

What would happen if you bought a package of seeds but never planted them? What would happen if you planted the seeds and then neglected them?

Just like seeds, relationship skills and knowledge won't help you form and sustain a healthy marriage until you **APPLY** them.

How often have you learned about a change that could improve your life but never made it? Even if you begin to make the change, how often do you fail to stick with it long enough to receive all the benefits? For most people, this happens more often than they would care to admit.

Our natural tendency is to take the path of least resistance. This often means choosing not to spend time and effort making positive changes that will improve our lives. Why are some people able to overcome these tendencies and others are not? Given the right tools and good information, the difference between those who reach their goals and those who don't is **persistence**.

Why are some couples able to form healthy marriages while so many others are not? **ALL** couples encounter obstacles in their marriages. Those who persist in doing the things that will strengthen their marriages are the couples who succeed in forming and sustaining healthy marriages.

How do you develop persistence? To answer this question, you must first understand what powers persistence.

Persistence is like an engine and motivation is the fuel. The two main sources of motivational fuel that power the engine of persistence are external and internal. External sources include rewards and fear. Internal sources include willpower and love. External sources produce quick bursts of power, but the extra power only lasts for a short amount of time. Another drawback of external sources is the increasing amount of fuel needed each time in order to produce the same results. One example of this principle is to think back to when you were a small child. How much work were you willing to do for a dollar? How long would you continue working if your current salary was dropped to a dollar per hour?

You can use rewards to get your persistence engine running, but as quickly as possible you should switch over to an internal source of motivational fuel. The advantage of internal sources like willpower and love, is you end up with more fuel than when you began. In essence, love and willpower become a perpetual source of fuel. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, *"That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing itself is changed, but that our power to do is increased"*. People who maintain positive changes fuel their persistence engine with internal motivational fuels.

Another key to success is to track the performance of your persistence engine until you have formed a habit. We have developed a tool called a Track It To Habit Log TM to help you accomplish this. You can print the log at www.healthymarriage.org/habitlog.htm

If you want a healthy marriage, you also need to have a plan. If you live in New York City and want to visit the Grand Canyon, then one method is to jump in a car and start driving. More than likely you will waste a lot of time and money because you haven't taken the time to do some research and create a driving plan. As silly as this method sounds, many couples do this when they get married. They pay tens of thousands of dollars and spend hundreds of hours preparing for the wedding but do little to learn how to form and sustain a healthy marriage.

No matter where you are in your marital journey, taking the time to learn the basic relationship skills and knowledge will significantly increase your chances of a smoother and happier journey.

As you learn healthy relationship skills, write down a plan on how you will apply them in your marriage. We have developed a tool called Strengthening My Marriage Plan to help you accomplish this. You can print a plan at healthymarriage.org/myplan.htm To keep your marriage healthy, you will need to refer to your plan often and modify it as you encounter the inevitable challenges of marriage.

If you want a healthy marriage, then you have to persist in applying the skills and knowledge that can help you form and sustain a healthy marriage. Don't allow anything or anyone, including yourself, to keep you from persisting in strengthening your marriage.

Action Plan

1. Read the other topics in this series by going to www.healthymarriage.org
2. Take a marriage education class. For a list of classes near you, go to www.smartmarriages.com
3. Fill out your *Strengthening My Marriage Plan*.
4. Choose a specific relationship skill to work on and use the *Track It To Habit Log™*
5. Make a commitment to persist and not give up when times get hard.

No marriage is healthy all of the time. However, there are marriages that are healthy most of the time. When you find your marriage has become unhealthy, ask yourself “What can I do to help my marriage become healthy again?” Don't ever wait for your spouse to take the first step to heal your marriage. Do what **YOU** need to do and **DO IT NOW!!!** The sooner you take action and apply what you have learned, the sooner your marriage can heal.

There are some things that should never be tolerated in marriage. Domestic violence is one of them. If you are a victim of domestic violence, please contact a professional immediately.

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Did you know on average, children, women, men and communities do better on every positive social outcome such as physical and emotional health, education, safety, financial, etc., when a couple has a healthy marriage?

All couples want a healthy and happy marriage. Many couples have been able to figure out through years of trial and error what it takes to form and sustain a healthy marriage. By studying these couples, researchers have identified the relationship skills and knowledge used to keep marriages healthy.

This pamphlet is part of the research-based Healthy Marriage Pamphlet Series which is designed to teach the relationship skills and knowledge to help couples form and sustain healthy marriages.

We need your help distributing these pamphlets. Feel free to photocopy this pamphlet, or visit www.healthymarriage.org to download and print the other topics in this series.

Marriage

Increase the Joy
Decrease the Misery



Persistence

A Key to Unlocking the Door to
a Healthy and Happy Marriage