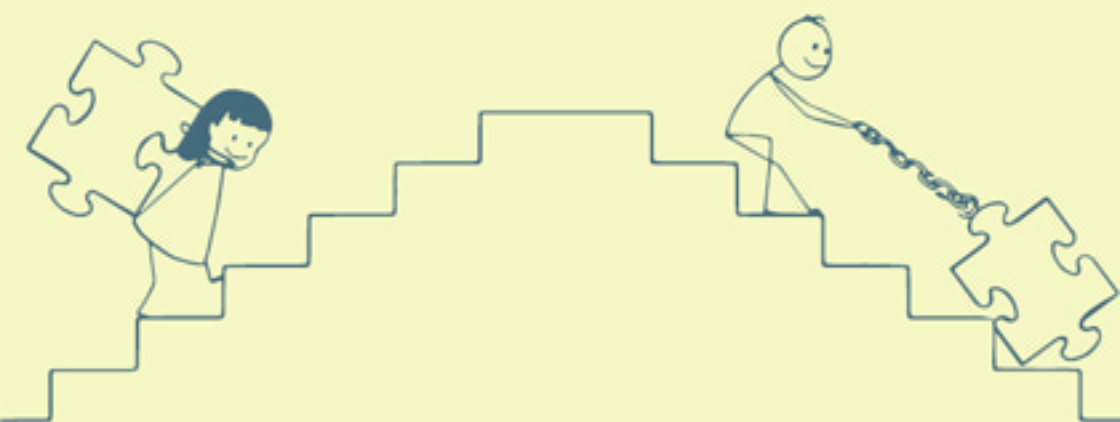


Not A Partnership



Why We Keep Getting Marriage Wrong,
& How We Can Get It Right

TOD JACOBS & PETER LYNN

Not A
Partnership

www.NotAPartnership.com

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by Tod Jacobs and Peter Lynn

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Not A *Partnership*

TOD JACOBS & PETER LYNN

Why We Keep Getting Marriage Wrong,
& How We Can Get It Right

Dedicated to
Mariam Jacobs
and
Regine Lynn
our beloved wives
who have shown us what it means
to be a truly loving spouse.

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Prologue

THIS BOOK WAS BORN in 2016 in a cafe on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. I was sitting with Yuval, an alumnus from the post-graduate program I co-founded, and where Peter and I have taught since 2005. Yuval — late 20s, talented, socially adept, heart of gold — was about mid-way through his second year of marriage. “Why is it,” Yuval asked, “that marriage is so hard? We love each other, we’re attracted to each other, we have similar values — but we often fight, and we always seem to be questioning the future of the relationship. Why can’t we get it right?!”

I thought about it for a moment. “It’s because you don’t understand what marriage *is*,” I answered. “You don’t know how to define it. And if you can’t define it, don’t know what a healthy one looks like, and don’t know your goal, how can you expect to get it right?”

The student pushed back: “What do you mean? What am I missing?”

I thought back to a sharp piece of wisdom I’d heard years earlier from a well-known South African rabbi¹ and replied: “You think that marriage is a partnership. You have

1. Dr. Akiva Tatz.

your rights and obligations, and I have my rights and obligations. So, like most partners, I spend my time convinced that I'm doing my job perfectly, but always disappointed in her for not holding up her end of the bargain. And of course she's making the exact same set of assumptions from her end. My dear, *marriage is not a partnership.*"

Yuval sat stunned for a few moments. "You *have* to write a book on marriage, with exactly that title!" he exclaimed. He then thought for another moment and asked, "So...if it's not a partnership, what *is* it?"

That question led to a fruitful discussion with Yuval about what marriage is, and how it works. That marriage, above all, is life's greatest platform for constant giving. That a husband or wife can take full responsibility for making the relationship work and for making the other happy, irrespective of whether the spouse is giving in kind. That great marriages are *made*, not received. I tried to paint a picture in which a husband and wife view their ultimate role as acting the way that the *spouse* needs. And how, ultimately, when we approach marriage in this way, we can generate a lifetime of happiness and wellbeing, literally becoming one with our soulmate.

After that conversation I phoned Peter Lynn and suggested that we write a book together. Since 2005, Peter has partnered with me in a post-graduate study program that, post my Wall Street career, I co-founded in Jerusalem. The David Robinson Institute for Jewish Heritage brings together gifted and idealistic young men with leadership qualities who wish to spend a year or two immersed in not only classical Jewish legal and philosophical texts, but in the

intensive study of character and relationships as well. The aim? To prepare these future businessmen, doctors, lawyers, artists and teachers to successfully juggle life's great challenges of career, marriage, raising children, community leadership and spiritual growth.

Since that time, we and our colleagues have helped hundreds of young men develop their potential and become people of personal integrity, greatness, and stature. In that work, Peter has proven a critical resource to our students and alumni, combining real-world experience, phenomenal intuitive knowledge of people and relationships, and formal training in Positive Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. Together, we have spent many hours teaching our students the theory behind building a great marriage, and countless more hours in the trenches with these young couples, counseling them as they grapple with the real-life challenges and promises of married life.

This book is the culmination of decades spent integrating powerful and ancient Talmudic and Kabbalistic wisdom with the real-life, real-time dramas being played out in the married lives of our students.

Year after year, we see that for even the most sophisticated and accomplished men and women — some of whom have been married for years — basic questions about marriage have gone unanswered and, shockingly, mostly unasked:

- 🐼 What exactly is a marriage?
- 🐼 Beyond the somewhat outdated traditional justifications of financial and physical security, or a desire to

raise kids in a stable setting, is there any deeper purpose in creating a legal framework for our relationship?

- 🐼 Isn't a series of great romances and intimate encounters preferable to a lifelong commitment to a single person?
- 🐼 Even if this person seems worth committing myself to *now* — what happens when things change? What if an illness arises, and I have to assume the role of caretaker? What if the money we expected to materialize simply doesn't? What happens when the good looks start to fade? In short: Why stay married if it's no longer good for me and surely not what I initially bought into?
- 🐼 Why take the risk, given the rather daunting odds of failure?
- 🐼 What does a healthy marriage look like?
- 🐼 Can a person in this generation — where there are few successful role models — navigate marriage based upon little more than gut instincts? Would she do that with her career? Would he do that even with his diet and exercise program? The contrast would be humorous if it weren't so terrifying in its implications.

Somehow, when it comes to marriage — possibly life's most challenging endeavor — we enter with literally no preparation. No training, no instruction manual, no clear vision of the goal or pathway. Sometimes we have little more than a vague set of expectations derived from a lifetime of

novels and Hollywood fantasies about love and romance (all of which *end* with the young couple falling madly in love, just as the curtain should in fact *rise* on the real work of building a marriage).

In the chapters that follow, we have attempted to define what marriage is — *and what it isn't* — and then to lay out practical steps that can bring the theory to life. Properly done with care, thought, tenacity, and above all, giving, we can transform marriage into a living source for the love, warmth, security and sense of wholeness that we crave and deserve.

Tod Jacobs
Jerusalem 2019

Introduction

WHY READ A BOOK ON MARRIAGE?

In the world of marriage, the stakes could not be higher — or more risky. On the one hand, most of us view marriage as one of the most critical aspects of our lives. More than 60% of unmarried people want to marry,² and by the age of 45, about 90% of people have been married.³ Indeed, one of the greatest regrets expressed by patients in palliative care, close to death, is that they wished they had spent more of their time and energy with their spouse and children.⁴ Most of us constantly hear from our friends and colleagues that marriage is the most important thing in life and commands the highest priority.

At the same time, the odds of successful marriage are stacked against us. To quote the Census Bureau's pithy summary: "Nearly everyone marries," but "nearly half of recent

2. Cohn, D'vera. "Love and Marriage." *Pew Research Center*. February 13, 2013, www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/02/13/love-and-marriage.

3. Cohn, D'vera.

4. Ware, Bronnie. *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying: A Life Transformed by the Dearly Departing*. Carlsbad: Hay House Inc., 2012.

first marriages may end in divorce.”⁵ Somehow, despite the critical importance we ascribe to marriage and its place in our lives, we usually fail.

The issues that give rise to marital problems are as many and manifold as the people who experience them. But there are two causes for almost all failed and failing marriages.

First, we pay lip service to the critical nature of the institution without actually investing anywhere near the same amount of time and effort that we invest in other important parts of our lives, like career, health, and other interests. In my career, it's a given that I have to prepare thoroughly, work hard, subject myself to review, always look and act my best, stay current on all information and wisdom related to my job, and frankly, stop at nothing to make sure I succeed. But when it comes to my marriage, I spend precious little energy preparing and seeking to understand what it is and how I can best function as a successful and ever-better spouse. By the time we are *forced* to invest time in marriage, it's usually too late, after much damage has been done, and this investment is almost solely in the form of therapy or self-help books and materials. In short, we spend little time before the wedding preparing to succeed, and lots of time after the wedding struggling to fix where we have failed.

Second, even if we are willing to make the investment, we simply lack clarity in what the true goal of marriage is,

5. Kreider, Rose M., and Jason M. Fields. "Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: Fall 1996." *Current Population Reports*, p. 70-80. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p70-80.pdf.

what a beautiful marriage looks like, and how marriage is meant to function. Lacking a clear goal we are even more befuddled about how to get there. In virtually every other arena in which we seek greatness, the pathway is known or can be discovered. If I want to be a doctor, I go to medical school and learn the curriculum. If I want to play piano like a master, I hire a teacher and practice for hours every day to improve my technique. But when it comes to marriage, the goal becomes fuzzy. I want a good and happy marriage, but how do I get there? Perhaps I have never even seen a great marriage before. Even if I have been lucky enough to see a good marriage, navigating that path myself, even with a willing spouse, often proves elusive. There are too few talented jungle guides to lead me there. I don't even know where "there" is.

WHAT THE DICKENS HAPPENED TO MY GREAT EXPECTATIONS?

The *tragedy* of uninformed marriage lies not just in the high failure rate, but more precisely in the gulf between the life-long expectation of the deep happiness and fulfillment that the relationship will provide, and the sad reality of what marriage really looks like, even if it survives. Bad outcomes are painful, but they are excruciating when the hopes were so high.

In the words of one Harvard researcher: "It's not marriage that makes you happy, it's a happy marriage that makes you happy."⁶

6. Munsey, Christopher. "Does Marriage Make Us Happy?" *Monitor on Psychology*, American Psychological Association. October, 2010, www.apa.org/monitor/2010/10/marriage.aspx.

It is no surprise, then, that hopeful, but often frustrated, confused or unhappy spouses have spawned an exploding industry of marriage books, seminars, therapy, and coaching.

The brilliant economists, Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, note in a different context (child raising), “In our society, if someone wants to be a hairstylist or a kickboxer or a hunting guide — or a schoolteacher — he or she must be trained and licensed by a state agency. No such requirement is necessary for parenthood.”⁷ Even less is expected and required for entry into marriage. Honestly, how do we stand a chance?

WHY THIS BOOK?

Is *another* book on marriage really needed?

We’re busy. You’re busy. It is truly hard to keep spending more and more time working on my relationship. So why should we spend time writing, and you reading (let alone buying), *another* book on marriage?

To make matters worse, there are lots of great books on marriage that we, like you, have read and found insightful and helpful. The powerful revelations regarding the fundamental differences between men and women by authors like Carol Gilligan and Deborah Tannen have had a quarter of a century to percolate through the collective psyche. Books like *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* and *The Five Love Languages* have given us tools and practical steps to integrate into our daily lives to enhance how

7. Levitt, Steven D. and Stephen J. Dubner. *Think Like a Freak: the Authors of Freakonomics Offer to Retrain Your Brain*. New York: William Morrow, 2014.

we communicate with, give to, receive from, and love our spouses. These books are amazing, helpful, and powerful. We have read many of them and we want you to read them.

So, again, what's the point of *this* book?

This book is different from all other books. All other books give us tips and advice about how to *be* married and what to *do* in marriage.

This book *defines* marriage.

What we present herein is the prerequisite for the other marriage books, because in order to get the most out of all the wonderful contemporary works on marriage, we first need to understand what marriage actually *is*.

Most marriage books assume that the reader already knows what marriage is and what it should be. After all, a person reading a book about marriage is probably already married or planning to get married, so of course he or she must know what marriage is. And even if we cannot quite express it in words, we have Google to define it for us:

Mar·riage (*n*): the legally or formally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship (historically and in some jurisdictions specifically a union between a man and a woman).

To put it mildly, this definition is vague, superficial, and not terribly helpful. Barring the legal point in parentheses, it could just as easily describe my relationship with a close friend.

How fascinating is it that people yearn and dream for marriage, suffer through failed and sometimes hurtful relationships to find “the one,” make that “til death do us part”

commitment — and then discover they are not quite sure how to define exactly what it is that they have been yearning and struggling for. We pick up a junior high school level definition, and we're good to go!

TREATING THE SYMPTOMS AND IGNORING THE DISEASE

As problems arise in our marriages we seek solutions, but we often get stuck at the surface level. In the medical profession, the difference between a great doctor and a mediocre one often comes down to how they treat an illness. The inexperienced practitioner spends lots of time treating symptoms. While that approach may help the patient feel better, as long as the infection at the root level is left untreated it will continue to fester and eventually overwhelm the salves and painkillers. It becomes far more difficult to treat, as undiagnosed or ignored problems tend to worsen over time. The understanding healer always works on the root cause of the pathology. It may be more complicated and often more painful, but it brings true healing.

Our lack of a clear definition and clear goals of a healthy marriage not only prevent us from addressing underlying issues, but also leave us highly susceptible to burnout. When our marriage is missing a unifying and galvanizing theme, all those randomly acquired pieces of advice and good tips eventually become haphazard, confusing, and overwhelming. Without a clear picture of the destination, even the most sophisticated GPS — with all of its real-time data and knowledge of shortcuts and roadblocks and hazards — will fail, unless the goal is to get nowhere fast.

LET'S FIGURE OUT WHERE WE'RE GOING

Why this book? Because *we know the definition of marriage and want to share it with you!* In the ensuing chapters we will define not only the goal, but time-tested means of helping you get there.

The definition of marriage, together with its practical application, that we will present in this book is drawn from numerous sources. We'll dive into the oldest and, quite amazingly, most insightful source we have yet found — the Book of Genesis — for a glimpse into what marriage is all about, what it's meant to achieve, and why it's worth the struggle above all other pursuits. We'll marry that up, pun intended, with cutting-edge research on relationships. And we'll discuss practical steps to becoming great spouses, friends, and lovers. The goal is nothing less — and don't settle for less! — than to produce a great and enduring relationship that will form the core pleasure, meaning, and security amidst our tumultuous lives. The extensive experience of the authors in preparing our students for marriage and in counseling them along the way adds the real-world dimension to the theoretical framework.

While some of the source material is “spiritual,” the insights contained therein are by no means confined to religious adherents. Indeed, the power of the ideas lies in their universality and self-evident depth and truth. Whatever your background and beliefs may be, we believe that the ideas speak for themselves and have proven themselves unequivocally powerful and compelling across the centuries.

In summary, we've divided the book into two parts:

1. What is a great marriage?
2. How can I have one?

OBJECTIVE #1: KNOW THE THEORY

This book begins with the premise that while we may recognize many fundamental truths about marriage and we may have learned some helpful tactics, we nonetheless remain at a loss when it comes to truly understanding many key aspects of marriage, such as:

- 🐼 *What* a marriage really is
- 🐼 *Why* we need (and desire) marriage
- 🐼 *What* the goals of marriage are
- 🐼 *Why* it is that men and women function so differently
- 🐼 *How* the fundamental responsibilities of a spouse are defined
- 🐼 *What* a truly healthy relationship even looks like
- 🐼 **And most importantly**, *what key elements* make a marriage work (let alone thrive).

Our first objective, then, is to answer these questions. As we will show, with proper vision and a willingness to invest, two people who could not be more different from each other can attain a transformational unity between them that far surpasses what either one could achieve alone.

The process of focused and continual giving to each other can produce not only a great marriage — and a nurturing environment for children, physical security and financial

benefit. That very process can and will help produce two great individuals as well. Giving enobles and expands us. The more you place on your shoulders, the greater your stature becomes.

If completion as a human being is what you seek, marriage is the vehicle that can get you there.

CRUSHING THE HARMFUL MARITAL MYTHS

In order to answer the key question of what marriage *is*, we must clarify what it *isn't*. There are some key myths and false premises we absorb throughout life that ironically work to uproot and destroy the very institution they seek to embrace:

- 🐼 It's easy since we're in love
- 🐼 I can wing it
- 🐼 Marriage is romance
- 🐼 Romance is love
- 🐼 Romance lasts forever
- 🐼 My gosh, we're so different. We must have made a mistake in marrying in the first place
- 🐼 Marriage is a partnership
- 🐼 I'll love my spouse when he starts loving me
- 🐼 I'll give to her once she starts giving to me
- 🐼 Maybe changing the definition or structure of marriage will save us
- 🐼 Maybe two master bedrooms will foster peace at home

- 🍷 Maybe “open marriage” — inviting others into our bedrooms (with my spouse’s permission!) — will help ensure our ability to remain happily married

The list goes on and on....

OBJECTIVE #2: MAKE IT HAPPEN!

Once we’ve clearly defined marriage and its goals, we’ll turn to Part 2 in order to lay out the key elements that will help us transform the theoretical picture into a real and flourishing marriage. We have divided the practical steps towards building your marriage into four golden pillars of activity and investment:

- 🍷 Keep it fresh
- 🍷 Gratitude: feel it and show it
- 🍷 Respect in all its forms
- 🍷 Responsibility: it all depends upon me!

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

Let’s begin the process of integrating our ideas with our actions. If marriage is as high a priority as we claim, let’s start the work today, here and now, by taking the mission critical step of defining what a healthy and happy marriage actually is.

Not A Partnership

For more than 13 years, Tod and Peter have worked together in the area of marriage. Their primary objective is to help students develop a mature and idealistic vision of marriage as the primary vehicle to create wholeness, meaning, purpose and happiness in their lives, and on working to perfect the character issues that lie at the core of a successful spouse — giving, empathy, focus, staying power and a strong desire to help build the other. Their work combines practical and mystical Jewish wisdom with modern theory and techniques, and with experience accrued through years of real-world implementation and practice.



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