

TELLING YOUR MARITAL STORY

By Joyce Parker, Ph.D.

In his book, *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail and How You Can Make Yours Last*, John Gottman, Ph.D. suggests **that couples tell their marital story to each other to help reinforce positive beliefs and feelings about the marriage.** Usually, couples have some history of positive feelings and interactions that brought them together and served as the foundation of their relationship. If however, only negative feelings are evoked, attempt to discuss these feelings with each other in nonjudgmental and noncritical ways. Try to determine why you don't feel better about your shared past and how you might change so that you may resolve some of these issues in the future.

To tell your marital story read each question below. You may want to take some notes or write down your answers. Then discuss your answers with each other. Answer with as much detail as you wish.

1. What was your first impression of your spouse? Was there something about this person that made him/her stand out?
2. Think back to the time you were dating. What were some of the highlights? What were some of the tensions? What made the relationship worth pursuing?
3. How did you decide to get married? Were there obvious differences that you knew you'd have to overcome? How did you overcome them?
4. What do you remember about your first year of marriage? Did you have to make certain adjustments to being married? How did you do it?
5. What about your transition to becoming parents? What were the most difficult and most rewarding aspects of this period in your lives?
6. Looking back, what moments stand out as the really good times in your marriage so far?
7. Looking back, what moments stand out as the really hard times in your marriage so far? Why do you think you stayed together? How did you get through these difficult times?
8. How would you say your marriage today is different from when you first got married?