

The romantic love that brought you together as a couple will not be sufficient to sustain you through the storms every marriage goes through. In order to withstand the winds of adversity, you must develop and nurture a much deeper love.

Romantic love is important and should be nurtured in your marriage. More importantly, you should nurture the type of love the ancient Greeks referred to as agape. ***Agape is defined as the giving of oneself while expecting nothing in return.*** This type of love will help you achieve your dream of a lifelong, happy and healthy marriage in spite of all the storms you go through together.

Expressing agape presents a challenge to many who have become accustomed to giving only when something is given in return. When we give something to our spouse and expect something in return, we lessen the value of our act of service. This also leads to

resentment on our part if little or nothing is returned.

Overcoming the natural tendency to expect something in return may be difficult, but it is possible. Achieving this attitude shift is one of the keys to unlocking the door to greater joy and less misery in marriage.



How do you develop and nurture agape in your marriage?

The first step is to identify any obstacles preventing you from developing and nurturing this type of love. Then develop and implement a plan to

overcome these obstacles.

Your spouse may first meet your efforts in expressing agape with skepticism. Be patient and keep expressing agape. Eventually, your spouse will begin to reciprocate.

As with all good things in life, there is a certain element of risk. Expressing agape leaves you more vulnerable to being hurt. This fear has stopped many people from fully expressing agape towards their spouse. Wayne Gretzky said, “You miss 100% of the shots you don't take”. If you want a healthy and happy marriage, you don't want to miss taking this shot.

Your next step is to develop a list of what you can “give of yourself”. Don't just think of big things, but also include mostly little things like leaving a note on the mirror, doing some of his or her household work, or filling his or her car with gas. In essence, think of things you can do or say to let your spouse know you love him or her.

Action Plan

Write down four things you can do to express agape to your spouse.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Each morning take two minutes to review your list, add to it and select what you are going to do that day to express agape.

The most important step is to follow through with your plan. The best plans to strengthen your marriage are useless if never implemented.

By developing a lifetime habit of adding to your list and implementing it, you can achieve your dream of a happy, healthy, lifelong marriage.



For more information on gaining the skills and knowledge to form and sustain a healthy marriage please visit:

The New York City Healthy Marriage Resource Center

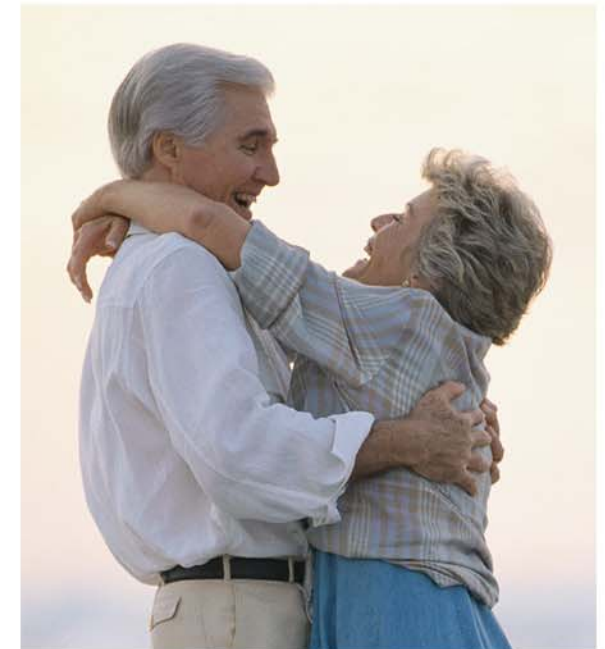
nyc.healthymarriage.org

To order additional copies of this publication visit
www.healthymarriage.org

© 2005 The National Healthy Marriage Institute

Marriage

Increase the Joy
Decrease the Misery



Agape

A Key to Unlocking the Door to
a Healthy and Happy Marriage