

Dr. John Gottman's Research on Successful Marriages

John Gottman, Ph.D is a prominent researcher in the relationship field. He studies successful relationships. Here are some of his findings as summarized by Ann Klein, LCSW-C.

- The most important thing is to have a friendship: Be interested in each other's lives and dreams.
- Verbalize and show appreciation for each other. Dr. Gottman speaks about the 5 to 1 rule: 5 positive comments or gestures to one complaint.
- Spend at least 5 hours a week alone with each other (it doesn't have to be all at once and friendly phone calls count).
- Avoid criticism, which attacks the character of your partner. Instead, you can say a complaint such as, "I get frustrated when you leave dishes around", instead of, "You are a slob."
- Instead of being defensive and blaming your partner in a counter-attack, see what part you play in the complaint and own up to it.
- Have respect for your partner, not being contemptuous, thinking you are better. After all, you chose your partner! What does this say about you?
- Avoid shutting down and withdrawing from your partner, such as 'stonewalling.'
- During arguments, initiate repair attempts, such as, "I see what you mean" (without necessarily agreeing), or even, "Let's take a time out."
- Use a softened start-up, not screaming and blaming your partner.
- Conflicts and anger are normal and couples do not need to agree but need to understand each other and negotiate differences.
- Partners need to 'soothe' themselves and each other during conflict.
- Partners need to accept influence from each other.

Dr. Gottman's book is *The Seven Principles For Making Marriage Work*.