

HOW TO BE A GOOD HUSBAND

So you got married and became a man of vows. All those promises you made to your wife really mean something now, so it's time to start walking the walk. Fortunately, being a good husband isn't impossible. It's about following your heart, your conscience, and acting on your love for your wife. These simple steps, if taken seriously, can help lead you and your better half to a brighter future.

1. BEING A MAN OF PRINCIPLE.

Be a gentleman, if she'll let you. Most, not all, women find the idea of a gentleman sweet and endearing. If your wife is that kind of lass, get ready to bust out your most chivalrous self. Think 17th century manners, or thereabouts:

- A. Kiss her hello and goodbye.
- B. Take her heavy shopping bags for her.
- C. Open doors for her.
- D. Pay for dates.
- E. Of course, there's always the chance that she doesn't want you treating her in a gentlemanly way. If she doesn't, don't take it personally. Continue being sweet to her, even if you don't give her special treatment.

2. BE RESPECTFUL.

Respect is an act of understanding. Understand that your wife is an independent, different person, and that she may not want to do the exact same thing as you, even though your interests are usually aligned. Here are four examples of ways you can be respectful of your wife:

- A. Keep your promises. Do what you say you'll do. If you tell her you're going to do the dishes, don't wimp out and then make excuses while she takes over your responsibility.
- B. Be on time. If you say you're going to be somewhere at a certain time — say, pick up your kid at daycare — be there. Your wife's time is just as valuable as yours. Respect it.
- C. Stop assuming. Don't just assume that she'll do something because she's your wife or a woman. Establish good lines of communication instead. Learn how to ask for a favor.
- D. Listen to what she's saying. Don't pretend to listen — actually listen. Sometimes, the only thing we want is a good listener or a shoulder to lean on. Let her talk and be absorbed in what she's saying.

3. NEVER LIE.

Get in the habit of telling the truth. Ask yourself how you would feel if you found out your wife was keeping anything but a birthday secret from you. Always tell her where you are going if she wants to know. Tell her who you are with. Tell her what your motivations are, even if you think they're petty. Being open and never lying establishes great verbal communication, which is at the heart of all great relationships.

4. NEVER CHEAT.

It goes without saying, but it must be mentioned. Cheating is a form of lying. You wouldn't be very accepting of your wife having an affair, so why would you? If you're having an affair, take a good, hard look at your life and ask yourself why you're married to the person you're married to.

A. If you love your wife but lust after someone else, realize how unfair the situation is. You want the comfort of your wife, but you're not willing to be exclusive and honest with her. This is selfish behavior at its most basic. You can't have your cake and eat it, too.

B. If you no longer love your wife, then why are you still married to her? Both of you would probably be much better off if you were given the opportunity to find someone you truly loved, or someone who loved you back. Think about it.

5. MINIMIZE LAZINESS.

Laziness is a major turnoff to women, and a bad habit to boot. Laziness isn't necessarily watching football on Sunday; laziness is not doing something you know you should or want to do, but can't bring yourself to. So take the garbage out, surprise her once a week by cleaning the house, or exercise to show her you have self-worth. It makes a big difference.

6. TRY NOT TO BE SELFISH.

We could debate for hours how selfish humans are, but one thing seems clear: though we are selfish, we have the capacity to be selfless. Love should inspire that selflessness. Instead of always asking what you can do for yourself, start asking what you can do for your wife, or what you can do for the benefit of your marriage.

A. Minimize jealousy. You may get a little jealous from time to time, and that's okay, as long as you try to not let it affect your wife's happiness. (It's probably a good sign if you're jealous.) That's because jealousy can

be very selfish. Never keep your wife from doing something just because you're jealous.

- B. Compromise. Learn how to reach the middle ground. Often, what you want and what your wife wants will be totally different. In these cases, adjust your expectations. Don't expect to always get exactly your share or to "win" the argument.

7. NEVER RAISE YOUR VOICE, YELL AT, OR PHYSICALLY ABUSE HER.

Your wife trusts you to look after her comfort and safety. Don't set a bad example and let your emotions get the better of you.

- A. CONTROL YOUR TONE, IF POSSIBLE, IN AN ARGUMENT:

"I'm worried that we're not sticking to our budget. I'm not accusing you of anything. I'm just looking out for our long-term happiness and I wanted to have a discussion with you about ways we could both change our spending habits."

- B. RESIST AD HOMINEM, OR PERSONAL, ATTACKS. THE FOLLOWING IS NOT A HEALTHY WAY TO ARGUE:

"Oh yeah? You really want to make sure our children get into a good school? Well why don't you talk to your ex-boyfriend the principal? You seem to have a smashing relationship with him."

- C. NEVER HIT, DETAIN, OR THREATEN YOUR WIFE WITH VIOLENCE. DO NOT TRY TO USE YOUR PHYSICAL SIZE AS AN ADVANTAGE OVER HER. YOUR WIFE COULD PRESS CHARGES.

8. SHOWING AFFECTION

Find little ways to make her feel great. It's funny because, often, the smallest things find a way to nourish a relationship. Ask yourself, what can I do to make my wife even happier? It doesn't have to be earth-shattering to be effective. It's the thought behind it, and the emotion in it, that's the real gift:

- A. Work on having a better relationship with your in-laws. Few things are more important for her than you having a relationship with her parents. You probably don't see your in-laws every day, but that undersells the importance of the goal: ultimately, she wants you to love them like you love your parents.

- B. Does your wife really care about charity? Invest in a microloan in her name, and give it to her as a present. She is now the proud beneficiary of someone else's opportunity.
- C. Do things around the house that she normally doesn't enjoy. If your wife hates doing the dishes, for example, make her a little "get out dishes free" card, good for a week without dish-duty.

9. BE OPEN.

It might seem weird, but being open with your spouse is indeed a sign of affection: it shows them that you trust them and, more importantly, that you enjoy being intimate with them emotionally. Women are especially attuned to their emotions; men are often not. Being open will reassure her that you're taking that step for her.

10. SHOW HER YOU LOVE HER.

Why did you marry her in the first place? Express to her why you love and how she makes you feel everyday. Do this often. It will lead to good habits, promote more love and affection in your marriage, and reduce amounts of stress.

- A. Write her a short handwritten letter. Put it underneath her pillow; as you kiss her goodbye in the morning, tell her to check underneath the pillow. The note could say something like: "Every day I'm with you, I learn even more about how impossibly lucky I am. I love you."
- B. Come up behind her when she knows that you're in the same room and give her a heartfelt kiss on her neck while wrapping your arms around her. It'll make her heart melt.
- C. Make your own romantic fortune cookie. Find a way to slip a personalized fortune into a fortune cookie your wife breaks open. Have it read something like: "Only you can make my heart crumble...."

11. BE SUPPORTIVE.

Support her in her honest endeavors. Whether it's supporting her when she wants to take Latin dance classes or when she wants go out with the girls, your support makes her feel safe and lets her take calculated risks. When she has nothing else to fall back on, she knows that she can count on you to be her rock, her muse, her lighthouse.

- A. When your wife is feeling down, find a way to cheer her up. Bring her breakfast in bed, massage her feet, or rent her favorite movie. Again, small things can have big meanings.

12. PUT THE "MAN" BACK IN ROMANCE.

It may not be the first thing that you think of when you wake up in the morning, but romance is essential to a healthy marriage. Don't just assume that because you're married, you don't have to try to be romantic with your wife anymore. Not only is that thought misguided — what if your wife decided that she didn't have to watch her weight once married? It also takes some of the fun out of marriage. So be a man and do the manly thing. Be romantic.

- A. Do date nights at least once a month. Some couples manage to find the time to go on dates every week, but once a month is sufficient. Plan a date that evokes a great date you went on earlier in your courtship, or plan a date that gets the blood pumping again: skydiving, whale watching, or a movie, to name a few.
- B. Celebrate your anniversary. Your anniversary is really important to your spouse, and it should be to you too. It has symbolic meaning in addition to providing an opportunity to renew your love. Forgetting your anniversary is a big no-no. At the very least, have a dinner planned and a bottle of wine chilled.
- C. Keep intimate relations in bed strong. Don't let things dry up in bed, or take things for granted. Seek to please your wife as much as she pleases you, and keep exploring her and your own sexuality through one another.

13. TRUST HER COMPLETELY.

A lot of the things mentioned in this tutorial revolve around trust. If you don't trust your partner, you're probably living in a pretty miserable place. Learn to trust your wife in the same way that you want her to trust in you.

14. REVEAL YOUR PERSONALITY.

Marriage is an enduring opportunity to get to know somebody better and better over many, many years. If you keep an aspect of your personality secret or just closed off, you're probably not getting all that you want out of your marriage. It really does go to show: you get what you give.

- A. Have long conversations; make her laugh; share interests, hobbies and occupations; take her somewhere that has personal significance to you; encourage her to get to know your extended family (and do the same for hers); engage in debate; share fears, doubts, and vulnerabilities; be who you are, not who you think she wants you to be.

15. REMEMBER THE GOLDEN RULE.

The golden rule is not only important to our idea of morality, it also helps us navigate the sometimes stormy waters of a marriage. The golden rule is that you do unto others as you would have them do to you. All this means is "put yourself in their shoes" before you act.

- A. Of course, you need to have the right sort of perspective if you're going to use the golden rule, and you can't lie to yourself about what other people want. If you're unsure about something, ask yourself "What would I want to happen if I were in my wife's position?" This is generally a good exercise for you to engage in.
- B. If you're religious, share your religion with your wife. Draw on your faith for strength, and actively seek meaning with your partner on your life's journey. Give yourself to your wife as much as you give to your god. Maintain your values throughout.

16. TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR APPEARANCE.

Of course, the most important for last: practice good hygiene, look sharp as a tack inside and outside of the house and make sure you keep up the same general level of cleanliness that your wife does. If you care about how well your wife dresses and much often she brushes her teeth, she's sure to care about the same things.

17. CONCLUSION

And that's the way it should be between two people who love each other, shouldn't it?