6 Proven New Year’s Resolutions

That Every Couple Will Want to Make

**1. Watch your tone.**

Full disclosure, this is one my husband and I really struggle with. Oftentimes we’ll be asking a simple question or making a harmless comment, but those words quickly become fightin’ words when the tone is snippy, sarcastic, or agitated. He thinks I’m too sensitive. I think he’s too passionately Italian. All too often, the tone of voice can be the difference between a fight or hurt feelings and civil, constructive conversation. In fact, according to research done by the University of Southern California, tone of voice is a massive factor in marital satisfaction. So, for 2018, try to lead with love and respect when it comes to your tone of voice as you communicate day to day with your spouse. After all, it’s not what you say, it’s how you say it. You love each other, so you may as well speak like it!

**2. Make your chore chart work for you both.**

Do you ever find yourself resenting doing all the cooking or being the only one who ever folds the laundry? When weekly household tasks aren’t appropriately divided in a marriage, resentment can build up fast. It’s easy to lose yourself in the weekly grind and make excuses like, “He works longer hours at the office and is more tired at the end of the day,” or “I make more money than he does.” Whatever the external factors are, find a routine you can both agree on, and enjoy resentment-free, marital bliss. You don’t have to make a literal chart (unless you want to, of course), but the point here is to create habits so that you both feel like you’re pulling equal weight—or whatever balance might look right for you two. After all, according to studies, Millennial couples who split chores in a more egalitarian manner have a bit more fun.

**3. Unplug at least one hour before bed.**

I’m sure you’ve found yourself in bed with the lights out, lying next to your hubby, and you’re both staring at your phones, scrolling, scrolling, scrolling before passing out. Not exactly a habit that leaves a lot of room for intimacy, and it’s an especially tough one for our generation of tech addicts to break. We know studies show that we should be doing this already to have a better night’s sleep, but having an accountability partner is the best part about marriage. So, in order to maximize your quality of time together, paving the way for engaging conversation and intimate moments, resolve to put away your devices one hour before saying goodnight. You may be surprised by all the fun you didn’t even realize you were missing out on together.

**4. Dream—and play together.**

According to researchers, “Playing together helped couples rekindle their relationship and explore other forms of emotional intimacy.” So, what about making a point to have more fun together and spend more quality time with one another on a regular basis? Maybe it’s simply adding more fun people to your social circle. Maybe it’s agreeing to try something new together once a month, such as a new restaurant, a day trip to a nearby city, or a glass blowing class. Groupon and other daily deal sites have some of the most random ideas—and they are a great resource for coming up with fresh things to do together. The sky is the limit here, and it should speak to who you are as a couple.

**5. Praise five times more than you criticize.**

If you feel like you and your partner are caught in a vicious cycle of snippy comments and pointing fingers, then this is the relationship goal that will transform your marriage. When we criticize frequently, it can break down our partner’s spirit and cause them to retaliate with criticism of their own—and suddenly you’re both on that gross carousel of negativity you never wanted to be on. Good news is, relationship experts agree that this toxic cycle of behavior can be broken by checking yourself when you’re the one who’s doing the criticizing, like being mindful of words such as “should” (which implies your spouse did something wrong) and focusing on your partner’s behavior, not personality, when pointing out missteps. Meanwhile, if you’re on the receiving end of things, try not to become defensive, ask questions to find the root of the problem, and calmly establish a solution. Also, remember the secret 5:1 formula. This means that for every negative experience, there needs to be at least five genuine, positive experiences. So, if you do find yourself in those inevitable, pesky fights (don’t worry, everybody does)—try to rejuvenate your marriage afterward by remembering this ratio.

**6. Become fluent in each other’s love language.**

Skip the Rosetta Stone subscription this year, and pick up a copy of The 5 Love Languages instead. Dr. Gary Chapman has developed a relationship-altering theory about the five ways we all tend to show and receive love: words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and physical touch. Many couples have testified about how finally understanding their partner’s and their own primary love language amps up intimacy in a significant way. Don’t know what your love language is? Start by taking the quiz to find out. Once you and your partner know one another’s love language, you can then start establishing goals based on them. Maybe you need words of affirmation to feel the presence of love, but your spouse receives validation by physical touch, for example. What kind of loving habits can you learn to meet one another’s needs in 2018? Once you know the ways you’re similar or different, you can focus your energy on meeting each other’s needs, which will result in a healthy, lasting relationship.