

The

HUSBAND'S

Manual

Copyright © 1998 Teresa M. Murphy and Andrew F. Murphy

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by an information storage and retrieval system—except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review to be printed in a magazine or newspaper—without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed and bound in the United States of America. First printing 1996.
Second printing 1997.

ISBN 1-887472-40-1

LCCN 97-061878

Illustrations by Margaret Scott

Text Design: Irene Archer

Lyrics in chapter 5 reprinted by permission of the songwriters, Stephen Longfellow Fiske and Jai Joseph.

Sunstar Publishing LTD
204 South 20th Street
Fairfield, Iowa 52556

Why This Book?

Many men are used to working with manuals—car manuals, home repair manuals, income tax manuals, etc.

This book is similar: It's a how-to. It's didactic: Step-by-step, easy-to-read directions for being the best husband you can be and making things work in your marriage.

The Husband's Manual is written for the guy who wants to do the right thing and will do what it takes to have the best marriage possible.

Chapter 1 lays the groundwork: Three rules about the husband's role and how he can lift his marriage above the ordinary.

Chapters 2-50: Practical ways to apply the three rules in daily life.

At his wedding a husband usually senses that he is embarking on a challenging and exciting journey. Sometimes he loses track of that sense in the crush of everyday affairs. But the simple events of everyday life can be the building blocks for those original feelings and dreams. Much of this book is a reminder of the basics, how not to forget them, and how important they are in contributing to a marriage that remains an unending adventure.

Preface

Life continues as a joy and a challenge.

This revised edition of *The Husband's Manual* incorporates additional insights gained through our seminars on communication issues between men and women. The chapters Apologizing, Looking Good, and Talking are new.

When we were planning to be married, we spent a lot of time thinking about our new roles and what we could bring to each other. For Andy, who had been married before, it was an opportunity to sort things out anew. For Teri, who was marrying for the first time after many years of being single, the concept of joining presented many puzzles. As we sought guidelines, we searched our own experience, talked to many other married people, and scoured the bookstores. We found plenty of general marriage handbooks, but no guides specifically geared toward the issues of everyday life.

We've been authors, teachers, and personal growth trainers for many years. Of course, we've been students as well. As we have helped empower people to realize their potentials in several arenas, we realized a glaring deficiency. Nowhere was there a how-to for husbands. Many helpful theories and perspectives on the topic, but no specific reference works. Nothing to answer questions ranging from how to deal with recurring needs for intimacy (and autonomy) to "Should a husband open a car door for his wife?"

Well, like most people, we figured it out for ourselves. We have found that the attitudes and behaviors described in this book serve us well. Now we want to share them.

Teri & Andy Murphy, 1997

Arlington, Chico, Dunmore Town, St. George's

Table of Contents

Why this book?	V
Preface.....	VI
1. Three New Rules: Make your marriage strong while making yourself happy	1
2. Apologizing	11
3. Asking for Change	15
4. Being Alone	19
5. Being an In-law	23
6. Being the Man of the House	29
7. Bill Paying, Bookkeeping, & Record Keeping	33
8. Breadwinning aka Providing.....	37
9. Changing	41
10. Complimenting	45
11. Criticizing.....	49
12. Deciding Small Stuff.....	53
13. Deciding Big Stuff	57
14. Decorating.....	61
15. Drying Her Tears.....	63
16. Eating	65
17. Expressing Your Feelings.....	67
18. Fighting	71
19. Getting Along	73
20. Getting Help	75
21. Giving, Giving in, and Forgiving	77
22. Giving Presents	81
23. Going Public	85
24. Growing Old Together	87

25. Having Friends.....	89
26. Having it Both Ways (Being your own man and hers, too)....	93
27. Housekeeping (the Art of Compromise).....	97
28. Keeping Secrets.....	101
29. Keeping the Faith	105
30. Listening.....	109
31. Looking Good.....	111
32. Loving Only Her	115
33. Making Love	117
34. Making Love Last	121
35. Negotiating	125
36. Opening Doors (and stuff like that)	129
37. Posturing	131
38. Raising Children	133
39. Repairing and Maintaining the Home	135
40. Resisting	137
41. Saying No.....	139
42. Sharing Interests	143
43. Sharing the Wealth	145
44. Socializing	147
45. Solving her problems	151
46. Spending and Saving Money	155
47. Supporting.....	157
48. Talking.....	159
49. Taking a Closer Look	163
50. Taking Offense	165
51. Trying New Things (Dealing with Differences)	167
52. Walking the Perimeter.....	171
Appendix: Joint Vision Statement	173

CHAPTER 1

Three New Rules: Make Your Marriage Strong While Making Yourself Happy

Whether you are already married or are planning to be, think of your marriage as a play in the theater of your life. The part you have landed is The Husband. You are an actor in the finest sense: you become the role. You are also the creative genius of this play; you get to write your part. And best of all, you get the girl. And on top of all this, the role you create as Husband can make your marriage stronger while it makes you happier. What a deal!

Most of us, unfortunately, are either stuck with old scripts or have no clear sense of the roles we'd like to create. The traditional role sounded something like this:

A husband is the boss in the family. (Although in one version, the wife only allows the husband to believe that he is the boss; she is the real power.)

A husband brings home the bacon.

A husband keeps a stiff upper lip.

The list goes on. When you landed the part of Husband, you may have decided that you didn't entirely like the old role, so you cast off some of its restrictions. Yet, you found it difficult to play the part without the old script. Actors need scripts. Without one, the old role has a way of slipping in, inviting one of you to be either manipulative or sacrificial.

NEW RULES CREATE NEW ROLES

This book proposes that you establish a new role, a new play-book—one that’s all your own. It encourages you to set it up so that the role you create, The Husband, can make your marriage stronger while bringing you what you want and need most in life. Forget sacrifice and forget manipulation. We’re talking about getting happier while your marriage gets better.

The traditional roles were anchored in the belief that men and women are inherently different in predictable ways. Those who reject traditional roles argue that we learn our differences and we can unlearn them. Chances are, both positions are partly true. So we’re going to propose something new to which you can anchor your role. It’s a set of rules for looking at your marriage in a way that focuses on what you want, opening unlimited possibilities.

Rule 1: Assume You Are Together for a Purpose

This first rule—the Prime Directive—is the most important. It’s an attitude that carries over into everything you do. It asks you to work from the premise that your marriage is no accident.

Some men believe their marriage was made in heaven. They know they were brought together for a reason. Perhaps you’re one of these lucky ones. Or maybe you started out believing the heavens brought you the perfect wife, but that you or she has changed, and now you feel you’re no longer with the “right” person. Maybe you even feel you got tricked into marrying the “wrong” person under pressure or for convenience.

Regardless of where you fit on this scale, you can get a lot of mileage by proceeding from the assumption that there is a purpose for your being with this woman.

Just think how this attitude changes things. If you believe your mating was an accident, a mistake, or just sexual attraction, fights about whether to leave the bedroom window open or closed at night remain just that—fights. But once you believe you’re together for a reason, you have to start asking yourself, “Why are we fighting about this? What purpose does it serve?” Maybe it gives you a chance to be more cooperative, to

learn patience, or even to be exposed to a different way of sleeping!

A SUGGESTION FOR FOLLOWING RULE 1:

Use Everything for Your Learning

This precept was stated particularly well by Peter McWilliams in his excellent book, *Life 101*, in which he says, “Use everything for your upliftment, learning, and growth. Everything. Everything. Everything.”

Want to have a good marriage—one that’s secure, interesting, passionate, alive, and growing? You can’t achieve these qualities by avoiding conflicts. The best route to a happy marriage is to tackle friction head on, indeed, to see every problem that arises as an opportunity for growth, personal and marital. (Remember that the Chinese symbol for crisis also translates as “a juncture providing opportunity.”)

You particularly need to say what’s hard to say. The more you tell yourself that you have to withhold something to avoid “rocking the boat,” the more potential the truth probably has for growth and clearing the air. Honesty may feel risky, but it pays off, particularly when presented tactfully.

Suppose she has a habit that drives you nuts. She talks too loudly, recounts minute details when telling stories, repeatedly leaves drawers open or lights on after leaving a room. Anything—even more serious activities such as drinking or smoking too much. How can you use this for your learning? What might you learn from this experience? Some possibilities:

- n ***Assertiveness***: Confront the issue with her (tell her how you feel), without starting a fight.
- n ***Patience***: Feel solid and centered and not ruled by some one else’s behavior.
- n ***Kindness***: See another’s shortcomings and not judge them as “wrong.”
- n ***Self-awareness***: Reflect on your own shortcomings; do you tell long-winded stories too?
- n ***Negotiating skills***: Reconcile your differences while keeping a cool head and your self-esteem.

There's something to learn in every experience. It'll make you a better man and a better husband. You are in charge of you. Anything and everything in your marriage, as in your life, can ultimately be used for your upliftment and growth. It's a winner's game.

Does Rule 1 mean no man is ever stuck with a mate who is "bad" for him, and no one should ever divorce under any circumstances? Of course not. Some marriages have such deeply embedded destructive patterns that one person acting alone may not be able to break free of them. And sometimes two people really do grow in such different directions that the purpose that brought them together can no longer be served. But before you quit, make sure you've given it everything you've got to find the good, the learning, the love you can bring to your marriage. Make sure you've studied this book carefully.

Remember that you guys chose each other for more reasons than physical attraction. Your marriage is the best of all routes for personal and spiritual growth.

Rule 2: Honor Your Differences

People are different. Your wife is the sum total of all her experiences, a unique expression of life. So are you. Honor her individuality by recognizing its uniqueness. Do the same for yourself.

When she sees events and relationships differently from your way, it's not because she's being disagreeable. It's who she is. Say she has a problem (your description) with cleanliness or promptness. She's either "Ms Super Clean," or she's "a slob." She's either "fidgeting and nervously early," or she's "always late."

Whenever she exhibits the "problem," notice how quickly your mind jumps to the idea, "She's wrong," or "She did that on purpose." She's not behaving this way to annoy you, any more than you behave the way you do to annoy her.

Of course, sometimes people do irritate each other on purpose. They play out aggressions and even get mean with each other, usually when some other area of life gets overwhelming or disappointing. But this is not what you are honoring. Honoring your differences doesn't mean you have to honor her bad moods, but rather the underlying

person she is, through her ups and downs.

Mostly, she's just different. And the ways she differs from you are perfect for you. In his best selling couples book, *Getting the Love You Want*, Harville Hendrix advances the theory that in most marriages there is one critical difference between the partners, and it recurs in different forms. It may well be the thing both partners will admit they were attracted to originally. A quiet, easy going man, for example, may be attracted to an outgoing, vivacious woman because of her sparkling personality, only to be turned off later because she "talks too much," seeing her now as pushy and superficial. A meek woman may be attracted to a strong-willed man because he is such a "take charge" guy, only later she feels overwhelmed and ignored by his bossiness.

The central dissimilarity between you is likely to form a basis for all your major conflicts. After many years of research and work with couples, Hendrix says this difference is also the one that offers the greatest opportunity for growth and learning. The shy guy gets to learn about sparkle. Ms. Meek is driven to learn to stand up for herself. Both have chosen the perfect mate to drive them crazy, OR to push the edge of the envelope of who they are.

SOME SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO FOLLOW RULE 2:

Avoid Labels

The world's religions all agree on one issue: No judging. And that's what labeling is—judging. Beyond the theological reasons for suspending judgement (it's God's job) there's a practical reason as well: It doesn't work.

If you label your wife as "shallow" or "short-sighted" or "inconsiderate" you set yourself as the rule maker. Your notions are the standard by which all others are judged.

What happened the last time she judged you? Did you appreciate it? Did you thank her for pointing out how imperfect you were (according to her standards)? Did it improve your relationship? The best way to keep from being judged is not to judge. Labeling only makes it harder to work through differences.

Of all the best intentions, this seems to be the most difficult;

many of us have to learn it and re-learn it all our lives. Still, it's worth the effort because labels cause resentment. And resentment is poison to your marriage. It has been said that when you hold it in your mind, you get paranoid. When you hold it in your body, you get sick. And when you hold it in your heart, you get mean.

Let Go of Expectations

Expectations are hopes that your wife is going to do a certain thing or become a certain way. They almost always cause problems.

When you got married, chances are you had a list in your head of some of her traits you weren't crazy about—needs of yours she didn't fill. On some level, you probably told yourself she'd change. You also had a vision of how your life would be together.

For many men, the ideal wife is active, interesting, and attractive, and has just the right touch of independence. She's sensual to her husband's touch and attentive to his moods and needs in a lighthearted, often whimsical way. She looks great in her clothes. She can handle anything.

We're attracted to these ideals, but in real life there's always something missing. We feel cheated and sometimes resentful when she doesn't measure up. Sometimes we compare her to other men's wives or even to our mother. We focus on what's missing, instead of what's there.

What's there is your wife. Embrace the uniqueness she brings to your marriage. Of course you learn from others, particularly those whose marriages you admire. But you don't have to live up to anyone else's model. This is your life. Figure out how you and your wife are going to experience it according to this guideline:

Agendas are okay. Expectations are not.

You may have on your agenda that your wife will develop an interest in sports and join you in the local softball league or in watching the NFL on Sundays. You'd love it if that happened, and you encourage it, letting her know what your agenda is. You do not, however, have the expectation that it will happen. Whatever happens is okay. You'll accept her choices for herself. That's what Rule 2 is about. Letting go of expectations frees you to enjoy your marriage for what is best about it without always comparing it to something else.

Rule 3: In All Things, Move Toward Her

Your marriage vows may have noted some opposite conditions (you know, sickness and health, richer and poorer, etc.). The fact is, most marriages have a little of both. Over your life together, there may even be extremes; she may get demanding or depressed, evangelical about some cause, perhaps even unbalanced. This rule advocates using every opportunity—the gloriously good as well as the not so good—to move toward her.

Often when things aren't going well, we pull away, feel resentful, or hide out. We may look as though we're engaging in family life, but we're actually holding back the best part of ourselves. There will certainly be times when you need space to cool off or collect your thoughts. You may just need alone time; most people do. Go ahead and take it. But make it short. The longer you're "apart," the more work it will take to convince her to rejoin you. Usually when you feel the urge to bolt, it's a good sign that you need to drop your armor and link arms with her as soon as possible.

You may be tempted to say, "What about her part in this? Isn't she supposed to hold up her end? I can't do it all." True, but this is not a wife's manual. Besides, you can't control what she does—only what you do. In addition, you may find that once you shift your stance, even slightly, it produces a surprising shift in her.

A SUGGESTION FOR FOLLOWING RULE 3:

Take Responsibility for Your Own Happiness

Your wife can't make you happy and you can't make her happy. Each of us is personally responsible for that elusive state.

Have you ever met a man who saw the best in life? He turns lemons into lemonade, finds silver linings in dark clouds, sees the finest qualities in people (instead of focusing on their faults). He may even have a wife whom other people consider unattractive or obnoxious. But he focuses on her good side and finds ways to cope with the rest. He's responsible for his own happiness. So are you.

Then there's your wife's happiness. You, naturally, are interested

in having your wife be content, fulfilled, and gratified by life. You want to keep unpleasantness out of her life. A noble quest—one which will keep you busy and be its own reward. It's also impossible.

You can provide all the necessary ingredients for her happiness, but she has to experience it herself. She's responsible for her experience of life. Should you stop trying, become inattentive, or neglect her? Absolutely not. That's not moving toward her in all things. The point of this suggestion is to keep you sane whenever she isn't happy.

She's got her own set of hang-ups, of problems at work and with the kids (and sometimes with you), of unresolved conflicts with parents, siblings, and friends. Childhood events influence her reactions and responses to life, just as yours do to you.

You are not responsible for her, you are responsible to her.

You are responsible for yourself and for your part in the integrity of your marriage. Move toward her: support, encourage, assist, love, and honor your wife, but remember, you can't make her happy. She has to do that for herself.

You have to do it for yourself, too.

SO HOW SHOULD A MAN BEHAVE?

What do these rules mean for the traditional role of Husband? This is where you get to write the script; the answer is, it's up to you. Right now is a good time to see how you define yourself as a man. Use the three rules to assess your beliefs and decide which parts you want to keep and which you want to redefine.

Your attitudes toward traditional roles needn't cause you to reject or embrace them entirely. If you're going to throw some out, make sure you replace them with others that truly serve you both. Pick which ones serve you best.

Even if you and your wife take wholly traditional roles in your family, you can be "liberated" from the bonds of history and social convention if you both actively participate in the process of choosing. In other words, as co-directors of this play, decide together how you'll interpret your roles. Many old traditions work well for people, and by consciously choosing them, we make them our own. You guys are

writing the script.

Shape your role to serve the goals of your marriage. Of course that means you'll have to get clear on what these goals are.

Your Goals

You wouldn't try to run a business without a business plan. So why try to run a marriage without something similar? What are the dreams and values you share? If you've always taken it for granted that you both know what they are, you may be surprised at how much benefit there can be in spelling them out. What do you stand for as a unit, a team?

Talk this over with your wife and ask her to join you in establishing your goals in a Joint Vision Statement, like the one at the back of this book. Whether you come up with many goals or only a few, this endeavor can provide you with a new level of strength and pride in your marriage. One thing is for certain: If you work together on common goals with a common vision, you will have a life far richer than either of you can achieve alone. It's the best kind of synergy. And whatever your goals are, the new rules can help you achieve them. Living by them will serve you and strengthen your marriage.

Rule 1: Assume you are together for a purpose

Rule 2: Honor your differences

Rule 3: In all things, move toward her

Now that you know the new rules, the challenge is to put them into practice. The remainder of this book offers suggestions for applying the rules to common situations in married life. Of course, your life and your wife are unique. No book could cover every situation you'll face. If you find you have a problem that isn't covered by a chapter, go back to the three rules. They may seem difficult at first, but there's nothing you can't handle. Take your time and keep rehearsing. You'll find you get better and better at your role and at applying the rules. You've got your whole life to polish your performance.