

# Foundations

Winter

## Marriage, Work and Music

**D**o you like to listen to music while you are at work? Is it allowed? Lots of people enjoy having music playing in the background while they do their tasks either at work or at home. Some people enjoy listening to podcasts or talk shows at work and don't find it a distraction.

### Adjusting the Volume

You might consider your marriage as a kind of background music to the rest of your life. Your relationship is often not the thing at the front of your mind as you go about your day's activities but it is there just the same. If your relationship is very good the effect on your work life is probably very positive. Happy people are more productive and not as easily distracted, while workers struggling with relationship issues are often less productive. It's like having really bad music playing while you are trying to concentrate.

### A Question of Balance

Most couples don't spend a majority of their time thinking about their relationship or doing marriage enrichment activities. They are too busy earning a living, providing for their children, or working on meeting a deadline for a project. The problem occurs when you lose track of what is most important—your love for each other. You are likely to have lots of different jobs over your lifetime but hopefully you will only have one great marriage.



### Keeping it Positive

As you pursue your career and find the path to your earning a living, take a moment to bring the background music of your relationship to the front of your mind. Do you like what you hear? Does it bring a smile to your face? Do you need to make some changes so that your lives can be more positive and productive? What might some of these changes be? Here are a few, they are simple but that doesn't mean they are easy.

### Balance Between You

How about the balance between the work paths the two of you are on? Respect for each other's journey is so important. One may bring in more money, while the other is contributing more to the upkeep of the household. A job in a hospital might require a lot more time flexibility than a job in an

office. That does not necessarily make one more important than the other. You need to feel respected for your work, and so does your spouse.

### Small Change

Remember to tell your spouse that you love them. How often is hard to say but a general rule might be a little more often than you do now. Make time for each other. It might mean getting up a little earlier to have a cup of coffee together or talking for a few minutes before you go to bed. Ask your spouse for ideas about what would feel good to them. If you haven't taken the [Love Languages quiz](#), consider doing that. Then you'll know that you're speaking your spouse's love language. And finally, see the music of your marriage as something that enriches the fabric of your whole life.

# Your Job, My Job, OUR life

**Y**ou were probably both working when you got married, and you knew how the jobs/careers you had at that point could work together. After all, you had already been fitting them into your life. But neither home life or jobs are static.

## Changing Goalposts

Marie was an administrative assistant when she married Tom. It was far from her dream job but she took it to get into a company she wanted to work for. Tom also had a “placeholder” job, but was hoping to open his own business with a partner. Within six months, Marie got a promotion and Tom had opened a business. Skip ahead to the next year when they found out that Marie was pregnant with twins.

In this couple’s case, things had changed substantially both at work and at home. How do couples handle shifts like this? It is not at all uncommon for jobs to change and families to change. How do couples handle it? Where is the guidebook?

## Managing Careers

Jennifer Petriglieri researched many couples juggling two careers and marriage. She interviewed couples starting out, raising young families, and later along in their lives, and published the book, *Couples That Work*.

## Three Transitions

In it, she outlines the three major transitions couples face in the process of juggling work and marriage.

Well, pretty much the first thing you need to know about career advancement is to dress for the job you WANT, not the job you have.



**The first is Working as a Couple.** When you’re setting up the basic rules, she suggests looking at your underlying values and goals rather than the practical splitting up of chores and responsibilities.

**The second transition she labels reinventing yourselves.** She says midlife crisis hits a couple, not just an individual. It’s time to reassess what is good for both people and for the family structure. Again, there’s a need to revisit your goals, and see if you can support one another’s dreams. Supporting each other equally is an important ingredient here.

**The third transition is when roles change** – one person gets sick, parents need care, children are leaving the nest. Once again, hearing your partner discuss what they see as their work opportunities, challenges and limitations and sharing your hopes and fears with them becomes an important and rewarding conversation.

## Communication is Key

What is most important to remember, Petriglieri feels, is that your values and attitudes are what should be shaping your decisions. Communicate, communicate, communicate to stay on the same page about jobs, chores, children, locations. Stay open to your partner, listen with your heart and your ears, and keep working toward what’s best for both of you. The only 50/50 part of marriage that really matters is in the realm of listening, respecting and caring.

*Couples that Work* is a thoughtful, practical, and well researched book. Maybe this is the guidebook!



# 4 F's for 2024



**Y**ou both have jobs and they are important. They take a huge amount of your time. But the most important person in your life is probably not with you at work. And even if the two of you do work together, it's hard to be doing the work of your marriage while doing the work of your employment. What are the ingredients that will help you to keep your relationship on track despite all the time you need to spend at work?

## **FLEXIBILITY**

The more you can be flexible about expectations, the easier it will be for the two of you to enjoy your time at home together. Be flexible about chores, about dinner time, about plans you've made. It will still sting if work gets in the way of a weekend away you'd planned, but being willing to shift the plans so that you leave later, come back earlier, or choose a different weekend is key. It doesn't mean, though, that it's okay for one of you to keep asking the other one to be flexible. That brings us to the second "F".

## **FAIRNESS**

You both have demands on you, and so each has to be fair about what you ask from the other. You can't work late every night without making some

accommodation. When you work late, you've taken away from the common time your spouse expects to share with you, and likely from your share of the household tasks. How will you compensate for that? If you earn more, will you take her to dinner next week? Will you buy him headphones he wanted but couldn't afford? And the loss of your presence should be acknowledged.

## **FUN**

Make sure to keep some fun in your life. With both of you working and a household to maintain, you'll need times to look forward to. It's tempting to fill the non-working hours with chores, and make fun time a low priority. But those relaxing times, even if they are brief, are so good for you! It is easier to get out of bed when you know that sometime during the day there is a coffee break

you'll share, a show you'll watch, a walk before dinner – something you promise each other that's enjoyable to both.

## **FAITH**

This doesn't refer to religious faith (although it could encompass that as well). This is faith in each other, the belief that the work each one does is meant to build up your common life. It is a belief that neither will make friendships at work more important than your friendship with one another. That faith is the rock bottom of all your marriage, and it is so important to have that faith as you each go off to work. You may leave with an unresolved conflict, but you go with the faith that you'll figure out your problems together. A day is a long time to have to live with an unresolved disagreement. A business trip is even longer. But if you believe that your spouse makes your relationship a priority, you'll work it out.

*This is the only report card where you'll be happy to get straight F's, but if you're able to keep all these elements alive in your relationship you'll be honor roll students in the school of marriage.*



# Interfaith Holiday Advice

**The holiday season** is a particularly sensitive one if the two of you come from different religious traditions – particularly if they are not both Christian traditions. The great to do about Christmas in our culture may leave your Jewish or Muslim spouse feeling left out.

How will you handle your differences around the holidays? The answer lies in how you handle your differences when it is not holiday season. Hopefully, with respect and conversation about the needs of each of you.

## Scripture Guides Us

In the book of the prophet Zechariah in the Hebrew scriptures is a section that talks about the coming together of people from different places and with different beliefs.

*Thus says the Lord of hosts: there shall yet come peoples, the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall approach those of another and say, “come! Let us go to implore the favor of the Lord”; and, “I too will go to seek the Lord.”... In those days ten men of every nationality, speaking different tongues, shall take hold, yes, take hold of every Jew by the edge of his garment and say, “Let us go with you, because we have heard God is with you.” (Zechariah 8:20-21,23)*

If we can remember that our customs are meant to express our beliefs and that they are not just about the way our family always celebrated, then we will have come a long way



along the path of respect for one another's beliefs.

## The Corner of Two Cloaks

A Catholic wife of a Jewish husband once wrote, “ I have taken hold of the corner of two cloaks, the Jew Jesus and the Jew with whom I am sharing my life.” Her efforts to honor her own beliefs and those of her husband have led her down a path that helps create a more respectful climate in our culture for all of us. We need to find within our different traditions the voice of the Lord calling us together, and to see the richness that this union provides.

# Nursery School Rules

**A number of years ago, a woman was writing about how she and her husband handled their dual career marriage.**

She said that her 18-year marriage in which both she and her husband have worked, is a healthy, vital marriage that includes two grade school children. Use the nursery school rules, she advises: Play nice, be fair, and take turns. That means taking turns being the point person at home, or take turns earning the bigger salary, play nice by staying faithful to your spouse no matter what temptations present themselves at work, and be fair by taking on tasks that benefit the family. She gives the example of her husband handling the taxes and vacation planning, while she handles home repairs. She says that the key to having a healthy marriage when both people work is to continue to adapt. Giving the example of the way a woman's

body changes through pregnancy, she says that both spouses have to be willing to grow and change in order to keep the marriage growing.

In the current situation, where there are many homes where both adults are either working out of their home, or both home because they've been furloughed from their jobs, it is vitally important to the relationship to remember the nursery school rules. What are the issues that come up for you? How do you make time for each other? How do you keep work (or looking for work) from spilling over into home time? The take home message is that recognizing how work impacts your home life and being respectful of your partner's feelings will help you negotiate this very important task.

# Exercise

## I know:

What I would like to do for work.

I might be unemployed in the next year.

A new job might involve moving.

Agree	Disagree	Unsure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## I understand:

That cell phones, tablets and other technology makes it hard to separate work and home time.

That problems at work can cause problems at home.

That each person's work is important.

Agree	Disagree	Unsure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## I believe:

That we need to talk to each other about the way our work affects our home life.

That we support each other's career goals.

Being married has changed some of the ways I think about my job.

You help me by talking with me about work.

We could figure out how to save money if one of us loses our job.

Agree	Disagree	Unsure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## I will:

Balance my work and family obligations.

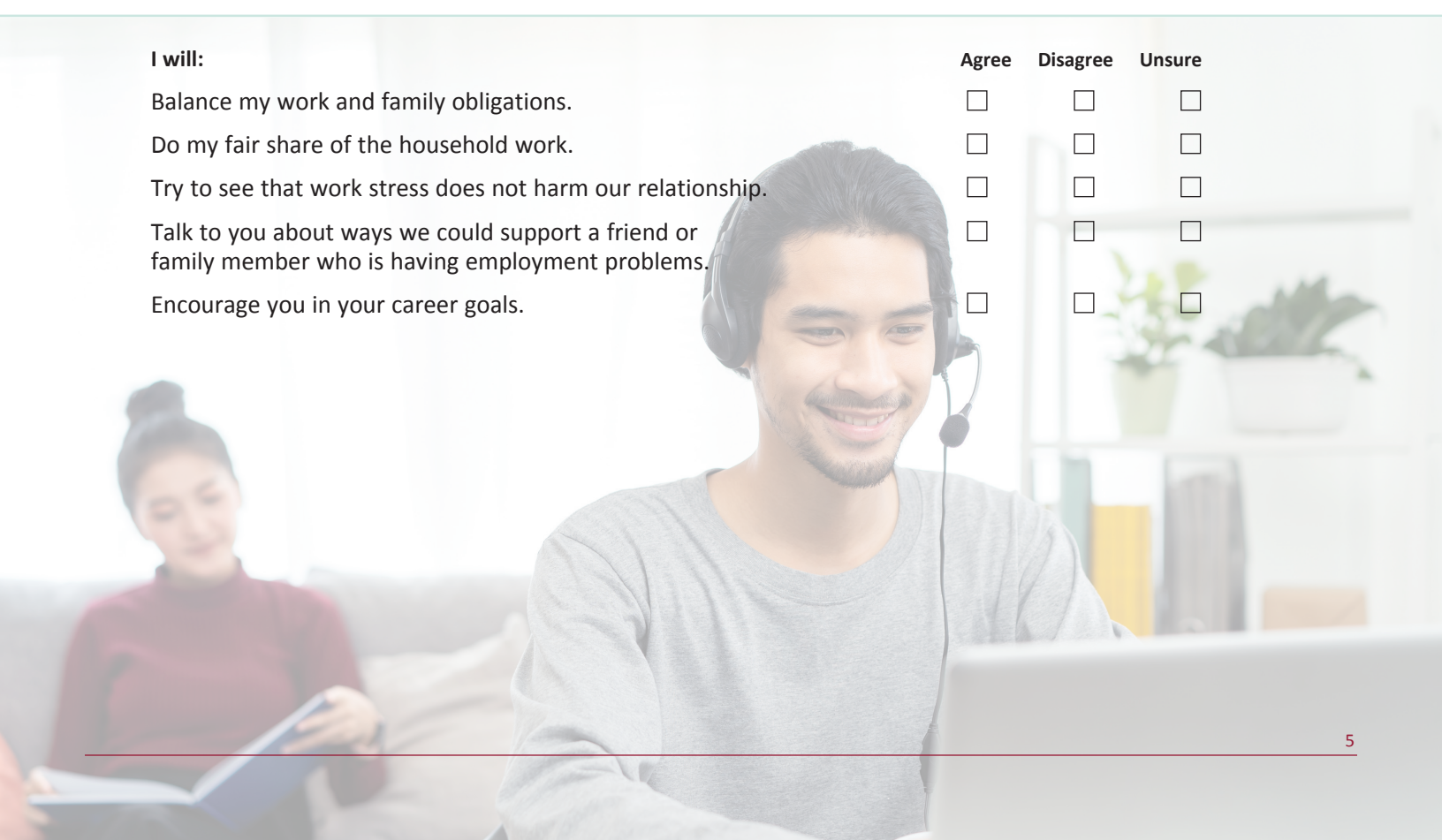
Do my fair share of the household work.

Try to see that work stress does not harm our relationship.

Talk to you about ways we could support a friend or family member who is having employment problems.

Encourage you in your career goals.

Agree	Disagree	Unsure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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# Spirituality

## *“Hands to work, heart to God”*

You may remember this story of the talents from the Bible. A man went on a trip and gave some money to three servants – five “talents” to the first, two to the second, and one to the third. When he came back the first one had doubled the money and so had the second. To each of them he spoke an often quoted saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

### **The buried talents**

The third one was timid, scared of his master who had a reputation for being a hard man. He did nothing with his money, but buried it so it wouldn’t get stolen. The master was furious! He accused his employee of being wicked and lazy. He told him the least he could have done was put it in the bank so some interest would have accrued.

### **Our Talents**

How does that parable relate to our work life? We all have talents that God has entrusted to us – brains, personality, abilities. The work we do is the way we invest those talents. And our work may not be just the way we earn a living. Moms or dads caring for their kids are also working, caring for and nurturing their children. Those folks building homes with Habitat for Humanity are working, not for a salary but for the good of others.

### **Being Faithful**

Using the gifts we have been given is a way of being faithful to God and to God’s world. We are meant to work for the betterment of others, not just take care of ourselves. We have a responsibility to get out and “flex our muscles,” whether that means using our strength, our creativity, or our financial resources, to make our community a better place.



### **Hands and Heart**

Sister Ann, founder of the Shakers, had a motto, “Turn your hands to work and your heart to God.” When we believe that all constructive activity is our work, then that saying includes shoveling for our elderly neighbor, helping our sister with her computer, doing our paid job as well and kindly as we can – using our talents, doubling God’s investment in us.

### **Relationship Work**

Finally, we have the work of maintaining our marital relationship. Keeping your marriage alive and healthy may mean finding a balance with it and the work you do for a living. Know that by finding that balance you are indeed turning your mind to God, the author of your story of love for one another. You are increasing the value of the gifts given to you so that God will one day say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

# Foundations

A NEWSLETTER FOR MARRIED COUPLES

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