

**The Marriage Playbook™**  
**5 Fundamentals of Marriage**  
**By Ace & Bethany McKay**



In the recent Olympics, there was just one story after the other of people who have pushed their body, mind and spirit to new levels all to represent their country to the best of their ability. I wish husbands and wives, would be that passionate about their relationship.

If we want to go for the Gold in our marriage, we have to work hard and train everyday, sacrifice to show our spouse that nothing else matters but each other, and always shoot for the Gold, because to even get the Silver or Bronze is still an accomplishment that most can't say they pulled off.

Watching Michael Phelps swim, just points out that with the right preparation, we can win, we can break records doing it too, even when water gets in your goggles and you're going thru the motions nearly blind. Phelps makes it look easy but he didn't just show up in Beijing and say, "I'd like to swim please." He'd been preparing since he was 11 to accomplish all that he has and now he's the all-time great Olympic athlete. However, we show up on our wedding day saying, "I DO" and "I LOVE YOU" thinking that's enough to make a marriage work. You have to keep training for the next event, pushing your mind, body and spirit with passion like an athlete.

The basics of any sport have basic fundamentals. When they are built upon properly, they lay the ground work for success. When an athlete or team starts to make mistakes they simply go back to the basics so they can build on the only thing that can help them improve which is a solid foundation. There are 5 fundamentals in marriage you can build upon, and may already be doing, that can create a team mentality among you and your spouse.

### **1. Open Communication!**

When a couple realizes that they are a team, the communication has to begin. A team on and off the field has to be in constant communication with each other in order for them to win. So in your marriage why would it be any different? As our dating relationship evolves the deeper we go into conversation about who we are or are willing to reveal. At some point, couples tend to stop that free forum discussions about who they are, what they've been through or what they want to become.

Our spouse is the one person that should love us unconditionally and vice versa. Yet we tend to put up walls around certain topics that keep us from getting closer together. You or your spouse may be in a place where the lack of communication has been breached due to a trust issue. You can't change your spouse but even if you are not to blame for how the level of intimacy is among your conversations, you can make your time and attention available to them. By doing so, you create an environment that makes them feel safe and the trust and words will flow freely. The best part is that in time, this becomes an effortless motion, like walking or chewing gum. You won't have to think about it, it'll come naturally.

## **2. Keeping passion and intimacy a priority.**

Passion is in the little things. Intimacy is doing the little things often. We allow work, kids, etc. to take our time and energy away from our spouse. If you do little things every day, like text messages while at work, flowers for no reason or first affections when you get home (very important after kids because they need to see Mommy and Daddy loving each other) you are investing into your spouse and letting them see that you love them. Not just saying it, but showing it. If you put an English speaker in a room with someone who only speaks Spanish, there is very little communication and opening up going on. The same in marriage when it comes to speaking each others love language. You have to speak to them in the way they receive love in order to show the proper passion. If you give a gift to your spouse to show love but what they need is words of affirmation, you missed it. You end up sending a message that says I will love you but on my terms and your needs don't matter. It takes practice and not setting the bar so high that you can't maintain it, but the daily investment brings your marriage closer together.

Taking the time to learn how to speak all five love languages that Dr. Gary Chapman talks about his book "The Five Love Languages" is key to a successful game plan. Your spouse has one or two that speak love to them best. You should know this as well as a swimmer knows the length of the pool. However, don't neglect the love languages that seem small to them, because, when those go unspoken for a while, they can quickly become a primary need/desire that they may try to fill other ways or with other people when they are not shown at home. In case you don't know what the love languages are, there are five you need to learn. They are:

1. Physical Touch (*Doesn't always mean SEX*)
2. Words of Affirmation (*Can be a simple love note or text during the day*)
3. Acts of Service (*Means doing something she knows needs doing but doesn't have time as well as the things she leans on you for on a regular basis*)
4. Gifts (*Doesn't have to be expensive*)
5. Quality Time (*Date nights need to be a regular occurrence. Babysitters are an investment into your relationship. Even swapping kids with other couples, you can easily set the other couple to be accountability for dates without the added cost*)

If don't know what your spouse speaks mainly in their love language, just watch how they show love to you the most. That's a good tip to how they want to receive love from you.

## **3. Making Date Night's feel right.**

With the economy being so unpredictable and tight, you may feel this is an expense that you can't afford. The great thing about date night is you can get creative in your approach without a whole lot of money. I've found that there are quite of few free things in my community I just had to check with the visitation bureau to find them. If you have kids, babysitters can be pricey so working your relationships with other couples with kids really helps. They watch your kids on date night and vice versa.

I say all that so we can remove the excuses of why you are not making this a priority. We date each other early in our marriage but life kicks in over time and we allow date nights to be pushed to the back burner. It's when life gets crazy that dates nights become most important. The main idea behind them is because your spouse comes first; before the kids and your job. One day the kids will move out and the job may change or go away but your spouse is there and how well you invest now will dictate how well that is going later in your marriage. Date nights are another great way to open up the lines of communication. As you change & grow, your needs and desires will too, so date night helps you to reconnect after a busy week. This is another way, for husbands, to really get points with their wife when date nights occur regularly. They open doors to achieve oneness with your wife, something she longs for with you. Date nights also give you a break from the drains of the house, kids, and the world. Finally, a date night shows your wife that she is important enough that you schedule time with her. All the things you put in your palm/blackberry each week, putting your date nights in first allow you to see where your priorities are.

#### **4. Observe Other Marriages Doing it Right.**

The one thing being a married couple does, it attaches to other married couples. No matter how long you have been married, there are at least one or more couples in your circle of influence that are there to live life with you. This is what my wife and I call the '12<sup>th</sup> Man'.

In football and soccer, each team has 11 men on the field during each play, but you will often hear announcers talk about the 12<sup>th</sup> man. Now if there is a 12<sup>th</sup> man on the field, the team gets penalized, but most of the time when they talk about the 12<sup>th</sup> man, they mean the crowd. The crowd cheers louder when the other team is trying to score. They also cheer for their team when they do something well or when they are trying to rally the team for a comeback; the same goes for marriage. Our 12<sup>th</sup> man is someone outside of our marriage who is passionate about you and your spouse. A mentor couple who has seen their team through hard times is a great 12<sup>th</sup> man or each spouse can find their 12<sup>th</sup> man in someone of the same sex to talk to who can cheer them on. The 12<sup>th</sup> man always needs to be someone of the same sex. Wives need to talk to other wives and husbands need to talk to other husbands. Otherwise, your 12<sup>th</sup> man could end up on the field and you could get penalized in the form of a physical or emotional affair.

When you talk to your 12<sup>th</sup> man about your marriage, be honest with them. They can't help you if you don't tell them the truth. Wives, this is not the time to sit around and complain about your husband, that wouldn't be showing respect, but rather talk about your troubles is a discreet way that doesn't make your 12<sup>th</sup> man lose respect for him as a man. You wouldn't want your husband going off complaining about you, show him that same respect; remember you're his cheerleader. I know it is very easy when women get together for them to complain about their husbands "flaws", but if you want to be a strong team you can't bad mouth your teammate. I have seen quarterbacks bad mouth another player on their team during an after game interview; this only adds tension between them and doesn't motivate them to play better next week.

## 5. Set Goals Together

Marriage, like a race or lap swim, is not about sprinting but having a marathon mentality. We have to pace ourselves and train to build up the stamina required to sustain the endurance to finish the race strong.

If you don't have a plan in your marriage of what to do when life happens, then you will inevitably fail. No team or solo player ever goes out on the field with the idea to score a goal, make a touchdown or shoot a basket without a way to get there.

Now the question here might be, "I don't know what life's gonna throw at me so how can I plan?" Well, that's partly true.

Based on what happens in life to other people, you can say, "What would I do in that situation?" The answers to those types of questions will help you make up your playbook.

Are you starting to get the idea? These are some truths in your relationship that if you don't have an offense, you will be forced to play defense. You can't wait for life to happen and just expect to know what to do. When a team goes on the field, court or rink, they know what they are going to do to score and score often. *When was the last time your marriage scored?* You and your spouse have strengths and weaknesses, talents and gifts that if you learn to play them to your advantage. Together you can win one game at a time and win the marriage Super bowl.

For starters, pick one place to start working on, something that can bring you closer and can create oneness. What happens to you; happens to both of you.

Praying together is one of the strongest moves you can make on the field. It's been my experience that having a marriage that revolves around God first is a marriage that last a lifetime. It's like a team huddle. You talk about what the other needs, you two pray about it and then you pray about those when you are apart and together. This opens up so much banter that the two of you will never run out of things to say. Within the first time you 'huddle' there will be things you could share that your spouse never knew was a struggle. A struggle not talked about just builds up walls among the team and isolation takes over.

You want to just wait till life happens and then see what you're made of? That's why the 50% of the marriages that fail; FAIL!

Your marriage is a badge of honor. No matter what state it is in. If you have holes to crawl out of, then think of your team as the underdog that is the punch line to every joke that exists. You've probably heard a good joke about the team you hate most. It's funny because it's true. Now the way to make it not funny is to change your teams play and start winning again. This may sound easier said than done but having an attitude of whatever it takes will start you on the road to victory. Whatever needs to happen to change YOU so you can be the best version of YOU.

In Chinese, the chant for GO! GO! is pronounced *Jaiyou!* The next time we need a pep talk in our Marriage this can be our cheer to our spouse that we are running along side them as we go for the Gold.

