

# HER VIEW: Secret of good marriage is mutual trust

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In August, my husband and I celebrated our 58th wedding anniversary in the nursing home.

On that occasion, a young employee there asked me what were the secrets of a good, long marriage. I was taken a bit by surprise and only a flip answer occurred to me right then - "Don't go to bed mad."

Later, as I thought about it, I realized that while that is true, I had really missed the boat on this. I should have said the real key is mutual trust.

Trust is truly a fragile thing - one to be guarded at all times for, once lost, regaining and rebuilding it is a long, arduous task that is often unsuccessful. The marriage vows are at once a solemn promise and a contract agreement, witnessed by others and as legally binding as any other contract. A couple takes vows to a lifelong commitment to look after the well-being of the other and to be totally loyal to each other, to the exclusion of all others.

It really boils down to behaving responsibly and with self-discipline. The best way to learn these traits is in the home by parental example. Sadly these days, too many young people grow up in such dysfunctional and abusive homes that they never witness a truly good example of such behavior.

If a couple truly love each other, these vows should be relatively easy to keep. I know that because I loved my husband, I was determined to never knowingly hurt him in any way, either physically or emotionally. I knew if I were to be able to trust him, I had to be worthy of his trust. Therefore, I was never tempted to flirt or in any way try to make him jealous. I didn't need a jealous display to know his love.

One of the aspects of a good marriage is exclusivity, the feeling that no one else can possibly feel this great. This also makes a good case for abstinence before marriage or commitment. If you have no other experience to compare with what you now have, there is no basis for comparison. The other doesn't have to worry about measuring up to what has gone before. Therefore, one's thoughts as well as actions are loyal too.

Another aspect of trust concerns privacy and keeping secret that which should remain only between the couple. Good sex depends on trust. After all, it is probably the most undignified action one engages in. To be able to give oneself completely to the other, without reservations or fear, is essential to its being all it can be. Learning that the intimate details of what occurred in the bedroom have been shared with outsiders can have a serious inhibiting effect on full enjoyment.

Also, being able to trust the other with innermost thoughts, knowing that confidence will be kept and respected is part of the solid foundation of a good marriage. That is why the courts have recognized this and ruled that a spouse cannot be forced to testify against the other. Being able to confide in the other is part of the cement of a good relationship. We all have a very private part of ourselves and letting the other into that world is a big step and not one taken lightly. To be a confidant is a privilege and everyone should be worthy of that privilege and respect it.

It is refreshing to know there are some young people who truly want to have a good, lifelong marriage. I wish I'd had the time and more appropriate occasion then to give her the above reply. I sensed she really wanted a better answer than the one I gave her. Maybe I'll share a copy of this column with her. I hope she knows the happiness I've experienced all these years.

Marrying Bruce was the best decision I've ever made.

**Lenna Harding** grew up in Pullman and lived her first 20 and past 30 years here. She is a longtime member of the League of Women Voters and served on the board of the Gladish Community and Cultural Center