בס"ד

10

Common Mistakes People Make in Marriage

Winter 2018

Based on your experience, what piece of advice would you give somebody who is about to get married to help him or her in the future? What pitfalls should that person avoid, and what attitude should he or she have going into the marriage?

I will try to touch upon 10 mistakes that are commonplace in marriages, with the goal of answering the above questions and providing readers with a healthier outlook on the whole idea of marriage. Hopefully, this discussion will bring about a certain amount of clarity and direction that will help us succeed in our most important relationships.

Of course, none of the readers of this book make any of these mistakes! But sometimes your parents may have had these mistaken attitudes, and you think that you won't repeat the mistake; you know it's a mistake, and you're ready to do the exact opposite – but sometimes the opposite of a mistaken attitude is another mistaken attitude! There are mistakes at both extremes, and one must know how to find the right balance.

And so we come to our list of errors:

#1 — Marriage is about enjoyment and pleasure.

#2 — There's no pleasure in marriage; it's just something you have to do.

#3 — You can change your spouse, provided that you work hard enough.

#4 — You cannot change your spouse, no matter what.

#5 — You and your spouse are intertwined; you're one.

#6 — You and your spouse are two separate beings.

#7 — You don't need your spouse in order to be happy.

#8 — There is no way that you can be happy without your spouse.

#9 — You should really expect a lot; marriage can be great!

#10 — It doesn't pay to expect anything; marriage is a disaster.

Now that we've made our list, let's go through it, taking the phrases one at a time. We'll try to point out the error in each one of these phrases and how people are negatively affected as a result.

1. Marriage is about enjoyment; marriage is about pleasure.

When people are young and immature, much of their thinking about whom they marry and what they are looking for in marriage revolves around thoughts of enjoyment and pleasure. Much of the initial attraction to one another, known as "infatuation," is simply getting caught up in the moment and seeing how enjoyable the relationship seems.

It's wonderful when people enjoy themselves and when couples enjoy each other's company, but the problem arises when they assume that this is what it's all about, and that this is how it will remain long-term.

That assumption is unrealistic: life comes with challenges, and even the best relationships hit bumps in the road. We definitely need to have a better picture of the purpose of marriage in order to get it right. Marriage is so much bigger than fleeting sensual pleasure. Building a home, having a soulmate with whom we can share a life journey, passing on that which is important to us to future generations, and so much more, are definitely the truly important components of marriage and married life. Without higher motives, no marriage will really be successful.

When there is a bigger picture and a higher cause that we can both be dedicated to together, then we have the glue that will hold us together with happiness and contentment. Fun and enjoyment are simply trivial in contrast to the real stuff. Moreover, the people who are just looking for fun are usually not genuine in their love and caring, and are just in it for their personal gain, which actually runs directly counter to truly enjoying oneself in the first place.

All that, however, is in regard to what often seems like fun and enjoyment. Real fun and real enjoyment are something else entirely, as we shall soon see.

2. Marriage is just something you have to do; there's no pleasure in it.

As life goes on, people sometimes assume that if their marriage is not enjoyable, maybe that's just how it should be. Maybe nobody really enjoys married life. We get married because everyone does, because we have to, or because we were told to. But life would definitely be much better and more enjoyable had we not gotten ourselves into a long-term relationship. Like a wise man once said: "All marriages are happy. It's the living together afterward that causes all the trouble."

It's such a shame when people have difficulties in marriage, and they say: "That's what married life is about." We sometimes come away feeling that marriage is the worst part of life, when in fact, according to the gemara, it is חיים, טובה, and ברכה: "Life, goodness, and blessing."

While the point of marriage is not necessarily to have fun, a healthy marriage can and should be quite fun and enjoyable. There is nothing wrong with looking to enjoy married life in a healthy way. That's why it's sad when people can't find the enjoyable aspect in their relationship. Just relating to one another in a healthy way, with shared motives and mature goals, can be a very rewarding and enjoyable experience.

There is a thrill in feeling true connection. There is something exhilarating and so enjoyable in a fulfilling relationship. If it weren't that way, then almost no relationship would be better than being

single, because being in a full-time commitment to another person will automatically limit how much you can focus on serving yourself. And that's why those who are in healthy relationships understand that being single and alone is torture compared to the excitement life has to offer when happily married.

I've seen many people who think that achieving more fun, pleasure, and spunk will make them happier, but they never achieved that happiness because they were never connected with their spouse, and therefore never really learned or experienced what true enjoyment is about.

If your marriage is anything less than happiness, it's time to invest more. If you think being married is simply the alternative to divorce, then you're really not cashing in enough on what marriage can give.

To sum it up: The goal of marriage is not "fun." Yet the absence of fun is a telling sign that something is wrong. Focusing on the true purpose of life and marriage should bring you long-term happiness and joy.

3. You can change your spouse, provided that you work hard enough.

Some people create a picture of their ideal spouse in their minds, and then spend the rest of their lives trying to mold their spouse into that picture. They spend so much energy on this. People are obsessed with thoughts such as "If only I could get him to…," or "If only she would…." So much time is spent on trying to find a way to reach that final destination.

And if you're a bit savvier, you do it in a way that sounds justified: your only motive is to help your spouse live a better life. But at the end of the day, when we look past all the justifications, you're just trying to change this person into someone she is not. This is an error; you cannot change someone's nature.

You can't change anyone. People are who they are, and if any changes in them are possible, those changes must come of their own volition. I don't know how many people have tried changing you, but I think you will definitely relate to the fact that any significant changes in your life came from within.

This inability to change others is especially true when you are trying to change your spouse's personality. A person's core personality doesn't change at all. [You can read more about this in my book How to Get Along With Everyone, Feldheim, 2018.] If you cannot accept that your spouse is not exactly what you wanted, then you may be in for a lot of difficulty and disappointment for many years to come. This is actually the reason many people end up divorcing: it finally hits them that they are "stuck" for life.

The good news is that there is so much you can accept and make peace with. Acceptance may be the number one ingredient in making any relationship succeed. The fact that you married someone whom you find to be less than perfect simply means that you found a human being. If you were fooling yourself into thinking that you'll marry somebody with zero flaws, it's time to wake up and smell the sour milk in your coffee!

Acceptance doesn't mean that you agree to suffer or that you must settle for less. Rather, acceptance means that you are ready to see the good that already exists and to see past your unrealistic expectations. One store owner hung a sign in his front window: "If you don't find what you're looking for, lower your expectations." Sometimes you come to the realization that what you were expecting or hoping for all along simply doesn't exist.

For some people, acceptance is the greatest challenge. It means giving up on what's most important to them. Sometimes we just don't want to acknowledge that something is out of reach; it's just too "essential" to give up on.

There's an old adage: "Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." What is this wisdom? What are the things that I cannot change, and what are the things I can? The answer may be that it depends on whether you're trying to change yourself or trying to change someone else. You can change yourself, but you can't change anyone else.

I once saw the results of a study which involved couples who had been married for many years. When asked what the key to success was, the response was generally, "We focus on each other's positive attributes." The initial phase of "love" eventually subsides, and then you start noticing the little things that annoy you. When this happens, you can either sweat the small stuff or you can choose to overlook it.

Choosing is key here. And it's not merely a one-time choice; rather, you must make that positive choice every single day.

It's unfortunate to see people who are looking for something largely unrealistic: someone who is "better," who will accommodate all of their needs and wishes. It's important to know what the truly important qualities in a potential spouse are and what can be overlooked and accepted. Knowing what can be overlooked is important even once you're already in a relationship. It's not about giving up on your happiness. It's about acquiring skills to accept the challenges of a relationship and to work on them. These necessary skills include learning how to accommodate what you can't change in your partner.

One last thing: Never assume that if only your partner loved you, they would change in order to accommodate you. Challenging and questioning somebody's feelings for you based on their difficulty in making a certain change is both unfair and damaging to the relationship.

4. You cannot change your spouse.

We just explained at length the great mistake of the spouse who thinks he can change his wife. So how can I now say that it's a mistake to think that you cannot get your spouse to change? Hasn't that been our subject for the last few pages? So I'll repeat: you cannot change your spouse. But you can definitely get your spouse to change. Did you catch the difference? It is not possible for a wife to change her husband, but חכמת נשים בנתה ביתה: in a subtle way, she can influence him to change of his own volition.

And ironically, one of the best ways to effect change is by accepting your spouse the way she is. The more comfortable she feels with you, the more she will look to accommodate you. If you're happy with your husband and regularly let him know, he will seek to please you even more.

Don't worry, your spouse knows exactly what you want. Either because you've previously made the mistake of demanding it or because you are close enough for her to feel it.

Actually, there's nothing wrong with saying: "It would really mean a lot to me if you..." "I know it's not easy, and you don't have to, but..." Speaking like that can be very effective! When you express yourself in a nice way, in a tone of voice that is neither judgmental nor demanding, you can achieve results.

In most cases, there is a way to get someone to make a change. If what you want is reasonable and your request is worded nicely, you have quite a fair chance of succeeding. And if you can't come up with the wording on your own, reach out to somebody who can help you see how realistic your request is and what the best way to word it would be.

The less challenging your tone and your underlying message, the more effective it will be. But remember, people don't generally change on the spot. You want to give a message that is healthy enough and resonates enough for them to know exactly what you want, while still giving them the feeling that you have all the patience that is necessary for them to make that change.

If you get the other person to believe that they are already fulfilling all that you expect from them, they will strive to please you even more. But if your message is that they are not living up to your expectations, you can be sure that they will continue to do that even more.

Let's just be clear about the fact that any changes you request must be realistic, and your husband must understand and agree with them, if only intellectually. Then, once he is loaded with appreciation and compliments, as well as your confidence in his capabilities and the total absence of criticism or condescension – change is definitely possible.

Let me end off with a quote that I hope we can try to disprove: "Men marry women with the hope they will never change. Women marry men with the hope they will change. Invariably, they are both disappointed." While I hate blanket "Men – Women" statements – I believe most of them to be myths – I think it's safe to say that those who marry with the intention of changing the other person, or those who marry with the notion that the other person will never change, will ultimately be proven wrong. Learn to have normal expectations along with the right tools, and you and your spouse can really attain happiness.

To sum it up: You cannot change anyone but yourself, while you can accept others. By so doing, you may be enabling them to make changes in a healthy way.

5. You and your spouse are intertwined; you're one.

One of the biggest mistakes people make is assuming that after marriage they become one with their spouse. Taken literally, this means: from now on we make all decisions together, we enjoy the same flavor of ice cream, and we read each other's minds. Or at least, you read mine, that is.

This mistake has caused tremendous grief in marriages. When people later realize that their spouse is, in fact, independent, with a mind of her own, they sometimes get hurt and try to fight back. (Ironically, it is specifically these people who don't see the importance of consulting with their spouse when they come to a decision or conclusion.) No two people ever became one. If they really were one, then there would be no reason for Hashem to have created both of them.

Aside from the unrealistic expectations that come along with this misconception, in reality, we should want our differences! The very fact that we are different from each other is what strengthens us in our marriage. It is specifically my strength versus your weakness and your strength versus my weakness that complete us both. Nobody is complete on their own, and that is why we need someone else, an עזר כנגדו, to help us complete ourselves.

We've already discussed the concept of "Mine, Yours, and Ours" (see chapter 6). In every healthy relationship, the M.Y.O. must be clear and spelled out. That which belongs to Me, where I make the decisions. That which belongs to You, where you're making the decisions. And what pertains to both of us, where neither of us should be dominating or controlling in any way. When these boundaries are clear, two people can live in peace and harmony, taking each other into account. When they're not clear, there will always be confusion.

So if you're assuming that because you are married, you and your spouse must share an opinion, a taste, or a hobby, you're in for trouble. Not only are you wrong to think that your spouse must follow you in everything, but even if you think that for some reason you should be the martyr and become your spouse's clone— you're making just as big of a mistake. Not only is it unnecessary and unhealthy; it's actually unrealistic and impossible! That's not what being an isha ksheira means, nor is it what being a nice husband means. And besides being wrong, it's bound to hurt you in the future.

So many people have made the mistake of assuming that they must merge with their spouse's mindset, and sometimes they're even taught that that's what's correct and proper. But the fact remains that when you have such expectations, somebody will end up being hurt. Constant togetherness is fine… for Siamese twins.

On this subject, it is important to note that this mistaken "oneness attitude" often leads people to think that their spouse should be able to read their mind. It would be very convenient if your husband intuitively understood every time something bothered you, without you having to lower your dignity and express it. It would be amazing to be married to a mind-reader, wouldn't it? No! It wouldn't. Would you really want your spouse to know everything you're thinking? Or only to know the things that you want him to do for you without having to ask? Well, you can't have part of it; it's either all, because you married a malach, or none, because you married a human being.

So remember: you can be two separate people and be happily married. You can even be involved in an ongoing dispute and still be happily married! As a matter of fact, the ultimate test of a relationship is to disagree while holding hands.

Another thing: it's not only that you can't become one; you should actually allow each other to be independent and look for ways to encourage independence. This will help you be healthy individuals who can relate to one another successfully. People are like flowers, and everyone needs their own water and sunlight. No one can grow in the shade.

6. You and your spouse are completely separate beings.

"Well, okay," you're thinking, "So we really are just two human beings; we're only roommates. I guess technically we are in some type of long-term bond together, but what does it really demand of each of us? Could we both go our own ways and 'come to the table' only when we get involved in something that takes two?"

If that's what you think, you may only find yourself really relating to your spouse when it comes to something that actually does "take two," namely—a fight! Wouldn't it be a shame to waste your relationship on fighting? You can fight with anyone; you don't need to be married to him to do that!

So what is the proper attitude with regard to this whole "oneness" aspect of marriage? The answer is this: If you think that you must be doing something, saying something, or thinking something, simply because that's what your spouse is saying, doing, thinking, or even demanding, that's a mistake. But if you possess that special feeling of unity and love, which really is the basis of marriage; if you're feeling love for your spouse and you really want to accommodate that person whom you love; if you earnestly wouldn't want to disregard that person's feelings or opinions in any way, then that's great. That's a loving marriage.

What you're looking to accomplish in marriage is to reach a point where your feelings give you the desire to accommodate the other person. This may not always come naturally right away, and it's fine if it takes work to get there. If you haven't yet reached that point, don't sit back and relax and say, "Well, I didn't get there"; rather, ask yourself: "What can I do to get there?" "Maybe being more accommodating will actually bring me there." Being flexible and reaching out toward your spouse, looking to unite in whatever manner possible, may actually bring you to a feeling of closeness. You will then naturally be inclined to accommodate your spouse.

I often counsel young men who tell me that their wives complain that they think only of themselves. So I ask them, "Is it true? Do you really think only of yourself?" There is a big difference between thinking "only of yourself" and thereby disregarding your spouse, and thinking "first of yourself" and "at the same time" of your spouse. Let me explain the difference.

If it bothers you that your spouse wants something different from what you want, and you're deducing from that that he is thinking only of himself, you're making a big mistake. He could be thinking of you as well, but still have an opinion of his own. Is he not entitled to his own wishes? Maybe you're suffering from mistake #5, thinking that you became one. Interestingly, you didn't come to the conclusion that you should want what he wants; rather, you concluded that he should want what you want. But in any case, it's a mistake. Your spouse is allowed to have an opinion and a desire, and at least in some cases, it's fine for him to take himself seriously as well. And it's fine to tell your spouse, "I love you and I care for you, but I'll admit that I love and care for myself as well." Remember, you don't become a malach just because you're in a relationship.

However, if you do actually disregard your spouse and accommodate someone else before them, or you just don't take their opinion and feelings into account at all when making your decision, that's just as big a mistake.

The guidelines here are very tricky, so let me give an example. Let's say your husband has relatives whom you're not really close to. It's hard for you to attend the simchas of this particular family. You don't know anyone, you have to work very hard to get dressed, it's hard to find a babysitter, and these simchas always shlep until very late; you get the picture. Now what should you do? Just shrugging and telling your husband, "Well, you could go; I don't mind," is not an option. He's your husband; it's your family too! But then again, to go against your wishes and feel resentful because of it is also not healthy.

So, if you're in a relationship and you want to make it work, you have to be a little selfless at times. You don't have to, and certainly not always, but you shouldn't avoid it or despise it either.

One more point on this one: if you are "one," there is no giving and taking. This is terrible; it's disastrous for a relationship. So often a spouse will neglect doing a favor, giving a compliment, or showing

appreciation, all with the excuse: "Of course, you did it for yourself; I don't need it anyway." Giving and taking are so healthy in a relationship. Yes, you are two people, and you really need each other.

For someone to be a 'brother,' there need to be two people. So too, it takes two people, giving, taking, and interacting in a healthy and intimate way, to create a happy couple. And part of what makes a couple into "one," and a happy one, is actually noticing how similar you are and how much you do already have in common, instead of focusing on where you differ.

To sum it up: You are two separate people, each with a mind of his or her own, in one marriage. You are looking to understand yourself and take yourself seriously, while also considering and accommodating your spouse willingly.

7. You don't need your spouse in order to be happy.

You may be beginning to notice that getting it right in marriage is not so simple. It doesn't have to be difficult, and not everyone bumps into challenging situations, but very often getting things right in marriage takes thought and effort. This is what sometimes leads people to think: "This is so difficult; who needs this?" All of a sudden, the old joke begins to make sense to you: "A wedding is a funeral where you smell your own flowers." "Who needs to put so much effort into a relationship and deal with so much difficulty because of it? I can just make myself happy with my friends and my hobbies; there's no point to this."

There are people who do this on a subconscious level. And then there are those who actually make a conscious decision to stick with the marriage rather than divorcing, while making "a life for themselves."

If you're struggling with this question, you can look around and notice that you'll rarely see older singles who are truly happy. And the reason is not because they're in a society where everyone gets married, and so they're social misfits. No, Hashem made us in a way that we need marriage. Isolation never made anyone happy. We are incomplete until we find a soulmate. Without somebody who can complete us, we will never reach true happiness. So yes, being married is about enjoyment and pleasure, which are unattainable when one is not happily married. Yeah, you can find "cotton candy"; you might find something that will give you fleeting pleasure, but only marriage will truly satisfy your soul.

Kim Clark, the former Dean of Harvard Business School, made the following remark during a commencement address to a graduating class. He said: "There will be no more secure foundation in your life, than a home that is full of life and love. Conversely, you will find no success in business that can compensate for failure in the home. But there is no success without investment. That's another lesson I'm sure you learned. If you are going to be successful, you have to invest. So I encourage you to invest first at home and to think of this as by far your most important investment. Indeed, I believe that the most important work that you do in your lives will be within the walls of your own home."

I want to highlight two things about Mr. Clark's comments. First, take note that they come from the Dean of Harvard Business School. He wasn't addressing a group of bleeding-heart liberals or a graduating class of future social workers. Mr. Clark was addressing the best and brightest in the world. He was addressing the future CEOs of corporate America. He was addressing the next generation of millionaires. And his primary message was: Invest in your home first!

Second, remember what you're reading now: You cannot make yourself happy. What a mistake to make! If you are married, the state of your marriage and relationship will dictate the state of your happiness. You can try to distract yourself with other things, you can try to enjoy life, you can try to find yourself in enjoyable and easier environments, but at the end of the day, you will not really be happy.

Chazal teach us, או חברותא או מיתותא. This doesn't only mean that you need to have a partner; it has to be somebody who is a Chavrusa, somebody you are connected to. Don't ignore it. I remember how Rabbi Avichai Cohen said it at last year's Keiravtuni with tears in his eyes: "Don't take your marriages lightly; everything depends on it." So yes, if you want true enjoyment in life, you must look to your marriage.

I once heard a good quote: "A bad relationship will make you feel more alone than when you were single." It's not only about feeling lonely; it's about being unhappy at your core. Marriage is a state of being, and it really does define your being. Don't look for happiness elsewhere; you will not find it. So many people are looking for it elsewhere and end up miserable. They blame the misery on their situation, but they don't realize that they are missing something essential that other people or things cannot give. They're missing "completion"; a single is only half a being. You can't be happy if you're not complete.

You know what people say: "A man is incomplete until he has married; then he's finished!" It's perhaps a funny joke, but it's not true. Yes, if you go into marriage without seeking perfection of character and completion, then yes, you're finished. But if you have the right attitudes, you come closer to completing yourself and fulfilling the will of Hashem.

One more thing: Not only must you be married in order to be happy, you must make sure that every part of what Hashem included in marriage is there so that you can be truly happy. Don't assume that you can do without any essential component of marriage (see chapter 8 for more on this subject).

8. There is no way that you can be happy without your spouse.

Assuming that it is your spouse's responsibility to make you happy, and becoming codependent, is at least as damaging as the previous mistake. We've already explained that you cannot make yourself happy; you need to be "complete" before you can find happiness. So it is certainly understandable that your spouse cannot make both himself and you happy on his own.

So many people make the mistake of blaming their spouse for their own unhappiness. While it is true that a healthy relationship is necessary in order to be happy, it doesn't mean that it's your spouse's responsibility to make you happy. Don't blame anyone for your unhappiness. See what you can add to the marriage, and let the marriage itself bring you happiness.

In general, don't throw the blame on someone else. Always learn to look inward and see what it is that you can do to improve your relationship. Again, this doesn't mean that you are responsible, or that it's all about you – but that is exactly what you should not be expecting from your spouse either.

Always look at your own side first. It takes two to create unhappiness. Not that both are responsible for the situation, but it still takes two. Even if you are 100% right about the difficulty arising in your relationship, chances are that if you're involved, you have what it takes to resolve it.

It's not about being responsible or feeling guilty; it's about learning what it is that you can do to improve the situation you are involved in. Sometimes, it's actually about enabling your partner to better herself as well. So much of finding happiness in your relationships is really in your court—at least 50%. Reach out and speak to someone who may have an objective perspective on what you can do – and refrain from busying yourself with being right.

To sum it up: You cannot make yourself happy in life without the element of a healthy marriage. But neither can your spouse "make you" happy. You make yourself happy by being happily married.

9. You should really expect a lot; marriage is great!

One of the common mistakes people make is assuming that marriage is pure bliss and the ultimate pleasure. I hear this often from newlyweds, who joke about how so many people seem to be miserable, but they really got it right! Nothing could be better than their marriage. While it's so encouraging to hear that, it's a shame that you unfortunately only hear it from people who have been married for about three days.

There definitely are many people who are constantly miserable, not because anything terrible is going on in their life, but because it's just not good enough; there's still room for improvement! First of all, there will always be room for improvement in your relationships. I found it very encouraging to receive an email the other day thanking me for my classes. The writer was saying that although all is good in their relationship, they came to realize how much more can be achieved and how their relationship can be deepened even more.

Such an attitude is wonderful and very true as well. But if knowing that things can always be better makes you feel depressed and leaves you feeling that you haven't achieved enough, then there's something wrong.

Aiming for the top doesn't mean being unhappy until you reach the top, especially when the "tops" aren't clearly defined. Life is real, and we are not robots. There are ups and downs, and relationships can always be worked on. So if thinking big and expecting a lot makes you less happy with what you have achieved, it may be time to lower your expectations. It's not that the goal of a perfect marriage is wrong; it is simply working against you.

Moreover, it's important to remember that, unfortunately, many people do have unrealistic expectations. This could be a result of mistake #5—hoping that we will reach a point where we are both one, meaning that you will blend into me, understand me, and serve me, me, me, me. Another source of unrealistic expectations may be seeing other couples and assuming that they never have downs.

Whatever the source of these expectations, we should probably say, "Make sure not to expect anything unreasonable." But how is one to know what is really reasonable? On the outside, it definitely looks like other people are living in paradise, so why shouldn't I be there too?

At some point, it's good to realize that whatever it is that you've been expecting, whatever you were striving for, may be somewhat out of reach. Life doesn't have to be mediocre, but life is life, and in this world happiness is never 100%.

So much of living happily together with someone else has to do with knowing what to overlook. As someone cleverly put it: "Keep your eyes open before marriage, but half-shut afterwards."

10. It doesn't pay to expect anything; marriage is a disaster.

People who've been married for more than three days, on the other hand, sometimes tend to give up. "I'm never going to make it," they think. This could be either because of their own unfortunate and negative experiences or because of the troubles they witnessed in other people's marriages. At some point, they decide to throw in the towel and say, "It is what it is; as long as it's not terrible, I'm okay."

In order to reach any goal, there must be strong aspirations. A regular subway commuter once thought that he had already heard every possible kind of solicitation from panhandlers: "Can you spare some change?" "Can you help me buy a cup of coffee?" But then one day he heard something new when someone approached him and said: "Excuse me, sir. Can you help me out? I'm trying to collect $1,000 before the next stop." He looked at him and said, "That's very ambitious," and the guy answered, "Hey, man, you gotta think big."

Just like with any other goal in life, if you want to succeed, "you gotta think big." Thinking big doesn't mean that you'll be unhappy. It means constantly striving for more. It means that no matter what you've done in the past, there's probably even more that you can do to make your life, your marriage, and your home an even happier place. As the saying goes: A relationship is like a shark. It has to keep moving forward or it dies.

And striving for more should never ever be a contradiction to seeing the good that already exists. As a matter of fact, sometimes the best move you can make is noticing the good that is already there. It's so sad to see people looking for something that is already there to a large degree. You know the famous story of the man who dreamed about a faraway treasure that was really hidden in his own cellar!

Stop looking and dreaming. Your dreams are often right under your nose.

To sum it up: Always strive for more, and never think that it can't get better, but don't be unhappy with what you already have. Very often the best move is simply noticing all the good that's already there.