

Family Rules

Marriage Tips Series

■ by Duane Kapp, MA, Marriage & Family Therapist, Chief Operating Officer

Twenty-five percent of the people who come to Chicago Christian Counseling Center come for marital or couple counseling. In future newsletters, we will be including a “Marriage Tips” Series. This article is the first in the series. Even if you are not married, this tip matters to any close relationship.

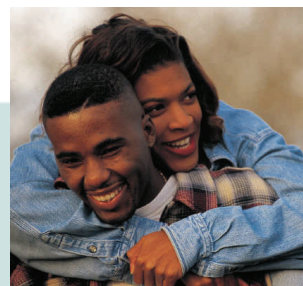
The current idea that we should just be “happy” in marriage misses the point. To be really happy requires that each of us become all that God intends us to be. Becoming all that God intends us to be includes being emotionally healthy – which is much harder than we think!

➡ MARRIAGE TIP | Consider your FAMILY RULES

Couples rarely take into account that each came from a family that had very subtle, unwritten but powerful rules. Couples will struggle for years, not realizing that their problems concern these family rules. Each individual is sure that all families operate the same way their family did, whether good or bad. There are rules for weddings, family gatherings, who prays at meals, and even rules on how bed sheets are folded or how the bed is made (or not!).

There are rules for who takes out the trash and who makes sure the doors are locked at night. For example, a woman's dad locked the doors at night when she was growing up. When her husband grew up, his mom locked the doors at night. They could fight over who is to blame when they both forget to do it. They could each conclude that they married an irresponsible, forgetful, uncaring and dangerous person! This conclusion could even color how they judge their spouse for a long time; believe me, it does happen!

So think about Family Rules the next time you get frustrated with your spouse. Are they just doing what was normal in their house when they were growing up? Is it something you would have NEVER done in your house when you were growing up? Is there really a RIGHT way to hang toilet paper, where to place the daily newspaper or how to spend free time? Instead of getting frustrated, why not make your own new family rules together! ■



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