

# Marriage Policies

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Marriage policies are much like signal lights at intersections. They ensure safe travel through areas that pose likely collisions. If obeyed, then safe travel is certain. Just like there is no need to have a traffic signal at every intersection, there's no need to have a signal/policy for every relational conflict. Traffic signals and Marriage Policies are only needed when repetitive collisions have been experienced. When you experience repeated arguments over the same issue, then it's time to create a relationship policy for your marriage. Below you'll find the most common policies that most successful marriages subscribe to. Most marriage policies are two-way. They are equally applicable to each partner.

## A. Communication Policy (the Structure of Communication)

### Part 1

1. Each partner has the **right to request** time to talk. "I'd like to talk about \_\_\_\_\_. Is this a good time for you?"
2. Each partner has the **right to decline** a request. "No. Now is not a good time."
3. If, your partner declines, then they are **obligated to provide you a better time**. "Ok, if not now, when would be a better time for you." "How about tonight after I get home and had a chance to unwind" Provide a specific date and time. This prevents the nagging/pestering that usually comes after being declined.
4. Make sure you **keep the appointment**.
5. If you can't keep the appointment and must break your commitment, do so at least 15 minutes before the fact, not after the fact. Then reschedule a new appointment.

### Part 2

1. Keep scheduled conversations to **no more than 20-30 minutes**. Once the time limit has been reached, then honor the agreement to end and reschedule for another session. If however, the conversation went well in the first 15-20 minutes, you can request to go another 15-20 minutes if all agree. If not, then just reschedule.
2. If during the 15-20 minutes one or both of you begin to escalate, then either one of you calls for a **time out**. This could be as little as 3-5 minutes or more. Then come back and resume. It's best to get plenty of physical distance during the time out. If after the time out, and you're not able to de-escalate, then reschedule the conversation. There is no point forcing the conversation during a time of escalation.
3. To keep the conversation on point, grab a **piece of paper and write the topic of conversation on the page**. Use this by pointing to the page and topic when your partner gets off topic. Invariably you'll come across many issues as you work through the one that was initiated. When you do you can respond by saying, "Yes, that is an important issue and we do need to discuss this as well. Let's write this down and schedule a time to do so. Now let's get back to our original issue."

## B. Relationship Policy

For the enhancement of any marriages, friendships are a vital contribution. Yet friendships can also be the demise of a marriage as well. Thus, a clear understanding of how friendships will be allowed into the marriage is vital.

### Part 1 – Same Sex friends

It's important that each of you have your own same-sex friends. Since you cannot meet every need of your spouse, same-sex friends become an important ingredient of getting your needs met. Here are some rules for same-sex friendships.

- 1 It is best that same-sex friends **be married as well**. Single same-sex friends are usually of a different mind-set than married couples and they can draw you into singleness thinking. In rare exceptions, there may be a single same-sex friend allowed if your spouse approves of this friendship. If at a later time, this friendship become a concern for your spouse then it would be time to reconsider continuing this friendship.
- 2 It is best that same-sex friends are **in healthy and thriving marriages**. This will only add to your marriage, especially if you're experiencing some difficulties. If your same-sex friend is experiencing challenges in their marriages, then it is hoped that they're seeking help.
- 3 Your same-sex friend needs to not only want the best for you, but more than that, they should **want the best for your marriage**. If they must choose, then they'll chose your marriage over you...thus holding you accountable to be the best spouse you can be. A good friend knows that if you take good care of your marriage then your marriage will take good care of you.
- 4 Your same-sex friend should **never compete with your time over your marriage**. They know that your marriage comes first and will defer to your marriage.
- 5 Have your **same sex friend spend time, on occasion, with you and your spouse**. It only enhances all the people involved when your same-sex friends and their spouses are invited to spend time with you and your spouse. A foursome outing can add to the overall trust and comfortableness to your spouse regarding your friends.
- 6 **You can each veto each other's same-sex friends**. Be careful with this one and use it very sparingly. There may be times when your spouse's same sex friend makes you uncomfortable...for whatever reason. If this is the case, then let your spouse know and ask them to diminish or fade out the relationship entirely. Yep, you're being forced to choose: It either me or your friend. The answer should be a no-brainer. Again, use this one sparingly.

## Part 2 – Opposite Sex Friends

1. I strongly recommend against having opposite sex friends while you are in a marriage relationship.
2. The vast majority of affairs are birthed out of these kinds of relationships. Most folks do not intend to end up in an affair. It usually starts in a very innocent way with good intentions to help, support, or encourage an opposite friend. Often, one side of this relationship begins to look forward to the help, support or encouragement. They look forward to meeting...again. All of us tend to under estimate the power between the male/female attraction.
3. Most people who find themselves in an affair have thought, “This would never happen to me.”
4. Some couples believe that there can be exceptions. Be very careful entertaining this.
5. Many couples have adhered to this policy for their entire marriage life and have lost nothing and gained a strong and secure marriage.