

When the Honeymoon Is Over - Cecil Osborne

When the Honeymoon Is Over by Cecil Osborne excerpted from, *The Art of Understanding Your Mate*; Osbourne is West Coast Director, Yokefellows, Inc.

When you married, you probably brought to marriage certain preconceived ideas of how life was going to be — perhaps a kind of perpetual romance, a continuation of the honeymoon. Then came grim reality. It wasn't the way you had dreamed it. He changed, didn't he? And without realizing it, you weren't always the same loving, patient, starry-eyed, adoring young woman he married. You both changed. Now let's see how we can go about restoring some of the stardust.

1. Learn the real meaning of love. You thought you were in love, and no doubt you were. Since then you may have wondered; maybe it was all a terrible mistake. Well, love isn't what you thought it was when you were in your teens. It is much, much more, and far more complex. If you want to be loved, you must make yourself lovable — not for a day or a week, but on a permanent basis. This may involve a radical change of attitude on your part. You want your husband to change, of course; undoubtedly there are many areas in which he needs to change. But you will never change him without a mature love. "Love never fails," said the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians.

Love is basically love of life, love of God, proper love of oneself, love of others, and the expressing of this love in manifold ways. Almost no one ever receives enough love. If you would be loved, learn to give mature love in a form your husband can accept.

Love can be expressed through patience, tolerance for the failings of your husband, meeting his needs, and by avoiding criticism. Love does not demand, it gives. Your own need for love can make you unlovable if it is expressed in a demanding or martyred manner.

2. Give up your dreams of a "perfect marriage" and work toward a "good marriage." There are no perfect marriages for the simple reason that there are no perfect people. Teen-age expectations of an idealized marriage are unrealistic. There are some more or less ideal marriages, but they are generally the ones which have been worked out through the years. Marriage is the most difficult and complex of all human relationships, and it requires patience, skill, tact, and emotional and spiritual growth. You can "grow a good marriage" if you are willing to work at it.
3. Discover your husband's personal, unique needs and try to meet them. He is not precisely like any other person on earth. He, like you, is unique. He has needs and preferences, failures and weaknesses, virtues and strengths in a combination unlike anyone else. Abandon any preconceived ideas as to what men are like and discover what your man is like. You will be unable, at first, to meet all of his needs. No one person can meet all the needs of another individual. You need not become a doormat or a household slave. You can seek to meet his needs out of a strong love rather than out of weakness or a need to "buy" his love.
4. Abandon all dependency upon your parents and all criticism of his relatives. "I always feel like an eight-year-old girl when I visit my mother," complained one wife of thirty-eight. "She takes over my children, tells me how to treat my husband, and what I ought not to do. I love her, but she refuses to let me grow up. Even after I get back home my mother writes lengthy letters of advice. I wish she'd let me alone and permit me to make my own mistakes, and learn from them." A basic rule in marriage is to never, never criticize the relatives of your marriage partner! It's all right for him to express resentment of his parents, but your attitude should be one of tolerance.
5. Give praise and appreciation instead of seeking it. One husband said, "My wife is always complaining because I don't appreciate her efforts. She says I don't comment on a new dress or tell her how nice she looks. When she spends a whole day cleaning up the house and has it looking just right, she feels put out because I don't praise her for doing what, to me, is her normal everyday job. Good grief! When I bring home a paycheck, she doesn't squeal with delight and praise me for being a loyal, hardworking, dependable husband. Why should I be expected to go into raptures over an omelet or a good meal or a new hairdo! Isn't that her job, just as it is mine to knock myself out every day at the office?" Men are sometimes far less aware of their surroundings, what they are eating, or even of what their wives are wearing than a woman would be. They are less given to little expressions of approval. You, as a wife, cannot command your husband's approval. You cannot make him more thoughtful by complaining. Such tactics may cause him to retreat or become hostile. Your task is to offer him the same sort of recognition and praise which you expect of him. Love and tact can win when petulant demands fail. Your husband will learn more by "osmosis" — through unconscious absorption of your attitudes — than if you make irritable demands upon him. It takes a wise and patient wife to make a good husband. They seldom come ready made.
6. Surrender possessiveness and jealousy. These two traits are close relatives. Everyone has the capacity for jealousy, and some jealousy is normal. It is only when it becomes possessive and all-pervasive that it is destructive. Extreme possessiveness stems from insecurity.

If we are to live creative, happy lives, we must seek out the origin of our insecurities and try to resolve them rather than justify them.

Overpossessiveness will drive a man away or cause him to retreat into the cold, gray castle of his own loneliness or into the arms of another woman. If you are unduly possessive, you are basically very insecure. You probably can- not resolve this deep-seated condition all alone. You will need the help of a professional counselor, and it will take time.

7. Greet your husband with affection instead of complaints or demands. You would appreciate some warmth and affection from your husband when he comes home. Your needs are valid. But if they are not being met, you can initiate response yourself. He too has needs. Perhaps he wonders why you don't greet him at the door with a warm hug and a kiss. Instead, you may greet him with the news that Jimmy has been bad, the washer is out of order, and the garbage needs to be taken out. "Oh, yes, and there's a notice from the bank that we're overdrawn." That does it!

Delay the bad news until after dinner! Don't hit him with it the minute he walks into the house. Greet him with some affection whether you feel like it or not. It pays big dividends. "Give and it shall be given unto you. . . ." Give your husband appreciation and affection. "Kill him with kindness," and see what happens. Your marriage will be better.

8. Abandon all hope of changing your husband through criticism or attack. Almost everyone is familiar with the basic threefold axiom: We can change no other person by direct action; we can change only ourselves; and when we change, others tend to change in reaction to us. If you want a better marriage, you must abandon, once and for all, any hope of changing your husband by direct action. This applies not only to husbands, but to all other persons including children. Love changes people. Hostility breeds hostility, but love begets love.
9. Outgrow the Princess Syndrome. Not every woman suffers from this, of course, but many do, just as many men grow up with the Prince Syndrome. In essence, the Princess Syndrome is the feeling that you are "special." No one is special; unique, yes; special, no.

A "princess" doesn't give. She asks, demands, becomes petulant when she cannot have her way. She buys luxuries with money that should be saved for necessities. She delivers ultimatums, or if she is subtle she manipulates to achieve her ends. If you see any of these traits in yourself, however small, begin now to abandon them as a holdover from childhood.

10. Pray for patience. The urge to be married, establish a home, and have children is so strong in most women that they are often blind to faults which are only dimly perceived before marriage. There is a partly unconscious belief in the minds of most women that "love will surmount all." In most instances the right kind of love can solve any marital problems. The right kind of love involves patience. "Love is patient and kind," we read in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 13:4). A mature love has this quality of patience. An immature love wants results right now. "Lord, give me patience, and give it to me right now," is the unconscious prayer of such persons.

"Love bears all things . . . hopes . . ." (1 Corinthians 13:7). Give up the tendency to complain, criticize, and control. You cannot control another human being even if you are entirely right in what you desire. The more you criticize and condemn, the more likely you are to drive your husband farther from you. If he drinks or golfs or watches television to excess; if he seems to ignore you, forgets anniversaries, and is in other ways thoughtless or inconsiderate, your petulant demands or hurt expression will seldom bring the desired results. It takes a great deal of patience to put up with unacceptable conduct, but good marriages are built on a foundation of patience.

It is one thing to feel chained to the dishpan, and another to feel that we have an important part in making a house a home. We can't hoax ourselves into feeling jolly about dishwater, but when a morn- ing comes that we find ourselves singing over the sink and stacking the dishes with genuine indifference — or even with a kind of tenderness — then we know that we have stumbled upon the meaning of small tasks in the heavenly economy.

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