



The 7 Best Things Happy Couples Do...plus one

By John Friel Ph.D., Linda Friel M.A.

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Psychologists and best-selling authors John and Linda Friel have written an enormously readable and infinitely practical book that delves into what makes a relationship enduringly successful. Wherever readers are in their own relationships, this book can improve those relationships dramatically, bringing them immediate and lasting benefits.

In the tradition of their bestseller, *The 7 Worst Things (Good) Parents Do*, the authors examine the behaviors that happy, effective couples display continually. After careful investigation, the Friels synthesized years of clinical work into a manageable list of the most significant patterns of behavior couples must address and embrace if they want to become truly great couples. Recognizing that other patterns and behaviors certainly do exist, when patients come the Friels for help, the core issues illustrated in this book are discussed as the couples move boldly toward improving their relationships-with consistently outstanding results.

The authors found that they had not seven, but eight, key items to identify. Here are a few:

- Be Sexual
- Be Willing To Divorce
- Manage Your Fear, Hurt, Shame, And Loneliness
- Own Your Part (be responsible for creating a great relationship)

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Family therapists Friel (*The 7 Worst Things (Good) Parents Do*) give tips for a healthy relationship. With their usual wit and incisiveness (and plenty of real-life examples from their years of clinical practice), the authors explain key psychological principles that underpin successful partnerships and also probe the unscientific element of "magic" that happy couples report. They describe how to avoid common pitfalls and nudge readers toward a better understanding about how early experiences influence romantic relationships. This is a useful resource for anyone in a relationship--be it a healthy or an unhealthy one.

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About the Author

John Friel maintains an active training and speaking schedule in the addictions field, and is known for his practical, innovative, powerful and compassionate presentation and training style. Whether speaking to the general public or to professionals, he has the ability to handle difficult or painful material with a fine balance of competence, sensitivity, gentle humor and professionalism that has made him one of the top trainers in the country.

Linda Friel is known throughout the U.S., Canada, England, and Ireland for her therapeutic and training expertise in the areas of family systems, survivors of unhealthy childhoods, depression, anxiety, addictions and personality disorders. She is cofounder and national director of the ClearLife/Lifeworks Clinic, which is a special four-day therapy program to help people move beyond the painful patterns of childhood shortages.

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Chapter 1 - Susie

Chapter 1 - The Explanation

*. . . There is a feeling now, that was not here before, and is not just on the surface of things,
but penetrates all the way through:
We've won it. It's going to get better now.
You can sort of tell these things.*

ùRobert Pirsig
Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

After twenty-one years of living together in a marriage, decades of scientific theories and data about relationships, and an amalgam of what we've gathered from our years of working with people in therapy settings, no matter how we think of them or try to write about them, making sense of love relationships can be baffling at times. Is the science flawed? Have we been deluding ourselves all of these years? Or is it simply that the array of successful human possibilities is defined by an infinite number of conceivable genetic combinations? There are over 6 billion people in the world right now, and you'd have to multiply that

by another billion to get an estimate of how many types of successful relationships there could be at any given moment in time.

And so, rather than being exhaustive or definitive, this book consists of some of our thoughts about relationships and some of the research on them. Before we send this manuscript to our publisher, scores more will be sent to other publishers to be in print next year, too. This book is just *one* way of putting together some of the things we see. When two people come to us for therapy, they are coming to see what *they* can see, using *us* as catalysts. When they go to someone else, they are going for different catalysts. In the same way, our children are a product of our lives, not yours. Your children are a product of yours, not ours. As obvious as that may seem, we say it because it underscores the crucial part of relationship therapy—that only *you* can improve your intimate relationship. Nobody else can do it for you.

The Patterns of Life

Part of the science of relationships is captured in the principle of *reenactment*.

We have a friend who enthusiastically participates in Civil War reenactments, during which he and his compatriots dress up in authentic uniforms from the mid-1800s, brandish authentic Civil War-era weapons, eat the kinds of food that soldiers ate back then and fight the famous battles of the war, to the delight of thousands of onlookers. In the study of relationships, reenactment refers to the fact that the patterns we display as adults are based on patterns that began when we were children. It also helps explain how patterns are passed on from one generation to the next not only by genetics, but also by *learning*.

On paper, at least, it's fairly simple to comprehend. As a child, you loved to read. At thirty-five years of age, you love to read. As a child, you were active and dominant, and at forty you are still active and dominant. When you were angry as a child, no one listened to you, or they told you to be quiet and go to your room—that a good child does not get angry. At thirty-five years of age, your husband brings you in for marriage counseling because he can't stand your pouting and silences anymore. It explains why, despite making a strong childhood vow to the contrary, a woman who had a controlling father is quite likely to either be very controlling herself, or to marry a controlling man.

As adults mature and deepen across the life span, we are blessed with a gift that replaces and far exceeds the value of the physical prowess that we gradually lose—we gain *wisdom*. In the arena of human affairs, a fair piece of this wisdom comes from understanding, accepting and becoming at peace with our psychological histories. It is common to have either an idealized or a "demonized" picture of our childhoods when we enter our twenties, and to assume that whatever was, was, and that we just have to press on in life. It is normal to begin tripping over the ghosts of our past somewhere between our mid-twenties and our mid-forties. And if we embrace the challenge of deepening and growing, we eventually gain a piercingly clear appreciation of the simultaneous complexity and simplicity of life.

Contrary to what some believe, the goal of growing up, whether or not you had a painful childhood, is *not* to rewrite your psychological history. Not only is it impossible to do so, but it wouldn't be emotionally or spiritually wise even if you could. An interviewer once asked us, "We eventually stop picking partners who fit those painful childhood patterns in any way, shape or form, right?" Our reply was an emphatic "No." The goal isn't to eradicate our childhoods. The goal is to *master* them. If you had a physically abusive, rageful father, your pattern may be to enter relationships with men who then become physically rageful. It doesn't mean you'll always have to marry physically abusive men. Once you've mastered your childhood and live in Emotional Adulthood, you now have the power of *choice* to stay or to leave and move on. But the man you eventually find happiness with may still be more on the stronger/controlling side, but within the healthier range. And, being in Emotional Adulthood, you will have a strong enough core self to maintain your power

in the relationship.

The process of "emotionally growing up beyond childhood" and mastering our psychological history is represented in chapter 8, entitled "The Rocks." It is a snapshot of the long, rewarding process of growing up and mastering and integrating our history rather than trying to erase it. It is part of the magic of being human. It is man and woman at their best. The two chapters following the one you are now reading are comprised of descriptive lists of what really great love does and does not feel like. These two lists are also designed to tap into the "magic" much more than the "science" of relationships. They are verbal paintings or impressions.

About List I and List II

As you read the two lists that follow in the next two chapters, we urge you to read them more than once. Savor them. Let them soak into your unconscious mind. If you do, perhaps you won't need to read the rest of this book, because painted in these two lists are pictures of what is and what is not part of really great relationships. Reading through the lists, you may notice that there is only one statement that is exactly the same in both lists. The letters and words in the two sentences are identical, and they are in identical order, yet the differences underlying the two represent the cutting edge-*the subtle six- to seven-degree difference* between a really painful relationship and a really great one.

As you finish with the lists, we suggest that you let yourself pause and reflect on the stirrings in your heart and soul, and spend some time leafing through the pages of your life to see from whence those passions came. When you've done this, tell your partner about that part of you. Share it with your partner. Thus intimacy begins.

It is through connecting one heart to another, around seemingly small things, that love grows.

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Kathryn Kern:

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Clarence Frey:

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