

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A CONSCIOUS MARRIAGE

1. *You realize that your love relationship has a hidden purpose—the healing of childhood wounds.* Instead of focusing entirely on surface needs and desires, you learn to recognize the unresolved childhood issues that underlie them. When you look at marriage with this X-ray vision, your daily interactions take on more meaning. Puzzling aspects of your relationship begin to make sense to you, and you have a greater sense of control.
2. *You create a more accurate image of your partner.* At the very moment of attraction, you began fusing your lover with your primary caretakers. Later you projected your negative traits onto your partner, further obscuring your partner's essential reality. As you move toward a conscious marriage, you gradually let go of these illusions and begin to see more of your partner's truth. You see your partner not as your savior but as another wounded human being, struggling to be healed.
3. *You take responsibility for communicating your needs and desires to your partner.* In an unconscious marriage, you cling to the childhood belief that your partner automatically intuitively knows your needs. In a conscious marriage, you accept the fact that, in order to understand each other, you have to develop clear channels of communication.
4. *You become more intentional in your interactions.* In an unconscious marriage, you tend to react without thinking. You allow the primitive response of your old brain to control your behavior. In a conscious marriage, you train yourself to behave in a more constructive manner.
5. *You learn to value your partner's needs and wishes as highly as you value your own.* In an unconscious marriage, you assume that your partner's role in life is to take care of your needs magically. In a conscious marriage, you let go of this narcissistic view and divert more and more of your energy to meeting your partner's needs.
6. *You embrace the dark side of your personality.* In a conscious marriage, you openly acknowledge the fact that you, like everyone else, have negative traits. As you accept responsibility for this dark side of your nature, you lessen your tendency to project your negative traits onto your mate, which creates a less hostile environment.
7. *You learn new techniques to satisfy your basic needs and desires.* During the power struggle, you cajole, harangue, and blame in an attempt to coerce your partner to meet your needs. When you move beyond this stage, you realize that your partner *can indeed be a resource for you*—once you abandon your self-defeating tactics.
8. *You search within yourself for the strengths and abilities you are lacking.* One reason you were attracted to your partner is that your partner had strengths and abilities that you lacked. Therefore, being with your partner gave you an illusory sense of wholeness. In a conscious marriage, you learn that the only way you can truly recapture a sense of oneness is to develop the hidden traits within yourself.
9. *You become more aware of your drive to be loving and whole and united with the universe.* As a part of your God-given nature, you have the ability to love unconditionally and to experience unity with the world around you. Social conditioning and imperfect parenting made you lose touch with these qualities. In a conscious marriage, you begin to rediscover your original nature.
10. *You accept the difficulty of creating a good marriage.* In an unconscious marriage, you believe that the way to have a good marriage is to pick the right partner. In a conscious marriage you realize you have to be the right partner. As you gain a more realistic view of love relationships, you realize that a good marriage requires commitment, discipline, and the courage to grow and change; marriage is hard work.

Let's take a closer look at number ten, the need to accept the difficulty involved in creating a good marriage, because none of the other nine will come to fruition unless you first cultivate your willingness to grow and change.