Senior Advice: Marriage works when partners do

by Doug_Mayberry

Q: My husband and I have been happily married for more 39 years. Our granddaughter is getting married in June. Her parents divorced early on. Last week she asked us for advice on how to make her marriage successful. We asked for a little time to make a list, and we have done so.

Do you have some tips we haven't included?

A: The bottom line is, marriages work if the partners want it to. Primary issues include matching their sexual needs, developing strong communication skills, agreeing on how money is spent and saved, making each other's feelings a primary concern, compromising on each other's wishes, understanding their vows are a long-term commitment, learning to balance seriousness with humor, and appreciating each other for who they are, and not what the other wants them to be. Being positive and allowing each other some privacy and space is effective. Agreeing about religion, being proud of each other, protecting each other, defining goals, and being honest and monogamous are essential. Suggest every time they separate they kiss and tell each other they love them.

Your granddaughter is fortunate in having you as excellent role models. If they run into problems tell them to call their grandparents!

Q: Now in our 70s, we find talking about our mortality is a downer. We are thankful for our wonderful lives and how lucky and fortunate we have been. Yet, what's ahead? Whose health goes first? Where should we live?

We fully understand we should be making plans. Can you advise us?

A: Planning is especially important as we are living longer and will probably need help. Many of us do not really want to count on our families to take care of us. However, we do feel more comfortable living near a relative or friend whom we can call. Could living in a retirement community in which the residents socialize and keep an eye on each other be in your plans?

Most of us would prefer to remain in our own homes. Some individuals choose to move prior to their actual need time.

This gives them time to settle in and get acquainted.

Another option is to employ an individual to help with household maintenance, prepare meals and drive for them even though they are still capable of doing so. This is an opportunity to find an experienced helper who can provide more help if needed.

We all like our independence, dignity and freedom. Board and care and other institutions are expensive, and many families have found a part time live-in works even better.

Do some scouting to evaluate what options you believe will work best for you. The Boy Scout motto, "Be Prepared," is a goal that should be on your priority list now!

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