

Think back to when you were first falling in love with your spouse. Do you remember hiding your faults? Don't feel too bad, he or she was doing the same. Do you also remember ignoring his or her faults or viewing them in a positive light? Looking back now, you have a better idea why they say love is blind.

One positive by-product of how you acted was that your level of respect grew. As we notice all the good things about people, our level of respect for them increases.

***As our respect grows for a person, we find it easier to listen, talk in a respectful tone of voice and treat him or her in a respectful manner.***

After your wedding day you probably started to let your guard down a little. You no longer tried so hard to hide your faults. At the same time your spouse was doing the same thing. It became much easier for you to notice his or her faults rather than overlook them.

As you began focusing on your spouse's faults, your level of respect began to erode. You may have noticed the side effects in how you spoke, listened and treated him or her.

As respect erodes, contempt grows. Contempt will poison your marriage and bring with it pain and misery.



***Both respect and contempt are built up by what YOU choose to dwell on.***

People who dwell on the faults of their spouse often try to force their spouse to change to meet their own expectations. Ultimately, this route is

met with bitter disappointment and frustration as each attempt creates more resistance and ultimately fails.

Others choose to politely ask their spouse to work on the fault. If their spouse does not change they work on becoming used to their spouse's fault. In essence, they accept the things they can not change.

The reality is no one is perfect. The sooner we learn to recognize and accept the faults that are not going to change, the more content and happier we will be in our marriage.

Should we learn to tolerate all faults? Of course not. One example of a fault that should never be tolerated is physical violence. Victims of domestic violence should seek help immediately.

When you focus on your spouse's positive traits and exercise tolerance with his or her faults, your respect for him or her will grow. You will find it easier to listen, speak, and treat him or her respectfully.

## Action Plan

For the next three weeks make a list each day of ten positive things your spouse did. You can also take a trip down memory lane and include things he or she has done in the past. Each night share a few items on your list with your spouse.

In addition, make a list of three positive traits your spouse has.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Each time you find yourself dwelling on your spouse's faults, begin thinking of this list and add to it.

As you complete these two activities the level of respect you feel towards your spouse will increase and you will experience more joy and happiness and less pain and misery in your marriage.



For more information on gaining the skills and knowledge to form and sustain a healthy marriage please visit:

## The Atlanta Healthy Marriage Resource Center

[atl.healthymarriage.org](http://atl.healthymarriage.org)

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# Marriage

Increase the Joy  
Decrease the Misery



# Respect

A Key to Unlocking the Door to  
a Healthy and Happy Marriage