

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTNERS IN A CONSCIOUS MARRIAGE

by Dale Bailey, Th.D.

Imago Relationship Therapy posits that there are compelling reasons beyond the moral ones for honoring one's wedding vows. One's emotional well-being, physical health, and spiritual evolution are also at stake. It is well documented that married people live longer and are happier. But marriage is in essence therapy, and one's partner's needs charts one's path to psychological and spiritual wholeness. Rather than leaving it to find oneself, one finds oneself through marriage. Here are some behaviors of conscious partners.

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They communicate their needs and desires to each other in constructive ways --- without criticism, provocation, or coercion. They accept all of each other's feelings, especially anger. Anger means pain usually rooted in childhood. Since spontaneous "dumping" is destructive, they learn constructive ways of expressing and containing anger and other negative emotions, which includes asking their partner for appointments for discussing them. This converts anger into passion and deeper bonding. They are committed to healing each other's wounds as the unconscious purpose of the relationship. They recognize their partner's needs to be a blueprint for their own personal growth, and that to use that will require intentionality and hard work. They educate each other about their childhood wounds. And taking inspiration from the romantic phase of their relationship, they

commit themselves to target their behavior to meet their partner's needs and heal their wounds --- unconditionally --- without asking for anything in return.

They accept each other's absolute separateness and different perception of reality --- as an equal. They explore each other's reality --- mirroring, validating, and empathizing with each other's experience.

They keep the energy of the relationship within its bounds. When frustrated or uncomfortable, they bring their concerns to their partner rather than withdrawing or turning to outside compensations.

They learn to own their own negative traits instead of projecting them onto their partner. They accept, manage, and integrate those parts of themselves which they wish to disown and deny.

They develop their own and encourage their partner's contra-sexual energy, breaking out of gender or sexual stereotypes. Each strives toward androgyny in the sharing of responsibilities --- income, household chores, childcare, etc.

They develop their own lost strengths and abilities rather than relying on their partner to make up for these. They call each other to wholeness.

They care for others and the world with which they are able to experience their oneness. Being aware of their power, competence, caring, and capacity for intimacy with each other, they want to direct their excess energies to the world outside their relationship.