

# 10 Marriage Rules You Should Break

Forget age-old axioms for long-term wedded bliss

By [Denise Schipani](#) Posted April 26, 2010 from [WomansDay.com](#)

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The two of you should do everything together; work out every disagreement (without actually *fighting*); spend every night in the same bed; and never, ever be bored. Say what?! These and other so-called “rules” for marriage need some serious debunking. And it’s not just because rules your mother may have passed on are outdated; some may be downright damaging. In fact, “breaking some marriage ‘rules’ may be the best thing you can do for your relationship,” says Barbara Bartlein, RN, MSW, psychotherapist and author of *Why Did I Marry You Anyway?* Here are 10 rules you can break with confidence.

## 1. Never go to bed angry.

Where did *this* one come from? Turns out, it may go as far back as the Bible, which advises not letting the sun go down on your anger. But trying to work through a problem when you’re tired and stressed won’t get you anywhere, says Elizabeth Lombardo, PhD, psychologist and author of *A Happy You: Your Ultimate Prescription for Happiness*.

“Agree to disagree for now, and to revisit the issue when you’re rested.”

<http://www.ahappyyou.com/>



## 2. Always be 100% honest.

In marriage, no-holds-barred honesty is not always the best policy. For example, “you don’t need to share details of past relationships,” says Bartlein. “That invites comparisons, and when you compare, someone comes up short.” The bottom line: You need to be polite and caring when it comes to your partner’s feelings.



### 3. Never vacation without each other.

The received wisdom here is that if you have time off from your jobs and lives, you should naturally prefer to spend it together. One problem with this rule is that you and your spouse may not have the same definition of a great getaway (you like to ski, he's a beach bum). The other danger, says Dr. Lombardo, is the belief "that you have to be each other's *everything*, and that's just not realistic." Sometimes, you need a spa weekend, and he may want to go camping (or vice versa). Just be sure that you don't *always* take off without each other.



### 4. If you fight, you're headed for divorce.

Actually, says Bartlein, research shows that couples who *never* fight—assuming that means they're holding back to avoid conflict—are *more* likely to split. You need to find ways to fight healthily and productively (without blaming, name-calling and the like), but that said, being committed to respectfully airing out conflicts is a far better rule than "keep your mouth shut."



### 5. Once you have children, they come first.

"So often, I see couples who have put their relationship on hold in order to be good parents," says Dr. Lombardo. But those couples, she says, have it exactly backward. Making your relationship top priority is better not just for you, but for your children, who need to see you in charge and who feel safer and more secure with parents who have a loving relationship. "Create couple-only time during which you do not discuss bills or children, where you do fun activities and enjoy each other's company." The kids'll be all right.



### 6. You should never sleep in separate beds.

Um, snore much? It's a myth that couples always sleep better and more cozily together than apart. One partner may be a toss-and-turner, or one may hit the hay early while the other keeps a reading light burning till the wee hours. So if one of you occasionally decamps to the guest room, don't sweat it. "Getting a good night's sleep is crucial to the health of your mind, body *and* marriage," says Dr. Lombardo. Just be sure a separate-bed habit isn't about avoiding sex or physical intimacy.



### 7. Partners should sync up their hobbies.

Though spending every free moment you have training for a marathon while your spouse works on his classic car isn't good for your marriage, neither is subscribing to the notion you should quit doing what *you* love just because your husband doesn't love the same things. Giving up your passions is akin to forgoing your independence, and "without independence in a marriage people feel trapped," says Bartlein. Pursue your separate interests *and* find activities you both enjoy.



### 8. If there's no spark, you're doomed.

Many married couples understand intellectually that they won't always experience that I've-been-drugged-by-love feeling in a long-term relationship. "But many still believe that when the spark dies out, it means they're in the wrong relationship, and seek something new," says Bartlein. Long-term relationships survive on commitment and trust, out of which grows love. The mistake here is to believe that you can live forever on fireworks, or even just love, alone.



### 9. Boring is bad.

The problem with this so-called rule, says Bartlein, is when couples confuse a calm, predictable union with a bad one. A drama-filled relationship may feel exciting, but in the long run it's not likely to be healthy. Isn't it better, she says, to "boringly" know where your spouse is every night than to be "excited" by constant ups and downs? "Better to have a safe, relaxed, 'boring' life together in the everyday. You can always inject excitement with vacations and activities."



### 10. You should have sex with your partner to make him/her happy.

This may be a particular problem for women, especially new mothers. "Sex becomes yet another item on your to-do list, and you think you have to do it for the sake of your marriage, and the happiness of your spouse," says Dr. Lombardo. While neither of those reasons is wrong, they shouldn't be the only reasons. "Sex is for *both* of you."



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