

*Restoring harmony when you don't feel happy in your marriage.*

Have you found yourself saying, "I'm just not happy in my marriage anymore"? If so, I have some food for thought for you.

David Walsh of Media and the Family has identified key messages that our culture constantly sends to us: easy, more, fast. Think of what we expect from our experiences at restaurants, on the internet. Those expectations have begun to filter into our relationships as well.

We want more from our marriages than previous generations. Only a generation ago the roles of men and women were more clearly defined. It was enough for men to be good providers and women to be good homemakers. With more women in the work force, we need and expect our mates to be our partner with household work, partner in raising children **and** to be our lover, best friend, confidant. What hasn't changed is that deeply satisfying relationships take time and energy. While we want more, easy and fast do not work in relationships. Easy and fast describe a one-night stand, not a long-term marriage. So if you want happiness in your relationship, don't look to your spouse or any other outside source. Look inside and do the transforming there.

1. Do a self check-up. Is my unhappiness at all connected with my work or my ideas of where I thought I'd be at this point in my life? How much energy have I been putting into the relationship? How well have I lovingly communicated my needs to my partner? Am I criticizing more than complimenting? Be sure not to ignore or overlook the obvious. For example, is my drinking or drug use, my work or travel schedule, my social or recreational life impacting the relationship?
2. Have I given up some meaningful activities? When you became a couple, it can be tempting to put so much energy into the relationship, you haven't been taking care of your individual needs. On the flip side, it can be easy for some to be so protective of individual needs that you haven't taken care of your "couple" relationship. You need a balance of self-care activities with time and energy into doing the things you enjoy as a couple.
3. Be the kind of person you expect others to be: thoughtful, positive, upbeat, respectful. It's amazing what we get from others when we approach them with positive regard.

So, I'm glad you have high expectations for your marriage - you want more than what you're seeing right now. Just remember that "more" takes energy and effort on both partners' parts.