



## **Transcript of Video #2: How to Make the Best Decision For Your Marriage**

Hi, I'm Dr. Dana Fillmore. Thank you so much for taking the time to watch this. I know that this must be an incredibly difficult time for you. You might be thinking "I'm done, there's nothing left to do to help my marriage, and I'm tired of trying." Or maybe you're just hurt, angry and fed up and feel like turning this off. That's your choice, but if you do decide to watch this - and it just takes about 20 minutes - I'm going to share with you some information that can help you make one of the most important decisions of your life.

But first you might be wondering why you should you watch this, I mean why should you listen to me? Well, I'm a Clinical Psychologist and a couples therapist and I've been helping couples and families for over 15 years. I have lots of fancy degrees but mostly what I have is a ton of experience and knowledge about what it takes to be a happier person and what it takes to be happily married. In fact, three out of four couples report that they want to stay together, not just that they will stay together, but that they **want** to stay together after applying my Marriage Success Skills.

On a personal note, I'm a working wife and mother with two kids. I know how hard it is to balance everything in your life and keep your marriage strong and fulfilling. But, because my husband and I try to use the very skills I teach, we've weathered the ups and downs of a marriage for over 16 years and are happy together today.

I also need to let you know that, in all honesty, I am pro-marriage. I want couples and families to work it out, be happy, and stay together. I also know that there are exceptions. There are relationships out there that simply should not stay together, such as those with physical violence, or cruel and ongoing verbal abuse, extreme anger management issues, or long-term unaddressed substance abuse. But other than that, I can honestly say that almost all marriages can get a lot better.

Look, I know that if you are watching this, it's probably because one or both of you is unhappy with and therefore checked out of your marriage. Now, maybe that's because you guys just don't know how to fix it, maybe that's because you think you'll be happier somewhere else or with someone else or maybe it's just because you want to stop hurting. I understand that you have your reasons. I understand that the situation may seem hopeless. In fact, I understand that it's probably incredibly difficult and painful for you to even watch this.

But I simply have to let you know that there is hope for you to be happily married again to the person you're already married to. And I'm going to be honest and give you a clear picture of the reality of the alternative. Now, I'm not trying to lecture you or tell you what to do. I just want to give you some facts that you can use to decide what to do with your marriage.

So, in this video, I'm going to be talking about how being happily married is a learned skill. I'm going to explain the normal life-cycle of a long-term marriage. I'm going to get real honest about the meaning of commitment and give you some straightforward facts about the impact of divorce. I'm going to try to help you avoid some common mistakes that you or your partner may have been making or may still be making, in your marriage. And finally, I'll explain that, should you decide to try, there are clear do-able steps you and your partner can take to get your marriage back on track. I'll list the practical skills that lead to a happy marriage. And, I'm going to tell you where you can learn them and how to make them last.

So let's get started. First and foremost, I need you to understand this. Being happily married has more to do with knowing how to be married than with who you are married to. In other words, most people whose marriages end up in trouble believed in the fairy tale that once you married the "Right Person," everything would be easy from then on out and they'd live Happily Ever After. Unfortunately, that's just not true. Marriage takes work, not just "trying really hard," but knowing some real practical skills that most of us were never taught. The good news is that it doesn't have to take very long to learn and apply these skills. And honestly, most of these skills aren't that hard to put into action. Then, when you do them right, the reward is so much greater than the effort invested.

I want to repeat, the good news is: these skills can be learned. So, you want to know the real difference between the people who stay happily married and the people who don't?

The people who stay happily married are willing to work on it. They're willing to learn, to grow, to change, to take risks and to take action. Basically, they're willing to do whatever it takes.

But maybe you're thinking, it's too late. That you're not in love anymore and that you don't think you can fall back in love with your partner. It's this very belief that may be getting in your way.

I'm here to tell you that it's *normal* to fall in and out of love in a long-term marriage. People who are married for a long time are not typically "in love" with their partner the whole time. They fall in and out of love many times over the years.

But what about the person who tells me, "I don't think I was ever in love in the first place." You know what I tell them? It doesn't matter. This concept of being "in love" can really confuse us and can interfere with happily participating in a long-term marriage.

In fact, in many countries all over the world, the concept of "falling" in love actually refers to the brief state of lust. In those countries, they rightly speak of **marriage** as a process of **growing** in love. Interestingly, that's one of the contributing factors to the high success rate of arranged marriages. That's right, arranged marriages have the highest success rates as measured by longevity and satisfaction. Those couples understand that to experience love in a relationship, a seed must be planted, cultivated and nurtured. But, it's a fact that the seed does not necessarily have to be there from beginning.

You know that 80-year-old couple that's dancing at the wedding who clearly adore each other and look madly in love. Well, those people will tell you that they were not madly in love every day for the last 60 years and may not have even been madly in love on the day they got married. They'll even tell you that there were many times over the years that they were so not in love that they wanted to toss their partner out of a window. We all want to be that 80-year-old couple, right? We want people to say, "Wow, look at them, I want that kind of marriage." Well, that couple will tell you that it took two things to get to that point: commitment and the willingness to work on their marriage.

So, let's take a minute to talk about that commitment. This is one of the toughest things I'm going to say in this video. I get that in today's

day and age, lots of people get divorced. The vows don't necessarily hold the same weight that they used to. I get that on some level - if being married only involved two people. But I've got to tell you this, and I know a lot of you don't want to hear it, but those vows aren't only for the two of you. They also exist to protect all of the people that love you, your parents, your friends, and for many of you, especially your kids. I know you have already thought about this and it may be the only reason why you're willing to watch this video. Deep in your heart, you probably know that you not only made a commitment to each other, but you also made a commitment to those innocent bystanders who believe in you and your relationship. You made a commitment to figure out a way to make it work. Now let me be clear, I'm not encouraging you to simply stay in an unhappy marriage as it is now. But I am saying that not only is it possible, but that you owe each other and your families your best effort to do the work to get happy in your marriage!

In fact, research indicates that 86% of unhappily married couples that stay together and *work* on their marriage report being much happier later on in life. In other words, they're glad they stayed and worked on it. And, on the flip side, we all know that when couples give up on their marriage and divorce, their financial resources are cut in half and in many cases far less than half, which is seriously lousy! I mean not many people can afford two households these days. Research also shows that *children* of divorced parents often have lower self-esteem and many have significant difficulties later in their own relationships. And did you know that a divorced person's life span can actually be shorter? These are all things to think about when considering whether to give up on or work on your marriage. And remember, the work that I'm referring to is do-able and reaps tremendous rewards.

On the other hand, if you're checked out of your relationship, if you're not putting in the time and effort to make it better, if you're waiting for your partner to change before you dive back in, I need to tell that in my experience that only leads to one thing: a destroyed marriage and likely divorce.

Now, some people tell themselves that "everyone in the family will be happier if we get a divorce" and it's rarely true. I mean, I just told you how kids of divorce typically have lower self esteem and more difficulty in relationships. But are you aware of the research studies that show most kids going through a divorce experience a drop in their grades and an increase in behavior problems. And many children of divorce have a higher incidence of drug and alcohol abuse as well.

I'm also confused by how many people think that **their** lives will get simpler if they get divorced. They fail to comprehend the impact of this kind of decision: significantly decreased or completely depleted financial resources, the pain and inconvenience of shared custody (for those who have kids), dealing with new spouses and maybe even step-children, giving up half the power and control over how their own kids are being raised, and many people simply don't anticipate the possibility of spending the rest of their lives alone.

Many of you may be saying, I've already tried. The only reason I'm checked out is that no matter what I do, it doesn't get better. I understand how frustrating that can be, but do you know why so many people's attempts to save their marriages fail?

There's lots of different reasons and usually lots of these are going on at the same time.

First and foremost, many couples simply start too late and give up too soon. Meaning: They let the problems in their relationship go on for so long that they become extremely difficult to fix. Not impossible, mind you, but difficult. Then when they finally decide to fix them, there is so much hurt and resentment built up that it seems overwhelming and they give up too soon.

Secondly, many couples don't take responsibility for the state of their own marriage. I hear all the time: "We don't know if *it's* going to work out" I always ask "What is *it*?" They speak about their marriage like it's something they can't control, like the weather. I remind them and I'll remind you, that "it" is "you." If you want your marriage to work out, work it out. It's up to the two of you to work on it and put in the time to learn the skills that will lead to a happy marriage. I'll talk about how to discover those skills later in this video.

Third, some people may have gone to a therapist that simply wasn't qualified to do couples therapy. It's an unfortunate fact that there are a lot of them out there that actually do more harm to the relationship than good. Are you and your spouse one of those couples that has already gone to a therapist and it didn't help? A lot of times this is because the therapist took sides and spent a lot of time figuring out who's wrong and who needs to change. Obviously, this didn't and doesn't work. I don't blame you if you're now suspicious of yet another therapist offering to help.

Further, many couples may have relied on friends and family for advice. But a lot of that advice is based on their own personal experiences rather than scientific research and can also, more times than not, actually damage the relationship more than help it.

Fourth, couples may have put their heads in the sand and told themselves, as soon as she gets that new job, it'll be better, or as soon as the kids go to kindergarten, it'll be okay and the marriage just gets worse and worse.....

Or, some spouses often just wait for the other person to change rather than taking a good hard look at themselves and doing what **they** can do to make their marriage better. This is extremely dangerous because it stems from a "selfish" and/or "scared" mentality and leads to a score-keeping competition that nobody ever wins.

And finally, my personal favorite, many couples simply fight and fight day-in and day-out for years and years, systematically destroying the relationship without learning how to **change** anything.

What many of these mistakes lead to is a focus solely on the problems in the marriage rather than on solutions. The ways that *you* can make sure that your attempts to save your marriage succeed are to:

- Seek *information* from a qualified therapist, somebody who has an excellent track record helping couples. You don't necessarily need face-to-face therapy but instead look to learn the *information* and the practical skills that will help you be happily married
- Take responsibility for your part in making the marriage successful. Don't wait for your partner to change before you make an effort.
- And for Pete's sake, stop fighting about it!

Many people hold some beliefs that are getting in the way of them checking back in and working on their marriage.

For instance, some people have the "grass is always greener," mentality. Meaning they tell themselves that they will be happier in a different situation whether that be with another person or on their own.

The bottom line, however, is that we cannot predict the future. And it is this pretend story, that we will be happier elsewhere that leads to checking out. The fact is the grass is greener in the field you water. Taking care of your marriage, putting time and energy into the relationship you're already in can lead to a happier marriage. This willingness to work it out will help keep the family together.

Conversely, deciding to head off to that other pasture, whether that be dating, remarrying, or being alone, brings a whole new host of problems to your life. Yes, a new situation can be exciting - for awhile. A new person can bring about passionate feelings again, but is that really worth a lifetime of complications? And did you know that those passionate feelings wear off after approximately two years so you'll be right back where you started: after all, wherever you go, there you are.

Running to a new relationship, doesn't solve 50% of the problems you are currently experiencing, because you bring yourself (50% of the partnership) with you into the new situation. Staying and working on yourself and through the issues in your current relationship allows you to learn and, therefore, grow into a better person and a better partner.

If your marriage has already been impacted by an affair, I need to let you know that a marriage can not only be saved after an affair but it can actually get a lot better with some work. I mean I don't want to minimize how painful the betrayal and loss of trust caused by an affair can be. And it happens to a lot of marriages - in fact 50% of marriages are impacted by some sort of infidelity at some point in the marriage. But if the couple decides to stay together and work on it, finding out why their relationship was vulnerable in the first place and then fixing it can actually lead to a stronger, happier marriage. If you find you're in this situation and you're not sure what to do, I teach the steps you need to know in our "How to Survive an Affair" System.

Another belief that prevents people from checking in and working on their marriage is that "People can't change."

I hear this all the time and I've got to tell you right here, right now, that it is so not true. In fact the opposite is true. People change all the time. It's actually the one thing we can count on in life. I mean really, most of you wouldn't be here right now if one or both of you hadn't changed; changed how you feel about each other, changed

what you wanted out of life, changed how you treat each other. People change through out their lives. The question is how motivated are you to change for the better? And do you know how?

Now you may not believe this because many of you have attempted to change or have heard promises that your spouse will change and then one or both of you go back to your old habits.

I know this happens, but it happens because you guys haven't learned a new way of doing things. You may have had good intentions but if you wanted to learn how to swim, you wouldn't just keep hoping and drowning, you'd take swimming lessons!

Most people simply don't understand that being happily married for the rest of your lives is a learned skill. The answer is not to get out of the water when it gets rough. The answer is to take lessons and learn how to swim.

Realizing that both of you may not have understood this previously, can allow you to forgive and let go of the pain and frustration of failed attempts to fix the marriage, allowing you to start off with a clean slate.

But maybe you're thinking that your situation is just too far gone. You might be wondering, "How do I know if it's too late?" "How do I know when to call it quits?"

My answer is this: If I'm going to walk away from my marriage and possibly my kids, break up the family, whatever. I would have to be able to look myself in the eye and know that I have done absolutely everything in my power to make it work. I've ended any relationships that interfered with the marriage, I've quit my job, I've moved, read self-help books, learned and practiced all the marriage skills I could get my hands on. I would have to know that I've done everything. If I believe that I've done everything I could to save my marriage and it has not worked, then I could hold my head up and move on knowing that I did everything possible to save my marriage.

So, I understand that you may be in pain. In fact, you may have been hurting for a long time in this marriage. But I want to tell you this. And, I'm not blaming and I'm not trying to sound preachy - In fact, I hope that you can see this information as a gift. So here it is:

Marriage is a choice. It's not magic. It's not a fairy tale. It's not simple and it's certainly not always easy. It's simply two adults deciding to spend their lives together. So, if you want to stay married, stay married. If you want to be happily married for the rest of your life, learn the skills you need and be happily married. It's your choice.

So, what are the skills that lead to a happy marriage? And more importantly, where can you learn them and how can you make them last? I'm about to tell you. And, I'm also going to tell you how to avoid yet another common mistake that people make when deciding on whether or not to work on their marriage. Finally, I'm going to end with a quote from the great philosophers, The Beatles.

Well, you've heard me say many times that being happily married is a learned skill. Let's get into that a bit. My research and experience over the years has shown that there are six major skill areas that couples need to learn in order to have a strong, healthy and happy marriage. These are:

- Spending Quality Time Alone Together
- Communication and Understanding Each Other
- Resolving Conflict
- Agreeing on Money Issues
- Fairly Dividing Responsibilities
- and, Having a Satisfying and Healthy Sex Life

Couples that are strong in these areas have the best chance at having a long-term happy marriage. One of the biggest mistakes people make, however, is that while they have good intentions to change, they don't actually learn how to change or learn how to make those changes permanent. For instance, they promise that they will try to meet their partner's needs, but they have no idea how to figure out what those needs are, no idea how to go about changing their own behavior and even if they do kinda figure it out, they rarely are able to make it last.

If you feel like this has happened in your relationship - in other words, if you think your marriage could use some work in one or more of these areas, there are a few places you can learn relationship skills.

One place to learn these skills is in Couples Therapy. I know I said that a lot of couples therapists can actually make a marriage worse, but if you can find a **qualified** couples therapist with a great reputation, that you both feel a connection with, that fits into your schedule and that you can afford, they may be able to really help you.

Many people learn these skills working with their spiritual leader or participating in religion-based couples groups. Again, make sure that these resources have a proven track record of, not just emphasizing the importance of staying married, but of actually helping couples learn the skills they need to be happily married.

Of course, there are many self-help books and products out there that cover some of the essential marriage skills I mentioned. But this would be a good time for me to tell you that many of the topics I introduced are inter-dependent, meaning that it rarely helps to fix just one aspect of your marriage. Learning to be happily married is like tuning-up your car, you won't fix it if you only change the spark plugs, there are a lot of other important parts that need attention. That's why I recommend learning all of the skills to set your marriage up for success.

We understand that it may feel like your world is crumbling around you right now, so, we designed our System to help you learn all of the essential Marriage Success Skills right away and in the privacy of your own home. I give you the tools you need to make positive changes in your life and I walk you through them step-by-step . The Video System includes:

- Important information and concepts
- Exercises to help build skills and knowledge.
- Straightforward, specific tasks to do each week to improve your marriage and reinforce what you're learning

I know a lot of you have been struggling with your relationship for a long time and I'd really love to help you.

Whatever path you choose, understand that having an ideal of what you want your marriage to look like isn't enough. You have to take action to make it happen. And remember, it takes time to grow and adapt to new skill-sets. Have patience with yourself and your partner during this process, but stick with it! Your relationship is worth the effort!

Before we wrap up, let me tell you one last common mistake people

make when considering whether to try one of these approaches and check back into their marriage. Many people believe they should wait to even try to fix their marriage until they feel “in love” again. In other words, they’re waiting to take any action to fix the marriage until they get the sensation that they *want* to fix the marriage and it’s the cart before the horse argument, isn’t it? Learning these skills and working on your marriage **leads** to those loving feelings again. Did you see the movie Field of Dreams? Marriage is a lot like that - “build it and it will come.” Have faith. Trust the process. Learning these skills revitalizes your marriage and, therefore, allows you to fall back in love with the person you’re already married to!

Look, I’m sure you have, at one point or another, tried to make your marriage work. Maybe you feel like you’re the only one that has tried to make your marriage work. Or maybe you feel like there’s just nothing left to do, there’s no path left to take, there’s no skills left to learn that will make your marriage happy again. Or maybe you truly love your partner and your family and you’re just scared and confused about what to do. I’m asking you to take a risk one more time. Learning these Marriage Success Skills really does make a difference. We have tons of testimonials from people who were on the brink of divorce and are now happily married with intact families and hopeful futures together.

Again, I don’t want to tell you what to do. I certainly don’t want you to feel like I’m judging you because everybody’s circumstances are different but I simply want to offer you the information that, if you let it, I know can change your life.

So let me wrap up on just a bit of a lighter note and tell you the Marriage Golden Rule. You must give in your marriage what you want to receive.

If you want to be trusted, you must trust. If you want kindness, you must be kind. If you want to be forgiven, you must forgive. And most importantly, if you want to be loved, you must give love. I mean, The Beatles really got it right.

“And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make.”

Thank you for taking the time to watch this. I sincerely hope that this has helped in some way and I wish you a lifetime of love and happiness.