversations about current events, art, literature and other interesting issues? Keep that in mind the next time you notice that all you and your spouse seem to talk about is what to add to the grocery list, whose turn it is to wash the dishes, and how much the neighbors spent on their new sofa. Jewish tradition reminds people to respect their spouse's intellect+, because when your conversations become too trivialized, your marriage does too.

8. Abstinence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder - According to Jewish law, a husband and wife should refrain from sexual relations during a specific part of each month. The time apart forces a couple to relate to each other in other, non-physical ways. Pick a few days each month to stay apart, and you'll find it brings you closer together.

9. Thanks are Welcome - Sure, we always say thanks for a great birthday present or an effusive compliment. But what about for the day-to-day things like a freshly-prepared meal, cleaning the bathroom, taking out the trash, and sharing the last serving of ice cream. Jewish tradition reminds people to appreciate the small stuff. There are blessings to be said before and after eating a small snack, upon wearing new clothes for the first time, upon smelling beautiful fragrances, and upon seeing fruit trees in bloom for the first time each spring, among others. Remember to thank your spouse for the small things they do each day, and you'll avoid the pitfalls of taking each other for granted.

10. Get to Higher (Spiritual) Ground - Yes, marriage should be about two people, but you can't focus on yourselves to the exclusion of everything and everyone else. Jewish tradition encourages couples to bring spirituality and godliness into their homes and lives. Whatever your religious beliefs, if your marriage has a higher purpose-whether it's to transmit your religious heritage to your children, help the homeless, or save the environment-you're sure to develop a stronger, long-lasting connection to each other.

About the National Jewish Outreach Program

Founded in 1987 by Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald to address the critical issues of assimilation and a lack of Jewish knowledge, NJOP is now one of the largest and most successful Jewish outreach organizations in the world. To date,

more than 770,000 people have benefited from NJOP's innovative, free programs which have been held in 3,620 locations-including synagogues, community centers, military bases, and college campuses-in all 50 states, nine Canadian provinces, and 30 countries around the world. (www.njop.org).

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