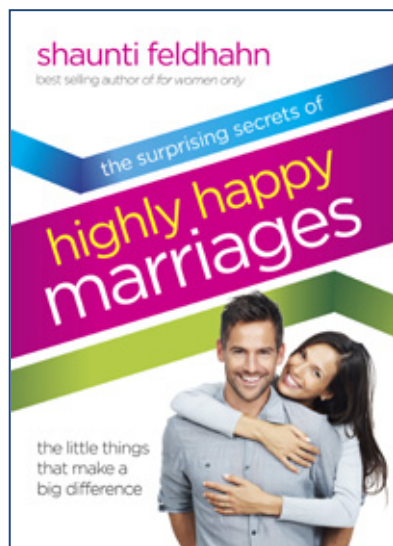


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## Surprisingly Small Marriage Tips Make a BIG Impact



How do successful couples nourish a relationship that both partners describe year after year as “highly happy?” For example, do they follow age-old wisdom such as “don’t go to bed mad” or “never keep score?”

“Hardly!” says Harvard-educated social researcher and bestselling author Shaunti Feldhahn who has spent the last three years interviewing and surveying 1,000 couples to uncover the most important habits of the most happily married couples—the things they do differently that *they may not even realize are making them so happy* and that others can replicate.

Feldhahn’s eye-opening findings are detailed in her new book, ***The Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages: The Little Things That Make a Big Difference*** (WaterBrook Press/ Dec.

31, 2013), for husbands, wives, and anyone who is in an intimate relationship or desires to be. Feldhahn uncovers the habits that most highly happy couples share—regardless of age or racial background or any other factors, little things they are doing that other couples (even those in pretty good marriages) often aren’t. “The key is that no matter what the state of your marriage, small changes in awareness and action truly can change everything,” writes Feldhahn. “These habits can yield gold for those who apply them.”

So what are some of the surprising secrets of highly happy marriages? Here are three:

**1. Little Actions Make a Big Difference. For example, for a man hearing “thank you” matters far more than “I love you.”**

The finding: For nearly every man or woman, the same few small, gender-specific actions not only matter but have a huge impact on a couple’s level of happiness. Feldhahn reveals the top five small daily actions that her research found mattered most for men, and those that matter the most for women.

**2. Go To Bed Mad: “Sleeping On It” Might Be Smarter After All.**

The finding: Highly happy couples find that when they can’t resolve conflict and anger before bedtime, they choose to sleep on it. Indeed, some 65% of highly happy couples reported that they did so, but interestingly, many happy couples advise others not to go to bed mad. In their practical experience, however, they have found that trying to “force” resolution at midnight, with

two exhausted people, can sometimes make things worse. However, unlike less happy couples, if anger remains in the morning they don't let it go unresolved; they deal with it.

### 3. Keep Score: What You Count Up Changes What You Give Back

The finding: Happy spouses keep track of what their mates are giving and what they need as a result, and deliberately try to give back. Many people advise couples to not keep score—but the happiest couples absolutely keep score, they just keep score of the good, not the bad. And as a result, they are very aware of what they “owe” their spouse and try to do things for them in return—which creates a very positive cycle for both partners.

Overall, Feldhahn found that contrary to popular opinion, the majority of marriages are fairly happy ones, with the couples enjoying being married—not just “putting up with each other.”

Indeed, Feldhahn wraps up *Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages* relegating to urban myth the commonly accepted belief that half of all marriages end in divorce. The truth lies closer to 30 percent and even less in the church. “A subconscious sense of futility about marriage in our culture is everywhere, and it need not be,” says Feldhahn, adding, “If a struggling couple assumes they will make it, the outcome is often very different from when they think there is no point in trying.”

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shaunti Feldhahn received her graduate degree from Harvard, and has worked on Wall Street and Capitol Hill. She unexpectedly became a social researcher and best-selling author equipping people with eye-opening, life-changing truths about personal and work relationships through her books that have sold two million copies in 22 languages, including *For Women Only* and *The Male Factor: The Unwritten Rules, Misperceptions, and Secret Beliefs of Men in the Workplace*. Whereas her *Only* series opened the eyes of men and women to what they didn't “get” about the opposite sex, her newest multiyear research project, published in *The Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages* investigates the process of what makes the happiest relationships. Feldhahn's work has been covered by leading media, including *The New York Times*, “NBC Today” and “Focus on the Family.” She and her husband have two children and live in Atlanta.



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