

Relationship Advice: Plan for a Successful Relationship So You Can Have One

By Richard Nicastro, Ph.D.

Meet Ed and Betty:

Ed tells me that of course his relationship is successful—he's been married to Betty for forty-seven years. However, actions speak louder than words, and I notice Betty rolling her eyes while Ed speaks. The more Ed and Betty speak, the more they sound like strangers instead of two people who shared almost five decades together. It becomes clear that Ed and Betty have very different ideas of what a successful relationship is. They could have shared those ideas with each other all along—without my prompting—to learn more about one another and strengthen their bond. I'm not surprised that Betty ends the conversation with, "How sad—I wish we talked about this a long time ago."

Ed and Betty aren't alone. Most couples end up facing significant relationship problems because they don't map out their *vision* of a successful relationship. But all couples should.

What will a meaningful, successful marriage or relationship look like for you?

Here's one method to help you answer this important question: Picture yourself and your partner in the far-off future. Maybe you're both retired at this point, perhaps after having spent decades together. You're living in your favorite place, enjoying life. One day you find yourself in a reflective mood and begin thinking about the history of your relationship. You wonder, "Was it successful?"

How would you know if your relationship or marriage was successful? A great deal of time together is just one way to gauge success, but it's not a very good one (many people spend decades in a marriage or relationship that never really felt meaningful). Think big—put quality over quantity.

What elements does a relationship need to possess for it to be successful to you? (Be as detailed as possible.)

Here is how one couple recently answered this question:

Our relationship is successful because _____

We make each other laugh...*often*;
We make time for each other;
We work on appreciating what the other values;
We respect each other's differences;
We develop and share mutual interests;
We are best friends;
We openly share the positive and painful with each other;
We treat each other with compassion and respect.

Your relationship deserves to have a vision and plan. Write it down and read it often. Add to this list and revise it as needed. Have your partner develop his/her own list and share your lists with each other. Remember: anything worth having is worth planning for. A healthy, happy relationship is no exception.

Author Bio

Over the past fifteen years Richard Nicastro, Ph.D. has helped couples build stronger, more fulfilling marriages and relationships. Dr. Nicastro has lectured at several universities and now conducts workshops for couples on a wide range of issues. His relationship advice has appeared on television, radio and in national magazines. A member of the International Coach Federation, Dr. Nicastro is passionate about coaching and believes that healthy relationships can add meaning and fulfillment to our lives. His goal is to guide individuals and couples as they implement the skills that will allow their relationships to flourish.

You can reach Dr. Nicastro via his website <http://www.strengthenyourrelationship.com>