

# Your “how-we-met” story speaks volumes.

Next time someone at a dinner party asks, “How did you two meet?” pay attention to how you respond. Your answer can predict whether your marriage will make it, says John Gottman, PhD, a psychologist at the University of Washington, Seattle’s Family Research Laboratory (aka “[The Love Lab](#)”).

Gottman took oral histories from 52 couples married an average of five years, analyzed their stories and physiological responses, and checked back with the couples in three years. Their story predicted with 94 percent accuracy which couples would stay together. (The figure was 88 percent in a separate study in which Gottman followed newlyweds.) Happy couples spoke with laughter and nostalgia, even when recalling hard moments. Unhappy partners, on the other hand, remembered things more negatively.

If you or your spouse tells the story of your romance using sarcastic or critical words, it may be time to find out what’s behind those emotions.

## Go ahead, fight — but choose your words carefully.

You can tell a lot about the future of a marriage by the way a couple argues, says Gottman. He determined four negative emotions used in arguments that proved particularly toxic on the relationship: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. Conversely, happy and secure couples used positive behaviors to diffuse the tension, such as humor, affection, and acknowledgement of their

## When marital bliss fades, seek out novelty.

You’re in for a major letdown if you bought into the myth that marriage will make you happy. The typical happiness boost experienced by newlyweds fades after roughly two years, according to [Sonja Lyubomirsky](#), a psychology professor at the University of California, Riverside; and author of *[The Myths of Happiness: What Should Make You Happy, but Doesn’t, What Shouldn’t Make You Happy, but Does](#)*.

Fortunately, Lyubomirsky also discovered that couples can adapt, augmenting long-term satisfaction and beating marriage boredom. First, deepen your appreciation for the positive changes in your life, including your spouse and marriage, because appreciation feeds happiness and prevents you from taking him (or it) for granted. Next, build variety into your marriage, for science shows that experiencing new and exciting things as a couple increases both relationship satisfaction and passionate love.

“It doesn’t have to be bungee jumping,” says Lyubomirsky. “It could be meeting new people, going out dancing, learning a foreign language, or volunteering together — anything you don’t normally do delivers this boost.”

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Orbuch believes these findings point back to a women's relational nature. "When a husband says, 'Your family is important to me,' [the wife] feels supported and validated." On the other hand, a woman who's striving for acceptance by her husband's family may have a harder time setting up healthy boundaries with her in-laws, which can add stress to the marriage.

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