

THE YEAR AFTER Building a Strong Foundation in the CRITICAL FIRST YEAR

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The first year of marriage can make the difference between marital bliss and marital disaster. The effort a couple puts into their first year is an investment that will reap rewards in the years to come.

I've outlined five aspirations for the newlywed couple to focus on during the first year of marriage to achieve optimum success.

1. Nourish your emotional storehouse.

The more warmth, tenderness, and sensitivity you create between the two of you, the stronger your marriage will be down the road. The first year of mar-

riage must be looked at as a one-year investment where the dividends will pay off your whole married life. When times get tough, you will have reserves to draw upon to keep your marriage close and safe.


Some believe they don't need an emotional relationship with their spouse, or they think they're too busy and can relate perfectly well without it. A person can feel this way for a number of reasons that are beyond the scope of this article. Chances are, if you don't push yourself to give and receive emotion, the effects will haunt you later on.

- Go out of your way to put a smile on your spouse's face.

** Names and other vital information have been changed.*

Happy Anniversary!





"The hardest thing for me to get used to after getting married was covering my hair. I am a Bais Yaakov girl who grew up knowing that one day I would cover my hair, but I was unprepared for the emotional response that accompanied this change. The morning after our wedding, in a big fancy hotel bridal suite, I cried and cried while davening shacharis, mourning the loss of my hair."

— Avigail, Jerusalem

tions if you find these harmful to you or disruptive to your own family's harmony. (Contact your *rav* for guidance.)

- Never let your parents talk to you negatively about your spouse.
- Never complain about your spouse to your parents.
- Don't pressure your spouse in any way with regard to your parents; work as a team.
- Don't live too close to the members of your parental family — if possible, move to another neighborhood or city.

Avromi and Shira came for therapy in their first year of marriage. Their major issue was setting proper boundaries in relation to their parents. Shira felt compelled to divulge to her parents almost everything that was going on between her and Avromi. When Shira was a child, her parents had constantly made it clear that she was a "bad" daughter, and she longed to make her parents proud of her.

Avromi's parents routinely degraded others in an attempt to compensate for their own feelings of inadequacy. Shira and her family were prime candidates for Avromi's parents'

soul-soothing thrashing crusades.

The situation kindled great dissatisfaction in this young couple. They might have even pondered whether they made the proper choice in a mate.

With a three-pronged approach of (1) helping the couple develop emotional , each other, (2) aiding them to discover inner resources in resisting their parent trusions while helping them build a new of relating to their parents, and (3) ex, ining the issues that kept them attached their parents in an unhealthy way, I was a to help them use that first year to strengt, their marriage.

3. Develop good communication to create "oneness" and connectedness with each other

To love your spouse is to know and understand who he or she is. The effort you put into understanding him will also be a nonverbal compliment that you care about him and that he is important to you.

Some people feel that if they become

one feels close enough, the desire to be understood, appreciated, and cared for becomes intense. If both spouses approach conflict with the attitude that “I want even more closeness with my spouse, so I want to help him or her to learn about my needs and desires,” they will emerge from conflict in their first year of marriage more connected with each other and more at peace with themselves.

Managing conflict in marriage can be difficult for a number of reasons. You might think you have a “bad” marriage if you and your spouse quarrel. Listening becomes difficult from the vantage point of someone with a low self-esteem. Having some form of trauma from your home of origin may also get in the way of handling disagreement.

Conflict does not have to mean that the togetherness you’ve built up dissipates. Try to get in touch with what inner peace will feel like after you’ve expressed your needs together

and have been understood.

- Make it safe for your spouse to express discontent.
- Share with your spouse your fears of conflict or any past experiences that might make it difficult for you to express your needs or hear his needs.
- Get help dealing with anger.
- Don’t think everyone is like you and will respond like you.
- Don’t say, “He/she is just like his/her father/mother” or “He/she can’t change.”
- Stress generates arguments — reduce stress and get rest.

Couples typically have trouble with this last aspiration. But for this or any of the other aspirations, get the help you need so that until 120 you can live within a flourishing marriage with an abundance of happiness and be productive in all your endeavors — together and forever.■

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“The day after my wedding found me seated in my sheitel macher’s chair, silently marveling at the fact that all frum women wear their wigs daily and seem to do so without experiencing significant discomfort. Even now, almost a year and a half later, my snood is my (second) best friend!”

— Adina, Lakewood