



*A guide to*

**CREATING YOUR**

**MARRIAGE CONSTITUTION**

+ Surprise extra tip (at the end)

## What is a marriage constitution?

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A marriage constitution is a set of agreements or guidelines for the couple's relationship. The marriage constitution serves as a personalized outline of the core principles, values, and boundaries that will guide and support each other in harvesting harmony, navigating challenges, and preserving the strength of their bond.

The document will include the red flags and clear boundaries that you need to feel safe emotionally, physically and mentally in your relationship. In other words, the things that you will not tolerate in your partner and have the potential to become a deal breaker.

Every couple should have one of these to prepare them for the complexities of family life; to help them stay aligned and protect them from each other, especially in times of conflict.

## Why is it important?

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Falling in love is wonderful, wanting to be with someone, for better and for worse is a lovely sentiment. We all aspire to be the best version of ourselves for our partners. These noble intentions, however, are not enough to prepare us for the unknown, the unexpected and what we can't possibly know about another person until we go through experiences with them. For these reasons, and more, a marriage constitution is crucial.

*Love is enough to create the desire to be the best we can be but it's not enough to know HOW to do this.*

It is vital to remember that everyone comes from different backgrounds, and we don't know everything about each other. Even within the same culture and faith, each family dynamic is unique, influencing us in unseen ways. What might be acceptable behavior in one family might be a red flag in another. For instance, one partner may have grown up in an environment where calling names or slamming doors, or walking out in the middle of a conversation was commonly done and seemingly harmless, while the other partner might see this as unacceptable and hurtful. It is important to realize that each partner comes from a unique family background, with distinct values, habits, communication styles and standards for acceptable behavior.

A personalized marriage constitution is information that provides clarity and insights to know whether your behavior will be considered harmless or harmful by your partner. Writing up a constitution for your marriage is a proactive step towards protecting both partners - as much as possible - from hurting the other, whether knowingly or unknowingly. It can help reduce or and possibly even eliminate the chances of hurting or offending the other, or holding anger and resentment.

This intentionally written letter of agreement is a good way to avoid, as much as possible, any misunderstandings. You and your partner won't be able to say, "I didn't know this was unacceptable" when it's right there in black and white print.

**But there is more to it** than the mentioned above. Another reason this exercise is so powerful goes beyond the do's and don'ts on the list. When done earnestly, with the sincere desire to show up as the best partner you can be for each other, the exercise leads to deeper knowledge and understanding of one another. Every "don't do this," every,"red flag," comes with a reason why these are unacceptable, revealing a lot about what triggers or hurts you. When your partner understands the reasons, they understand you better and this presents the opportunity for deeper connection and intimacy.

Love is a desire to know someone deeper and this exercise provides a sacred space to do so, and encourages self-awareness and personal growth, as partners reflect on their past and how it shapes their attitudes and behaviors. I encourage couples to take this exercise a step further and to use it as an invitation to share their “why” behind the list, their life stories, hurts and deepest desires. Often couples find themselves in a true open dialogue about each partner’s upbringing and the influence it has on their patterns and expectations from the relationship.

## When to do it

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There’s never a wrong time to work on your romantic partnership. Well, maybe not on the first date, but definitely early on enough to establish a strong foundation for the relationship. You might want to think about writing up a marriage constitution during your engagement period, this is often a time when couples share their vision for a future together. This allows you to clarify your expectations, roles, responsibilities, and any potential issues before making a formal commitment.

In life, we often encounter significant transitions or high-pressure points that no matter how strong the relationship, can shake the stability of it. If you don’t have a marriage constitution and are about to go through something major, it might be a good time to work on one.

### *Creating your Marriage Constitution*

When creating a marriage constitution, it's important to address the non-negotiables for each partner. Check your ego at the door, make yourself open to your own and your partner’s vulnerabilities, be a good listener and wear your nonjudgmental hat. Remember that the seemingly harmless actions and behaviors to one person, can be triggering for the other due to past experiences.

## Common examples of deal breakers:

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- No smoking:** One partner might have grown up in a household with heavy smokers and promised themselves they would never live with a smoker.
- No coming home drunk:** If one partner had alcoholic parents, they might find it intolerable for their partner to come home drunk.
- No cheating:** It's essential to define what cheating means to both partners to avoid misunderstandings.
- No swearing, calling names or making fun of people:** This can signify a significant difference in core values.

## *Now it's your turn*

Exercise: Now it's time for you to work on your personalized marriage constitution. List only the deal breakers. If you create a very long list with such things as keeping the toilet seat down or not leaving dishes in the kitchen sink the list might grow endlessly long, and this exercise becomes overwhelming and less effective.

- 1. Decide that you and your partner will create a list.** Think about what your red flags and deal breakers are, the things you know you will not tolerate in the relationship. You can do it simultaneously but each on your own or in advance before the sharing component. I personally think that doing this in days or a week in advance of your meeting helps create a fuller and more accurate list, because you have more time to reflect.
- 2. Get together for the sharing component.** Once you both have your drafts prepared, schedule a time to get together to share the lists, each one taking a turn to go through their list. It's important to have a conversation, explain yourself so you and your partner understand not just what, but why something on your list would be a dealbreaker, red flag, or not acceptable. This sparks deeper conversations and strengthens your understanding and connection.
- 3. Make verbal commitments.** After you've each had a turn to talk, and reached some agreements, make verbal commitments to do your best to avoid everything that appears on the list. This is an important moment between you and the one you chose to spend your life with. It reflects the commitment and mutual respect you share and as such, it's worth celebrating. It signifies the sacred bond between two people who love each other.
- 4. Draft and print your personalized constitution of marriage.** After sharing and discussing your individual lists, it's time to draft a common document that combines both.

5. **Seal it with an embrace.** Hug, kiss, dance with each other, be proud that you took the initiative to set yourselves up – in this union – for success. Keep this document tucked away or visible, whatever feels right to you both.



*I love surprises and I hope that you do too!*

Here is an extra small TIP that has made HUGE difference in my life and the lives of the couples I work with:

**Build Trust and Financial Harmony with this simple Expense Tracking Tool (this is not a budget tool)**

Very often couples share their challenges tracking expenses and keeping transparency with their finances.

Here is a simple yet powerful strategy you can implement to easily track your expenses, stay on budget and manage your finances with ease so you can build trust, work as a team and create financial harmony.

1. Create a WhatsApp group just for you and your partner. Give it an inspiring name like “Our Abundance”
2. Agree with your partner to diligently record every single expense in this group, no matter how small, even a \$1 purchase. Document the date, amount, and purpose or store name.

3. Transfer these entries into an Excel spreadsheet on a daily basis or every few days. This spreadsheet allows us to effortlessly track your weekly and monthly expenses.

This spreadsheet allows you to effortlessly track your weekly and monthly expenses. With this tracking system, especially after experimenting with other, more complicated methods of expense tracking that proved impractical, you can easily and consistently log your expenses in a shared space. Then consolidate them into a clear format. This provides you with invaluable insights into your spending patterns. It helps you make informed financial decisions, maintain accountability, and strengthen your financial transparency as a couple. And even more precious, it brings you closer together in your financial goals.

