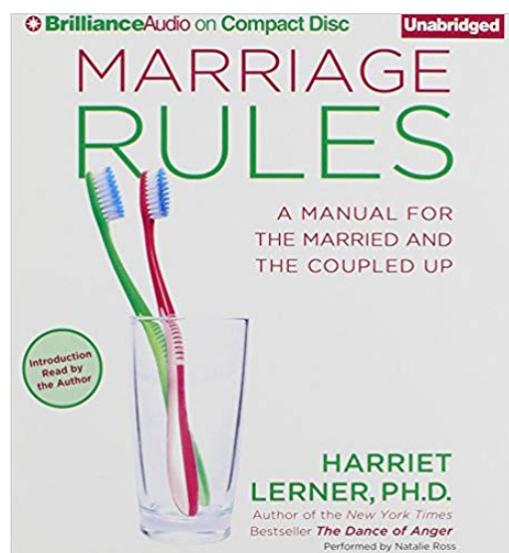


Marriage Rules: A Manual for the Married and the Coupled Up by Harriet Lerner Ph.D., Natalie Ross



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Following a unique format perfect for today's world, the renowned author of *The Dance of Anger* gives us more than one hundred rules that cover all the hot spots in long-term relationships. It's a go-to guide brimming with Lerner's signature clarity, wit, and warmth. Couples today operate in a time famine. One or both parties are likely to be hit by one stress after another, and marriage is the first thing to suffer. Here are memorable, easy-to-grasp rules to remind readers of their own good common sense — or to help them get off automatic pilot and do something different. *Marriage Rules* offers new solutions to age-old problems ("He won't talk" or "She doesn't want sex") as well as modern ones (your partner's relationship with technology). You'll also learn how to: Calm things down and warm them up Talk straight and fight fair Listen well as a spiritual practice Get a grip on intensity and "over talking" Connect with a distant partner Survive the unique challenges of children, stepchildren, and difficult in-laws Follow a twelve-step program to overcome defensiveness Know how and when to draw the line Take back your marriage when things fall apart So here it is — a treasure chest of lively, practical advice to help you navigate your relationship with clarity, courage, and joyous conviction.



Reviews of the **Marriage Rules: A Manual for the Married and the Coupled Up** by Harriet Lerner Ph.D., Natalie Ross

Akir

When read daily to each other, this simple marriage rule book invites conversation and perspective shared together. We took turns each day reading one rule to the other. The flow of this book starts a 'troubled' couple off at the stage, when both are feeling unheard and unsure of where the relationship stands. Once you get past the rules about speaking to each other, the "right" way, you move into the next chapter of rules with the foundation necessary to make improvements in the way you communicate and relate to your partner. As we marched through the book, we already decided we would revisit chapters or rules to strengthen what we learned. So much of this is common sense, but something that also vanishes when emotions are hurt and high. It saved us, and got us back on track, back on the path which we somehow departed without recognizing it was happening to us. We found this book better than our marriage counseling sessions at times and even bragged to our therapist of things we had learned as we read the rules. Therapy can work slowly, but this book gives a simple rule per day that keeps the momentum going and preventing a couple from backing up in between sessions. Not complicated to read or understand, this book won't scare off either partner and even covers rules for those with children (or step-children) and a little family of origin in there. We would definitely buy another rule book by this author, if she made this a series. Thank you for formatting a self-help book in this manner for those of us weary of psychology books full of psych jargon and over-explanation!

catterpillar

Marriage Rules: A Manual for the Married and the Coupled Up is not so much a typical self-help book as it is a set of helpful suggestions, for maintaining a healthy relationship or mending a broken one pieced together, by a seasoned expert in the fields of psychology and family relationships. Harriet Lerner doesn't waste time with wordy prose, instead she effectively provides a list of 106 rules, divided into ten chapters, which suggest concrete examples of common issues and ways to alter perspectives and behaviors to improve relationships. Despite the sound information she gives, it is difficult as a reader to learn about all the possible missteps he or she is making without feeling overwhelmed and defeated. Still, if the reader wants to learn and change, Lerner imparts something to take away from each example.

Lerner's rules are diverse, concrete and are sure to contain advice which applies to every reader looking to improve his or her relationship. The author gives the reader ideas about how to change his or her own behaviors in ways that will positively impact both partners. She gives specific examples of how to create a more loving and positive atmosphere by pointing out things many people do in relationships that cause tension and suggests alternatives, such as only criticizing once per day or telling your partner things you admire about him or her. She points out important aspects to maintaining successful relationships over time, which most people are not aware of, such as: marriage expert Goldman says a 5 to 1 ratio of positive to negative interactions are necessary for a lasting marriage. The reader may feel like he or she is doing many things wrong, or that this might lead to a break up, but Lerner has suggestions for every situation.

The author gives advice for happy couples, those who don't get along, or those on the verge of splitting up, which is a bit unsettling, but also means any reader can take ideas from a variety of examples and apply them for his or her own purposes. By showing couples at different stages, Lerner, gives the reader a chance to reflect on his or her own relationship, roles within the relationship, and how it might change in the future. The reader wonders, for example, if he or she exhibits the problem behaviors that lead to divorce. In allowing the reader to consider different options, for failure and improvement, Lerner literally helps the reader make better choices for his or

her relationship. Her rules support and empower decisions for the reader.

No one ever says marriage is easy. We know all relationships take work. Most partnerships don't have a guidebook like this one, with straight-forward advice. If you're ready, use it and welcome it. No matter what the circumstance of the reader, Marriage Rules is a start to making changes from within you'll need to improve your life with another person.

Kulwes

The timing of the arrival of this book was somewhat uncanny, as it arrived the day after my wife and I had had our first fight in quite a long while (in the past, there have been rough spots). During that fight, uncharacteristically, my wife was really angry with me and lost her temper, screaming and yelling and cursing; that night, she even slept in another room. The next morning my instinct was (fitting of Ms. Lerner's observation that we tend toward fight or flight) to be frosty, but I reminded myself that won't change a downward spiral effect; so I tried to be pleasant, but that probably just got me to neutral. Then, a few pages in to Marriage Rules, Lerner wrote (quoting a friend and colleague): "It's just when your partner is being the biggest jerk that you're called upon to be your best self." Now, my wife wasn't really being a jerk (I could understand why she was disappointed in me, even if she was over-reacting [from my vantage point]). But it helped me reset my emotional thermostat and got me excited about Ms. Lerner's new book.

The excitement wasn't because of any big breakthroughs, but because the book offers timeless reminders delivered in an engaging way and illustrated with good vignettes. For example, in Rule #43 in the "Fight Fair" section, she tells about a San Francisco-based couple that fought viciously over just about everything. They seemed to have no control over their attacks on each other -- until a distinguished British professor stayed as a house guest for months, sleeping in the bedroom right next to theirs. Over those months, they were courteous with each other and agreed it was among the best months of their marriage. The point: you have more control than you think.

Not every rule or vignette moved me (for example, her story about communication about sex in Rule #55 seemed a bit too obvious), but the general message in that section "Forget About Normal Sex" is spot on and relieves pressure that can only make things worse in the bedroom. So overall, well recommended, especially if you're looking for a book to keep by your bedside and read a rule or two or few at a time -- and then share the book with your partner.

Other books on marriage to consider: Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples, 20th Anniversary Edition (helpful for looking at the deep underlying patterns that cause disfunction) and The Couple's Survival Workbook: What You Can Do To Reconnect With Your Partner and Make Your Marriage Work (especially helpful if you're really struggling).

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