



Better bonding

Nicole Yorio

What do couples who describe their marriages as spectacular do differently than those who describe their marriages as simply so-so? The differences are quite small, actually. "When we look at happy couples, we see that great marriages are not the result of hours of hard work," says relationship researcher Terri L. Orbuch, Ph.D., who followed 373 couples for over 22 years as part of a marriage study funded by the National Institutes of Health. "It's small changes in behaviour and attitude that can transform your relationship." In her new book, *5 Simple Steps to Take Your Marriage from Good to Great*, Orbuch shares the steps you can take to marital greatness.

● **Understand Each Other's Needs**

"The main reason marriages break up is not conflict, communication problems, or sexual incompatibility," Orbuch says. "It's frustration — the day-to-day disappointment of the gap between what you expect and how your partner acts — that is most damaging." To diffuse that frustration, share your expectations with each other. Maybe you desire more affection and he craves more relaxed couple time. "And be sure to check in with your partner once a year, as added pressures or life changes can create new expectations," Orbuch says.

● **Show Him Some Love**

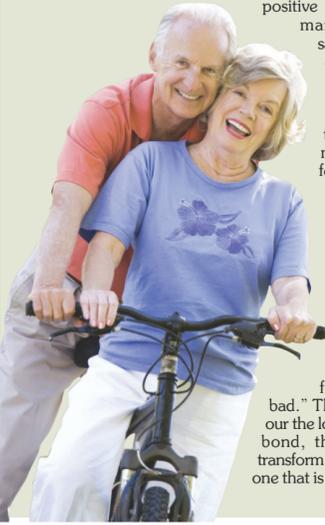
Husbands whose wives give them affirmation — those words and gestures that show they are appreciated, respected, and loved — are twice as likely to describe themselves as happily married. And men may need affirmation more than women, Orbuch's research showed. "Women are constantly receiving flattery from friends and even strangers who say, 'Love your outfit!'" she says. "But men don't get that recognition." Can you imagine a passer-by stopping your husband to compliment him on how well his tie matches his shirt? Not likely to happen — which is why, men rely on that attention from their wives. Luckily, there's another payoff to your flattery: He's more likely to return those loving deeds back to you.

● **Take 10**

A weekly date night is always recommended as a way to reconnect, but sometimes all you need is a few minutes. "I call this the 10-Minute Rule: Take 10 minutes a day to talk about anything — except for kids, responsibilities, or chores," Orbuch says. Throw out Mom's old advice about how an air of mystery keeps the flame alive: Orbuch's research showed that 98 percent of happy couples say they intimately understand their partners. And knowing your spouse intimately isn't always about engaging in heavy conversations: Anything that helps you learn something new will bring you closer, Orbuch says. You can bond over why you think your dog is the smartest one on your block or which superpower you'd want most. You'll get to know each other's inner world and strengthen your bond of happiness.

● **Focus on the Good**

The best way to make your relationship better is to work at fixing what's wrong, right? Nope. "The most effective way to boost fun and passion is to add positive elements to your marriage," Orbuch says. "That positive energy makes us feel good and motivates us to keep going in that direction." This doesn't mean that you can't feel — or talk about — anything negative, but "pretend you are weighing your interactions on a scale," she says. "If you want a happier relationship, the positive side needs to far outweigh the bad." The more you honour the love and joy in your bond, the sooner you'll transform your marriage into one that is truly great.



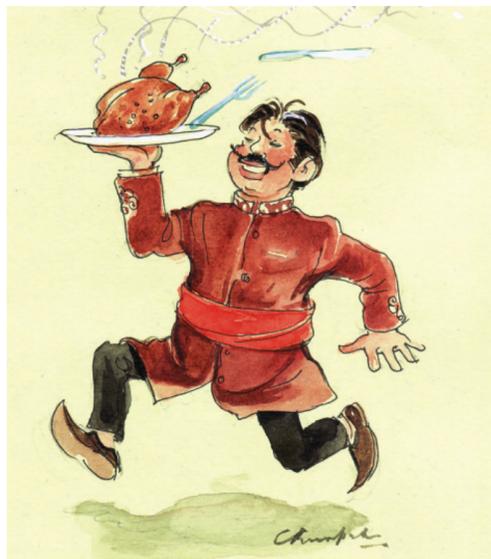
Going out for lunch with friends in the middle of a working day has a faintly illegal feel to it, and that definitely enhances its charm. A friend was treating us to a birthday lunch and we took off from work with the enthusiasm of school girls playing truant. Soon, we three ladies were ensconced in the sumptuous dining hall of a pretty upmarket joint, and really letting our hair down, though, with our short no-nonsense cuts, this is a bit of an overstatement. When it comes to fine dining in this city, we are really spoilt for choice. This place had it all — lily pond, glass elevator, beautiful paintings, antique furniture, the works. It was all so elegant and la-di-dah. Yet, it somehow missed the grand impression it strived so hard to create by a hair's breadth. It's like listening to a symphony orchestra and there's one false note by a violinist in the back row that grates in your ear. And what is this one mischievous element that renders all this enterprise futile? It's the waiters. Oh, they are all a bunch of freshly scrubbed young blokes in neat uniforms, who spring to your side in a split second, keep their heads bowed in deference to you superior status (largely undeserved), lay the cutlery without the maddening clatter, and are charmingly pleasant even after they discover you've left them a measly tip. You cannot fault them for their service. But open the menu and ask for their help and you can see them freeze in shock. English is an alien and tricky language for them, an uncharted territory of nasty surprises involving comprehension and pronunciation, and the printed menu is as indecipherable to us as them as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Call me a sadist, but I look forward to subjecting these blokes to this ordeal. It teaches me a lot about human nature. The one who is full of bluff and bluster will cockily assure you that all the items are equally good. Which translates to the subtlety that you can stuff yourself to a coronary, now that you've reminded him of his poor English skills. The passing the buck

sort of guy, who is quick to delegate responsibility to others instead of solving the problem himself, will tell you, "I have to find out from the cook." And he will bolt at top speed to the kitchen, where he will have a sit-in till you lose your cool and shrilly summon another of this species. Then, there is the raw recruit who will blush, grin sheepishly, shift his weight from one foot to the other, and say, "Sir, I really don't know. I am new to this place. It's only been five days." They all have different responses, but all of them are united by this one common phobia... That you will demand to speak with the manager. We manoeuvred our way through the menu smoothly enough, and lunch appeared, fragrant and appetising. For an hour, we became members of that enviable sisterhood — the ladies who lunch. The image instantly brings to mind hatted and gloved beauties, with a slash of red lipstick and stilettos, who gather with like-minded women for lunch and crib about husbands who are working themselves to an early grave to pay for their wives' luxuries. We talk of woman empowerment now, but are we getting any? We have to work for a living and meet our own expenses most of the time. Think how neatly the ladies-who-lunch demarcated the boundaries — the exploiter and the exploited. Sigh. Who says change is always for the better? Then we have the Supreme Court saying that those who have a live-in relationship are not committing an offence. Does that mean that such relationships actually have legal sanction? I can imagine agitated parents unable to say a thing if their daughters and sons set up households without the *saat pheras* or a legal document. A legal authority even issued a statement saying that it was alright because even Radha stayed with Krishna without marrying. Aw, come on, would you kidnap someone's wife because it was done in the *Ramayana*? Would you play dice because it happened in the *Mahabharata*? When will we grow up and take responsibility for

3rd eye

Indrani Raimedhi

our actions, instead of this infantile need to justify them? And by the way, this mere statement about the legality of live-in relationships is not enough. Mental health professionals and social workers must set up counselling centres and helplines to help young couples who face problems in such relationships. There are many young men and women out there who don't have the maturity to handle these commitments. There have been many cases of physical and emotional abuse and heartbreak. Young people must have some kind of orientation before they start living together, so that their expectations are realistic and they are aware of the pitfalls along the way. Till that happens, live-in relations will remain an irresponsible experiment that is fraught with negative consequences. But, I know most young people would challenge — if I don't try living together, how will I know if he/she is right for me? Well, that's a point. But, it reminds



Of this and that...

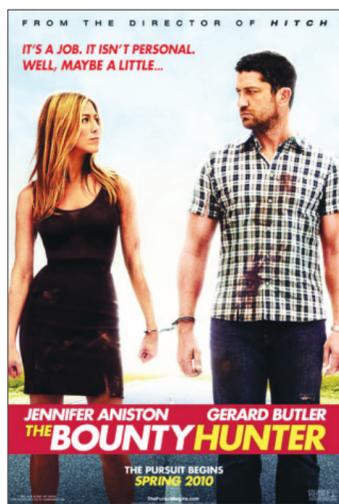
me of the restaurant menu. You don't have to eat all the items to find out what you like. You just go by your gut instinct — and hope for the best. Which brings me to another thought — this business of not knowing. We are all haunted by not knowing what happens next. Television soap producers have holidays in the Bahamas, thanks to our collective desire to know what happens next — who lives, who dies, who cheats whom... you get the drift? Unfortunately, in real life, unlike in the television soaps, you can sometimes never find out what happens next. The Great One in the sky plays this cosmic joke on you, so that you see the characters, get the dramatic tension of the plot and then *pouf!* The denouement is forever withheld from you. It's like that itch between your shoulder blades you cannot scratch, which is to say — maddening as hell. This happened to us on the day

of the aforesaid lunch. Lulled into a pleasant, postprandial stupor, we were sunk in our seats and purring homewards in the car. I was joking that I was too sleepy to crack another Yo Mamma joke (I am training for a career shift to stand up comedy), when suddenly, something caught my eye. A girl was driving a scooty. There was a man on the pillion. Now, don't get me wrong. I am not about to sing hosannas about the empowered woman. Something was not right. The man had his face buried on her back. He was swaying from side to side. Then, shockingly, he was beating his forehead against her back. I think you need a wall to do that kind of stuff. We were terrified the girl would panic and careen off the road. But our gal was a tough cookie. She had her back ramrod straight, shoulders rigid, eyes fixed firmly ahead — like a Yankee storm-trooper heading off to Iraq. And here we were, three lazily lolling women, stuffed to the gills with gourmet food, hunching forward in our seats, making excited conjectures, rudely interrupting each others' sentences, and coming up with different versions of what might be happening. He was drunk. He was having a nervous breakdown. He had just received bad news. He had broken up with his sweetheart, and this girl, who secretly loved him since they were in diapers, but who he thought as just one of the boys, was taking him home. Journalists are supposed to chase stories. It is our bread and butter, and in this case, we were literally chasing one. Now, I know how the paparazzi feel. Our driver must have really got into the mood of the moment because he slammed on the accelerator and hightailed after the couple. We were almost cheering him on, when suddenly, in the confusion of the traffic, the girl and her messed up passenger vanished into a side street. Life is so unfair. We let out a collective groan of disappointment and headed home to wonder forever what really happened, and if there was a happy ending. We women have a thing for happy endings. It's incurable.

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The Bounty Hunter

Cast: Gerard Butler, Jennifer Aniston, Christin Baranski.
Director: Andy Tennant.



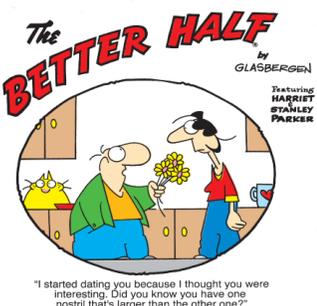
Milo Boyd (Gerard Butler), a down-on-his-luck bounty hunter, gets his dream job when he is assigned to track down his bail-jumping ex-wife, reporter Nicole Hurly (Jennifer Aniston). He thinks all that's ahead is an easy payday, but when Nicole gives him the slip so she can chase a lead on a murder cover-up, Milo realises that nothing ever goes simply with him and Nicole. The exes continually one-up each other — until they find themselves on the run for their lives. They thought their promise to love, honour and obey was tough — staying alive is going to be a whole lot tougher.

Repo Men

Cast: Jude Law, Forest Whitaker, Alic Braga.
Director: Miguel Sapocnik.



In the futuristic action-thriller *Repo Men*, humans have extended and improved our lives through highly sophisticated and expensive mechanical organs created by a company called The Union. The dark side of these medical breakthroughs is that if you don't pay your bill, The Union sends its highly skilled repo men to take back its property...with no concern for your comfort or survival. Jude Law plays Remy, one of the best organ repo men in the business. When he suffers a cardiac failure on the job, he awakens to find himself fitted with the company's top-of-the-line heart-replacement...as well as a hefty debt. But a side effect of the procedure is that his heart's no longer in the job. When he can't make the payments, The Union sends its toughest enforcer, Remy's former partner Jake (Academy Award winner Forest Whitaker), to track him down. Now that the hunter has become the hunted, Remy joins Beth (Alic Braga), another debtor, who teaches him how to vanish from the system. And as he and Jake embark on a chase across a landscape populated by maniacal friends and foes, one man will become a reluctant champion for thousands on the run.



FORECAST

MARCH 29 - APRIL 4, 2010

ARIES (MAR 21-APR 19)
On Monday, it's fantastic that you have a new health routine, but it's important to make your mental health a priority as well. On Wednesday, try to focus on someone else's needs. To calm down on Thursday and Friday, try to concentrate on the speed at which grass grows. Your end-of-the-week introspection belies the kind of weekend you'll have: Full of action, surprises and courting people.

TAURUS (APR 20-MAY 20)
The texture of your day on Monday feels very 19th century: Endearments, courtship, gardens, art and charm may all figure in some way. Wednesday is anything but dull. The emotional climax comes on Thursday and Friday — if your life were a movie, there would be an argument or an argument or a cataclysm, followed by rapturous passion and, on Saturday, a conversation about marriage. Maybe it sounds more like a Jane Austen novel. Anyway, Sunday sends you back towards real life.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUN 21)
Delegating is essential at the beginning of the week — especially because Tuesday and Wednesday are going to distract you. Letting others handle things while you stroll through parks arm-in-arm with a certain someone is a deft manoeuvre. Thursday and Friday, you find yourself making calculations, although not of the mathematical kind. Emotional calculations. Saturday you're moving slowly, but by Sunday, you're speeding up.

CANCER (JUN 22-JUL 22)
Your mind is racing at the beginning of the week, and you still feel like you're falling behind. Nevertheless, you enjoy the frantic pace. If you get a spare moment, you might try to have a nice one-on-one with a coworker, but you might have to wait until Wednesday for a second chance, even to catch your breath. Thursday and Friday, you're worthless when it comes to making decisions, and on Saturday, the slightest thing brings about a major personal crisis. On Sunday, regroup. Do something for yourself.

LEO (JUL 23-AUG 22)
You can afford an expensive lunch on Monday, but an inexpensive lunch will leave you feeling happier and more satisfied. You're more conservative than usual, but on Tuesday and Wednesday, you're also more social than usual. Romance figures strongly on Wednesday, but by Thursday and Friday, it's at the farthest reaches of your mind. Someone lifts a rock for you on Saturday, and a whole new world comes into view. Get back to your love life on Sunday.

VIRGO (AUG 23-SEPT 22)
Now that your desk is tidy and a new award for outstanding performance is hanging on your office wall, what's next? That's the question on your mind on Monday. Tuesday and Wednesday, you are bubbling over with ideas, but you're set on making the next thing as deep and meaningful as you can. Thursday through Saturday, you're lost in conversation, but family obligations on Sunday bring you back to solid ground.

LIBRA (SEPT 23-OCT 22)
Be in listening mode on Monday, in every situation. Tuesday and Wednesday, your attention to the outside world inverts itself, and you find yourself the subject of everyone else's interest (and, likely, their affection). But Thursday and Friday are colder days by comparison, more matter-of-fact and professional. Money is the dominant theme on Saturday, but Sunday is about idealism and good deeds.

SCORPIO (OCT 23-NOV 21)
A small favour for a friend on Monday — something you barely even think about — will come back your way tenfold later in the week. Tuesday and Wednesday require patience. By Thursday and Friday, the tide turns and suddenly, you're the luckiest person you know. Rebirth and regeneration are your themes on Saturday, and Sunday finds you taking risks.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 22-DEC 21)
Just because your boss is being a pain on Monday, doesn't mean you can take off after lunch and not come back. You have obligations to certain people. Thankfully, on Tuesday and Wednesday, your interactions with others are hugely rewarding. You're mostly lost in your own thoughts on Thursday and Friday. By Saturday, you're puzzling over the big picture, but Sunday, you're too busy playing games with friends to think much about anything else.

CAPRICORN (DEC 22-JAN 19)
The most useful information may come from far, far away on Monday, via phone or e-mail. Anything is possible — that's the animating principle on Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday and Friday, you're so focused on your new projects, that you're able to separate out the white noise. Saturday, you detach from your social circle to such an extent, that someone waves a hand in front of your face and says, "Hello, anybody home?" Sunday's a good day to reconnect.

AQUARIUS (JAN 20-FEB 18)
Scepticism is useful at the beginning of the week. But don't be so sceptical that others (wrongly) sense you judging them (this may happen on Wednesday). Thursday and Friday, make for a slow end to the workweek. Don't socialise until Sunday.

PISCES (FEB 19-MARCH 20)
You are learning more about you-know-who every day, even on days when you don't see each other. The only problem with not seeing each other, though, is that it encourages you to overanalyse everything. By midweek, you may have constructed an elaborate history of emotional deposits and withdrawals, that frankly has little to do with the reality of your interactions with this person. Sunday is a lucky day.