

How to Cultivate a Marriage That Will Help Your Child Succeed

According to psychologists Philip and Carolyn Cowan, [there are a few well-researched](#), but often overlooked aspects to ensuring solid development in a child's life.

The Cowans, both professors emeriti from UC Berkeley, explain that the first crucial component is the positive involvement of a father in the life of the child. The second, however, is related to the relationship between the father and mother. According to the Cowans:

"We now know that the quality of the relationship between two parents makes a big difference in how children manage their lives.

If parents collaborate effectively and don't undermine each other's parenting, children do better – socially, emotionally, behaviourally and academically. They don't become preoccupied with worry about parental tensions, which leaves them free to explore their own worlds and learn new things. In contrast, it undermines child development if parents cannot manage differences of opinion without aggression or moving into a silent, 'we're not talking to each other' pattern; they become anxious or fearful and find it difficult to concentrate on learning new things."

The trouble is, marriage isn't as easy to navigate as many think, a fact evidenced by divorce affecting between [40 to 50 percent](#) of couples.

So if we want the best for our children, how do we avoid those divorce statistics and foster a healthy relationship between

husband and wife?

Noah Webster had insight into that question. In his *American Spelling Book*, Webster [laid out](#) some pithy advice for men and women on having a healthy, happy marriage.

Addressing husbands first, Webster offered these tips:

- **Show Kindness.** Wives, Webster noted should be treated not only with respect, but with tenderness as well.
- **Exercise Sensitivity.** Rather than have a continual critical spirit, Webster advised husbands to do any correcting in a gentle manner.
- **Be Open.** Men are often perceived as less willing than women to open up and share what's on their hearts. Likely knowing that communication is crucial to a marriage, Webster advised husbands to "give up thy heart to her in confidence."
- **Be a Good Listener.** Because women also need a chance to share their hearts, Webster hints that men must be good listeners, ready to "alleviate" the cares that a wife needs to vent.

Women, on the other hand, were advised as follows:

- **Be Respectful.** Webster encouraged women to pursue harmony in the home, particularly avoiding stubbornness and unreasonableness when interacting with their husbands.
- **Build Him Up.** "Study to make him respectable," exhorts Webster. Such a practice, he notes, will not only be beneficial to husbands, but to wives as well.
- **Be Blind.** In the close connection of marriage, it's easy to only see flaws and share them with the world. Webster suggested wives do the opposite, highlighting the good about their husbands instead.

- **Invest Time.** Webster encourages wives to spend time learning more about their husbands and the ways in which they can strengthen and improve the “dear pledges of thy love.”

And last but not least, Webster encourages both husbands and wives to be faithful and constant in their love for one another. Unfortunately, that’s not something we hear these days. Instead, many are told to “follow your heart” and get out of a marriage if it’s not going well.

Do we need to reconsider such attitudes? Would we see more well-adjusted children – and husbands and wives – if we put Webster’s ideas into practice once again?

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