

Building a marriage takes work

By Robin Spear
Copley News Service

After months of planning and preparation, Matt and Eileen's wedding went off without a hitch.

They recently returned from a glorious week on Maui, and the last thank-you note was just mailed out. Settled in a new home with a small but functional amount of furniture, they're able to relax, knowing it's all behind them now.

Or, should we say, all before them.

Matt and Eileen — and thousands of other newlywed couples — have just embarked on a life-time adventure, a job that began at the first stage of commitment and which, in a good marriage, will never be complete.

Your first weeks and months together as a married couple will be intense and full of enlightening discoveries and satisfying experiences.

Establishing yourselves as a unit in which love, happiness and common goals prevail takes time and practice. Don't expect the gears that will help get you through the intricacies of life to begin synchronizing magically.

In many ways marriage is a business proposition. Both you and your spouse will bring operational skill, subtle and intuitive knowledge and common sense into the

partnership and together forge ahead into a successful life.

Undoubtedly you've gotten snowed under with wedding gifts that have given you decorating ideas. Since you'll be combining old and new plus some personal treasures, solicit each other's thoughts and ideas and blend your lifestyles together. Discuss and provide for individual needs before they become conflicts (i.e., one of you may need the laundry done sooner than the other).

Shared ideas and common living quarters translate into cooperative chore allocation. You and your spouse can partake in dual "10-minute cleanup sessions" by tackling rooms one at a time — together. This way, each person knows where the other person likes things stored, and both can do it on their own next time as a pleasant surprise to the spouse.

Avoid "chore wars" by realizing you may hold a different priority system when it comes to household duties. Before long you'll know what bugs your partner most, and your system will be established.

You and your partner need time-outs, too, as much time as possible, but at least every day. Don't clog communication channels or lose sight of your dreams and reasons for being together. Here are some ideas:

- **Fitness.** Ideally, exercise is a daily routine for you. Why not do it together? Of course you'll have to recognize inherent physiological differences in strength and endurance. Choose a sport such as cycling, swimming or brisk walking that can be enjoyable despite varied skill levels.

- **Shopping.** If you've both got the time, cruise the aisle together again at your favorite grocery store. It will go faster and you'll have a good time laughing about products and choosing menus. It's also a good opportunity to introduce your palate's likes and dislikes.

- **Working at home.** If one of you has to work at home periodically, chances are the other could also bring home an office task. While it's not exactly quality time together, it makes it easier when both partners are busy with the same chore.

- **Mealtime.** Put away the books, turn off the television and cease business talk. Use your meals together as a time to discuss vacation or holiday plans, movies you'd like to see or something funny you heard on the radio.

- **Let little things pass, especially if in the long run they won't make a bit of difference.**

- **Stick to one issue, and don't let a small thing trigger a series of items you'd like discussed. Single**



matters can often be resolved in five to 10 minutes if you're honest and straightforward in your approach.

- **Avoid blaming — odds are neither of you is right or wrong. Your goal is to solve the problem, not have winners or losers.**

Experts say that money is the major source of marital strife, so sound fiscal policy is a must if you're to avoid falling into this stereotype. Early on you'd be smart to sit down with your partner and set some goals.

Make lists of what you own, what you'd like to own, what savings account figure you'd like, trips you'd like to plan, etc., and balance this against your incoming funds.

After a couple of months you'll have a good idea what monthly bills you can expect to owe, and how you'll meet your goals will become clearer.

Remind each other that you're working toward the same goals, and learn to compromise along the way for extraordinary circumstances.

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