Habits for a Healthy Marriage: A Summary

The Catholic teaching on marriage as a sacred, lifelong union of husband and wife with the common mission of sharing mutual love, raising children, and helping each other and their children attain eternal life in God is inspiring and demanding. The Catholic goal of becoming another Christ to one’s spouse and children requires daily work to love as Christ loves through growth in habits, virtues and grace.

What are habits Catholic spouses can develop to have a healthy marriage? Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons, who has treated and written about excessive anger and other psychological conflicts in marriage and families for 40 years, provides 12 habits that can greatly strengthen the marriages of all Catholic couples in his new book, [Habits for a Healthy Marriage: A Handbook for Catholic Couples](https://www.ignatius.com/Habits-for-a-Healthy-Marriage-P3365.aspx).

**Forgiveness**

Forgiveness reduces anger by the loyal effort to understand oneself and one’s spouse and to engage in the demanding work of mastering irritability.

**Generosity**

Generosity conquers selfishness through growth in self-giving and in thinking many times daily, “we, not me.”

**Respect**

Respect overcomes the urge to control by thinking about the dignity of one’s spouse and children.

**Responsibility**

Responsibility closes emotional distance by committing to protect one’s spouse and oneself from loneliness, anxiety, insecurity and selfishness.

**Trust**

Trust calms anxiety through confidence in the goodness and protection of God and of one’s spouse and through forgiving those who damaged trust.

**Hope**

Hope reduces sadness by trusting in a positive outcome for events and circumstances in one’s life, especially the struggle with loneliness and sadness.

Gratitude builds confidence through an appreciation of one’s God given gifts and of the gifts acquired from each parent and through forgiveness of those who damaged confidence.

**Gratitude**

**Prudence**

Prudence improves communication by helping spouses see what needs to be said or done in a given situation and how to say or do it.

Temperance restrains compulsions and infidelity by moderating the attraction of pleasures and by mastering instincts and desires so that they remain loyal to one’s spouse.

**Temperance**

**Justice**

Justice prevents divorce by strengthening spouses to give what is due to God, their spouses and their children which is to work honestly on facing and resolving their and their spouse’s personality and spiritual weaknesses.

**Loyalty**

**Justice**

Loyalty is an unswerving desire for the best for others which decreases the retreat from commitment by recognizing the only place in which authentic human love and sexuality are realized is in marriage.

**Humility**

Humility fosters self-knowledge and the process of addressing weaknesses acquired from one’s parents and from one’s mistakes that interfere with marital trust, love and happiness.

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You can learn more about the importance of developing each of the 12 habits in Fitzgibbons’ new book, “[Habits for a Healthy Marriage: A Handbook for Catholic Couples](https://www.ignatius.com/Habits-for-a-Healthy-Marriage-P3365.aspx)”

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