

Secrets to **Successful Marriage**

**Every Muslim Couple's Guide to a
Long and Contented Married Life**

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PUBLISHERS

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Introduction

One of the greatest values of Islam is that it is based on the strength of its community and the basic unit of that community is not the individual but the family unit. When that unit functions well and is a source of love and peace for all its members, then the community will be strong and can flourish. When marriages break down, however, the community becomes weaker.

The Shari'ah Council recently reported a 40% divorce rate (and rising) amongst Muslim couples. This is shockingly high but also avoidable. In my workshops and counselling sessions I meet many husbands and wives who are frustrated and disappointed with their marriages. Lack of communication and misunderstanding over small issues snowball over time into causes of major anger and resentment. Marriage is no longer a source of tranquillity, but a source of stress. Some couples store their resentment and continue in unfulfilling marriages. Others divorce.

I have seen people who, in hindsight, regret acting in haste and getting divorced. If they could have their time again, they would give their marriage more of a chance. I also see many children of divorced couples who, as adults, are still suffering from the devastating effect of their parents' divorce decades ago. They are now carrying this baggage through into their own marriages and the cycle is repeating down the generations. This is a cycle that must be broken, insha'Allah.

It is my sincere intention in writing this book, to help our community overcome this fundamental issue. With thirty-five years' experience of counselling couples, I have gained an insight into the key factors that help a marriage be successful and the causes that can lead to disharmony. The advice and solutions that I have offered in my counselling sessions over the decades have worked to increase understanding between many, many couples and strengthen the marital bond, by the permission of Allah. I have gathered this experience and distilled it into three books, which I pray will be of use to all Muslim couples, whatever stage and state of their marriage, as prevention is always better than cure:

This first book, **Secrets to Successful Marriage**, deals with commonplace and everyday problems that affect married couples, whether newly married or experienced.

The second book in the series, **Secrets to Surviving In-Laws**, uncovers the much talked about (but often neglected) subject of in-laws.

The third book, **Secrets to Successful Families**, covers more complex marital and family issues in detail. It addresses the common issues in marriages and digs deeper to find root causes in order to effect lasting solutions for families.

There are four parts to this first book:

Finding the one focuses on pre-marriage. It might sound obvious, but looking for a spouse is a life decision and this is a crucial moment where you need to be honest, sincere, open and know what you want.

Keeping the love alive: Marriage can be an evergreen garden when given tender loving care. Sometimes you need to pull

out the weeds, sometimes water the flowers and devote time and care in order for the garden to flourish. It's the same with marriage. These chapters will show you how to tend your marriage to keep it successful, whether you are newlyweds or a seasoned couple.

Reflecting on 'me' to improve 'us': Every relationship has its ups and downs and there will inevitably be periods of time when we feel less fulfilled within the marriage. This section will give both partners tips about how to get through these periods and emerge stronger than before. By strengthening yourself, you are able to strengthen and support each other and thus the marriage.

Putting things right deals with more significant issues, how to recognise the signs of a serious problem within your marriage and, crucially, how to work through this stage without hurting each other.

As an Islamic counsellor, it is not my job to issue *fatwas* (rulings) or to advise on the matters of *fiqh* (jurisprudence). However, through speaking with scholars and people of knowledge, and also my own study of Islam, I do include some basic Islamic advice. All Qur'anic translations in this book are taken from Abdalhaqq and Aisha Bewley's translation - *The Noble Qur'an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English*.

Through the grace of Allah, I pray that the advice given in this book will be a help to those single Muslims seeking a marriage partner, to those couples starting out on their journey and wanting to learn more about marriage, and for those that are looking for solutions for their less-than-ideal marriages.

- Read the biography of the Prophet ﷺ and strive to emulate his example of good character. It was because of this that people were drawn to him and insha'Allah, you will find all of your relationships become easier.

Smile!

A smile in your brother's face is charity. (at-Tirmidhi)

We have seen how important good conduct and manners are in creating a calming home environment and a loving marital bond. The first part of this is having a cheerful face. Your spouse will see your face and assess your body language before they hear what you say. So make sure that it is a smile that they see.

A smile can say a hundred things from "I'm glad to have you in my life" to "Yes, I'm willing to compromise." Just that one small action can make the difference between your spouse looking forward to seeing you or not.

Sometimes when the worries of the world are weighing down on our shoulders, it is difficult to raise a smile. However, if you want to have the best possible relationship with your spouse, a harmonious and peaceful home environment and your spouse's undivided attention, then a genuine smile is the best place to start. If you think I am exaggerating, then let me ask you to stand in front of a mirror. First scowl and then smile. Which looks more welcoming, more pleasing to the heart and more beautiful to the eyes?

When I am counselling couples, husbands frequently tell me about their wives, "When I go to work, she's miserable, when I come back, it's the same." This complaint, most of the

time, comes from the man. It is rare for a woman to make the same complaint about her husband. So I would advise wives, in particular, to let your husband see you smile as he is leaving for work and smiling when he comes back.

Case Study

During a couple's counselling session, Uthman told me that he loved seeing a smile from his wife as he walked through the door. He said, "I don't think she realises but just seeing her smile melts all my troubles away." Consequently, none of his business worries or frustrations are brought into the house, thus creating a more harmonious environment for the family.

What to do next:

- ▶ Smile at your spouse before you part ways for the day. This will set the tone for the whole day. You will both have a better start to the day, knowing that you have left the house on a positive note and will hopefully return home to the same.
- ▶ Look at yourself in the mirror and see how much better you look, and consequently, how much brighter things can seem when you smile.
- ▶ Remember the hadith about a smile being charity. Practising this may well remove any difficulties you may be having, just by giving out that smile! Think of the rewards that you will be earning for it and it will become so much easier.