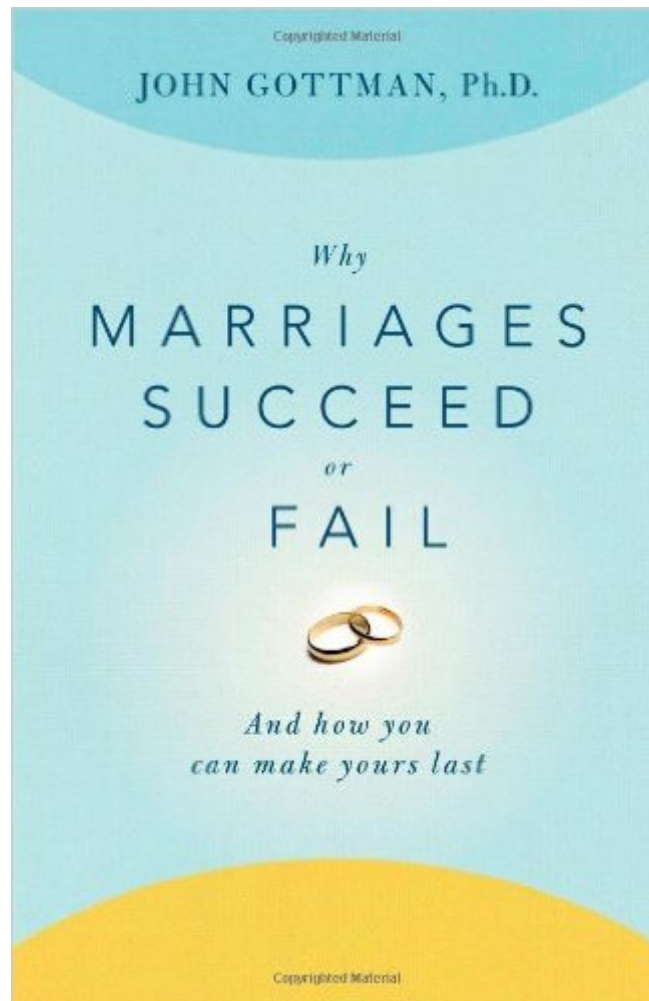


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# Why Marriages Succeed Or Fail: And How You Can Make Yours Last



## Synopsis

Psychologist John Gottman has spent twenty years studying what makes a marriage last. Now you can use his tested methods to evaluate, strengthen, and maintain your own long-term relationship. This breakthrough book guides you through a series of self-tests designed to help you determine what kind of marriage you have, where your strengths and weaknesses are, and what specific actions you can take to help your marriage. You'll also learn that more sex doesn't necessarily improve a marriage, frequent arguing will not lead to divorce, financial problems do not always spell trouble in a relationship, wives who make sour facial expressions when their husbands talk are likely to be separated within four years and there is a reason husbands withdraw from arguments—and there's a way around it. Dr. Gottman teaches you how to recognize attitudes that doom a marriage—contempt, criticism, defensiveness, and stonewalling—and provides practical exercises, quizzes, tips, and techniques that will help you understand and make the most of your relationship. You can avoid patterns that lead to divorce, and—Why Marriages Succeed or Fail will show you how.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I read this book on the advice of my marriage therapist, right after my divorce was final. No advice has ever rung so true. It was a little too late to fix that one, but it's given me a lot to practice for the future. Of course, no book can answer all the questions, solve all your problems, but if you want to understand some of the more intricate patterns of communication that can subtly erode your marriage, I think this book is exceptional. I recently read it again with my partner, and it drew us

together, helped us understand the goings on of our communication, where each of us has difficulty, and gave us sensible, reasonable solutions to mend our relationship and make it more positive. The best part of all: neither of us felt horrible for behaving like children; it just helped us understand what the consequences of our actions might be. One little bit of data he uncovered, the impact of positive to negative interactions between couples, was reduced to a rather mathematical formula: to practice a ratio of five positive to every one negative interaction. Sounds scientific enough, but in practice it's remarkable how much that little habit has done to improve all of my relationships. I think Gottman's work is a significant contribution to understanding how marriages do work, and what couples can do to avoid the pitfalls of harmful communication patterns. I have recommended it to everyone I know whose relationships are ailing and have gotten a lot of grateful thanks from them. He's got a great writing style, humorous at times, and the book is fun to read with your significant other. I feel his information is practical, authentic, and gives the people like me, who don't quite understand all the ins and outs of communication, hope to have a better relationship.

This book was required reading in my clinical psychology, masters level course. I was surprised to see a "popular psych" book in a graduate course but it turned out to be a great text. This book combines an academic and research perspective with accessible and easily generalized examples that can benefit anyone. Since reading it, I have significantly improved my relationship skills and use them frequently in my marriage. The self-tests, the simple practices, and the engaging writing style place this book at the top of the stack for relationship advice. This book is not just for couples in trouble--new couples or anyone looking to improve their relationship skills can benefit. I give it as a wedding gift all the time.

About 25 years ago John Gottman, a researcher at the University of Washington, started interviewing newlyweds in his laboratory. He hooked them up to devices that measure physical responses (blood pressure, heart rate, sweat on the palms, etc.) and videotaped them while they discussed a subject that was volatile for them. What topic was sure to create a heated argument? That's the one he wanted them to talk about. He was then able to go back and study the videotapes and watch the records of blood pressure and heart rate and see how the person responded both outwardly and inwardly. And then he tracked these couples over the years. Some broke up. Some stayed together. He found something very specific that enabled him to predict, with an astoundingly high degree of accuracy, who will break up and who will stay together: How do they fight? He found four things -- four kinds of communication -- that ruin a marriage. If those four are present during an

argument, the marriage is headed for disaster. His most important discovery, I think, is that it isn't the CONTENT of the fight that makes a difference, it's the PROCESS you use during an argument. If you use a lousy method of fighting, it doesn't matter if you're only arguing about a toothpaste tube, it can destroy your marriage. But with the right PROCESS -- one that avoids those four disaster-creating methods -- you can talk about a highly volatile issue like infidelity and still keep the marriage together and your love alive. When you're in an argument with your spouse, it always SEEMS that the important thing is WHAT you're arguing about. But that's not what matters. The important thing is HOW you argue. And Gottman's book tells you exactly how to avoid what doesn't work.

The author's ability to communicate his research in the first half of the book may make the book worth a read. He offers a refreshing look into marital styles, as well as problems that can creep into marriages. While this is interesting, the guidance offered for working through these difficulties is weak. The second half of the book, therefore, is not particularly interesting or helpful. My sense was that, at the time of publishing, the author had scientifically identified patterns and interactions in marriages that indicate when they are in trouble, but he had not yet identified methods to help these couples work through these problems. In addition, his identification of some differences between men and women was superficial. He seemed to have little insight into what men are motivated by, think about, or are worried about. Instead, he characterized them as sex-hungry and unable to communicate, with the solution being that women should just accept them that way. Neither the characterization nor the solution was helpful, accurate, or complete.

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