



10 Things Every Happy Marriage Has in Common

By [Redbook](#) | [Love + Sex](#) – Wed, 30 Jul, 2014 10:14 AM EDT

Read and learn. By Christine Coppa, REDBOOK.



They don't care who makes more money

Today, 28 percent of married American women earn more money than their partners, according to an analysis of Census Bureau data by *USA Today*. That can be difficult for some men--and women--to accept, but if it's your reality, there are several ways you can make the situation work for your marriage. Start by taking a deep breath, sitting down together, and closely examining where you're at, especially if your husband is in between jobs. "You have a marriage, a family, and at least one income to help get through a tough time--and this too shall pass," says relationship expert Paulette Kouffman Sherman, Ph.D. It sounds cheesy, but affirmations can also help. For example, "We are a team, and right now, I am helping us thrive. Other times, he's done that. And we will continue to support one other."

Related: [8 Little Things Happily Married Couples Do Every Day](#)

They share at least one hobby

Matt Coppolecchia, 38, and his wife of 10 years, Andrea, run, bike, and compete in races together. "My wife is my main support crew," he says. "The fact that she understands how much time I need to dedicate to training for Ironmans makes it easier for me to hit my goals." You may not be into crawling over coals during a Spartan race, but if that's something your husband can fit in without sacrificing too much time with you and the kids, it's worth encouraging him. And if you can find something that takes into account both of your passions--say, a wine-tasting class or doing CrossFit--even better. "Sharing pleasurable activities releases dopamine, the feel-good chemical in the brain," says Laurie Puhn, couples mediator and author of *Fight Less, Love More: 5-Minute Conversations to Change Your Relationship Without Blowing Up or Giving In*.

They're cool with spending time apart

Go ahead and schedule that girls' night out--and encourage your husband to plan some alone time with his friends, too. "Just because you get married doesn't mean your world has to collapse in on the two of you," says April Masini, author of *Think & Date Like A Man*. In fact, keeping the rest of your life and relationships going is just as important as any lingerie collection or bikini wax, she says. "My wife knew she was marrying a huge New York Rangers fan, so when I cut out to go to games with my older brother, she never gets on my case," says Joey Catalano, 32. "I show her the same respect when she hangs out with her girlfriends. Plus, it's nice to know there's someone to come home to."

They figure out the best ways to split up chores

A study from the University of Illinois found that an uneven division of household chores negatively affected wives' marital satisfaction, but the same didn't hold true for husbands. That's because men view chores as a way to help out, whereas women tend to consider them as part of a second shift, says Leah Klungness, Ph.D. "From his perspective, the dishes either got washed or not--he's not keeping score, and it simply doesn't register as important." Because sharing domestic duties generally signals that you're in a respectful partnership, Andrea Syrtash, author of *Cheat On Your Husband (With Your Husband)*, suggests focusing more on supporting your husband and less on an even split. "Happy couples are there for one another, so if one of you has a rough week, taking over garbage duty is a good reminder that you're on the same team."

Related: [The Ultimate Happy-Marriage Checklist](#)

They have sex, even if they aren't raring to go

If you think scheduling sex will make it as boring as crossing something off your to-do list, think again. "It gives you something to look forward to," says dating and relationship expert Barbie Adler. "Even if you had a frazzled day, intimacy will bond you." And it doesn't have to be a long, drawn-out affair. To make sex feel fun--and decidedly less like a chore--pick a non-dirty, silly code phrase like, "I'm craving tacos." That way, you can bring it up in front of friends, and hey, even over family dinner. Sexual or not, sharing an inside joke with your husband feels fun, special, and almost childlike--in a good way.

They touch each other every day

And it doesn't have to be between the sheets. "Of all our senses, touch is the only one that develops while we are still in the womb," says Ava Cadell, author of *NeuroLoveology: The Power to Mindful Love and Sex*. "It's also the only sense that utilizes the entire body, from head to toe." That's why Ed Nazarko, 36, initiates hand-holding with his wife of nine years all the time. "It's the easiest G-rated way to connect with my wife at any given moment." Or share a kiss--a man transfers testosterone to his partner's mouth when they lock lips for at least 10 seconds. Plus a new study found that touching one another boosts men's level of oxytocin, which has been linked to pair bonding.

They have a video game strategy

A Brigham Young University study found that couples reported lower marital satisfaction when one spouse's gaming interfered with routines. Seventy-five percent of women married to gamers wished their husbands would put as much effort into their relationship as they do zapping aliens and scoring imaginary touchdowns. But interestingly, of those couples that gamed together, 76 percent reported that the activity was good for their marriage. It doesn't have to be Call of Duty, but there's a whole world of Wii Sports out there.

Related: [10 Things Men Love to Hear in Bed](#)

They respect one another's fighting styles

Everyone bickers, whether it's over leaving a gob of toothpaste in the sink every damn day or an ongoing conflict with your in-laws. And although it can be uncomfortable, it's important to feel your feelings and voice your opinions, even if it comes off as confrontational. According to a study by a Baylor University psychologist, getting defensive and red-faced during a substantial argument isn't always a bad thing, because it can prompt a bigger, more satisfying resolution. "Honor one another's fighting style," says Adler. If your husband prefers some alone time to think before attacking an issue, it's important to give it to him--even if it makes you a little uncomfortable. And to make sure things don't get ugly, decide on a safe word that, when called out, requires both of you to take a moment to cool off.

They want to be healthy

There's no need to nag, but you should keep one another in check when it comes to your overall health--even if it means

putting both of your vitamins in days-of-the-week cases or suggesting an after-dinner walk. According to a study conducted at the University of Chicago, wives whose husbands were in poor physical health reported higher levels of marital conflict than those whose husbands were in good health. The study also found that the burden of caring for a sick spouse is more burdensome to wives than to husbands, because women are more likely to jump into a caretaker role.

They forego social media

According to a new study published in *Computers in Human Behavior*, all that time posting status updates and chatting with long-lost friends on social media can ruin a marriage. Researchers found that in states where 20 percent more people were on Facebook, the divorce rate was about 2 percent higher, even when adjusted for other variables like age, race, and employment status. And in examining data from a 2011 study of married 18- to 39-year-olds, they found that those who didn't use social media reported being 11.4 percent happier in their marriages than heavy users. If you're not ready to give up your news feed, be open with your husband about what you're up to so he doesn't, say, read too much into your being tagged in a touchy #TBT photo.

More from REDBOOK

10 Things He Wishes You Wouldn't Take So Seriously

Foreplay Moves All Men Secretly Crave

The Top 6 Things That Make Men Resentful

7 Ways to Avoid Becoming His Mom