



## Grown-Up Marriage

# Grown-Up Marriage: What We Know, Wish We Had Known, and Still Need to Know About Being Married

*Judith Viorst*

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## **Grown-Up Marriage: What We Know, Wish We Had Known, and Still Need to Know About Being Married** Judith Viorst

Although marriage is for grown-ups, very few of us are grown up when we marry. Here, the bestselling author of *Suddenly Sixty* and *Necessary Losses* presents her life-affirming perspective on the joys, heartaches, difficulties, and possibilities of a grown-up marriage -- and no, that's not an oxymoron! Featuring interviews with married women and men, the findings of couples therapists, the truths offered by literature and movies, and a bemused exploration of her own marriage, Judith Viorst illuminates the issues couples struggle with from "I do" through "till death do us part." Examining marital rivalry, marital manners, marital sex (extramarital, too), marital fighting and apologies, what kids do for (and to) marriage, and the boredom and bliss of everyday married life, Viorst leaves no marital stone unturned. From the early years when we wonder "Who *is* this person?" and "What am I *doing* here?" to the realities of divorce, remarriage, and growing older (and old) together, Viorst offers insights and advice with honesty, humanity, and humor -- all the while recognizing how tough it is to be married and, when it works, how very precious it can be.

## **Grown-Up Marriage: What We Know, Wish We Had Known, and Still Need to Know About Being Married Details**

Date : Published February 3rd 2004 by Simon Schuster (first published 2002)

ISBN : 9780743210812

Author : Judith Viorst

Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Relationships, Marriage, Self Help

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# **From Reader Review Grown-Up Marriage: What We Know, Wish We Had Known, and Still Need to Know About Being Married for online ebook**

## **Christine Slocum says**

The writing style is hard to follow. Heavy on fluff, light on content, and a rambling, preachy way of writing which didn't prioritize substance. I wish there was more research and less random, distracting poetry.

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## **Brendygirl says**

While I agree w other reviewers that some of the notions (especially toward the beginning) are outdated, the author recognizes that, and it's part of her story- to explain thinking from her generation (while acknowledging how times have changed). However, as a divorcee and someone who has subsequently been married over 40 years, as well as having had a couple sets of in-laws and being a mother-in-law and grandparent, she has the experience to give thoughtful advice and perspective from many angles. The author of famous children's books, she makes the book accessible and relatable. She is not pigeon-holing her audience to married couples, but anyone who is in a relationship. She owns up to mistakes she has made and continues to make- from all of her roles, past and present, and from opposite ends of the same stick. Instead of platitudes, she offers multiple examples from real people and patients of marriage therapists. Instead of a couple reasons for pitfalls, she offers many well thought through causes. Some "rules" or tips seem like they do not apply to you, until she spells out exactly how common dialogues or actions we're all familiar with actually do precipitate or exemplify problems. It elevates you out of denial. You recognize yourself and couples you know in her vignettes, learning how inappropriate you are, while also how normal you are.

I agree with other reviewers that the most profound chapters are: 6. Marital Sibling Rivalry, 7. Married sex, 8. Making war, Making Do, 9. The Divorce Option, and 10. Marrying again. It was extremely validating for me about why my own marriage ended, and helped me further understand, process, and articulate that stuff. And it made me feel more secure in my decision to most likely not marry again. I've been in a relationship for four years now and serendipity allowed this book to find me at a used book sale at a fall festival and now my partner has agreed to read it as well. Yay! I feel more 'grown-up' already!

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## **Katie says**

My mom gave this book to my husband and me when we were engaged. She thought it was so important and the lessons so valuable that we each got our own copies - and good thing, since I highlighted the heck out of mine! She was right - it is a wonderful book about marriage and relationships, and it's now my go-to gift for all my soon-to-be married friends.

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## **Mary says**

Meh - found a recommendation on a blog I really liked. I guess if I was younger this would be a good revelation for me, but basically it's a long book that says relationships are sometimes hard and people need to be intentional about them. Nothing that rocked my world or challenged my thoughts. Not terrible, just not amazing like I was expecting. I think I was most disappointed because it was all observations but no recommendations for actions.

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### **Virlys says**

Anyone who is married, might one day be married, is considering marriage, or is engaged to be married ought to relate to the stories, problems, joys, frustrations, and realizations of the real life people who author, Judith Viorst interviewed. This is readable and real with a wonderful balance and breadth of information about marriage and--more importantly--and understanding of what a grown-up marriage is and tools to achieve that optimum state. Besides case studies, Judith Viorst has the credentials and the research to back up what she says. She also shares candidly her own experiences--warts and all, as the old saying goes. I'm buying one as a Christmas gift!

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### **Joanne says**

I like Judith Viorst (Alexander and the Terrible Horrible No Good Very Bad Day, Alexander and the Wonderful Marvelous Excellent Terrific Ninety Days), and this book promised an overview of marriage as a cultural phenomenon. It isn't, though. It's a little bit of Viorst commenting on her own marriage and a little bit of her talking with therapists and other couples and a little bit of her reading a lot of books on marriage and a little of her own poetry and stories about marriage. I dipped in and out of it, and can't say I learned much new.

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### **Numberbox says**

Fantastic book. I've developed such an appreciation for Judith Viorst, and the topic of this book was perfectly on point for me. A delight!

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### **Celeste says**

So far so good, actually... I've read a lot of self-help books, and I like this one because it's pretty real. It doesn't try to pretend that a "happily ever after" marriage is easy...or even truly attainable (even the best marriages have their ups and downs. But I think Viorst does a good job of flagging some common difficult issues that (at least in a young marriage) you might be able to preempt by doing some conscious thinking about your preconceptions regarding the nature of marriage and family, and the nature of your own experiences that might have led to those preconceptions. I think it's a good'un.

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**Stacy M. says**

Good advice until Viorst talks about cheating like its just one of those things we all do. Put it down shortly after that; don't plan on picking it back up.

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**Mary Alice says**

I've been married 27 years and I'd like to think that my husband and I have an almost grown up marriage. I recognized some things from the early chapters as what was happening to us maybe 15 to 25 years ago. Fortunately, I learned those lessons without the benefits of this book.

Some of the lessons Viorst teaches are obvious. I read the growing old together section with the most interest, but most of those lessons I've already started to think about.

I got the most insights from the middle section, the sections on war within the marriage. Some of the rules Viorst gives are very, very good and were new to me.

I liked this book, mostly not for the advice (though it was mostly good), but for the portraits of marriages. They were interesting. Some marriages are like mine. Other marriages have elements of my marriage. The book was interesting.

I'm not sure if this book could save a marriage.

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**Rebecca Rosenblum says**

Lots of good simple advice, although a few bits are rather antiquated, and some of the later chapters weren't personally relevant for me--how to deal with retirement and so forth--though interesting to know what's ahead.

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**Dolly says**

After nineteen years of marriage, I'm convinced that we've done something right. But, and this is a big qualifier, I do recognize that a marriage is something that both need to work at, 'til death do us part. When you become complacent and start taking each other for granted, things can start to derail. By reading this and other books about marriage, I hope that I can continue to remind myself of the importance of nurturing our relationship.

This is a quick read (I actually read this over the course of two days, with more than a week of traveling in between them) and I think that most married couples could benefit from this sage wisdom, advice, and anecdotes.

I have really enjoyed reading Judith Viorst's books - they are candid, refreshing and sincere - and I will certainly look for more at our local library.

interesting quotes:

*"There's you and you, and then there's this third thing  
Which is the marriage. To it may you bring  
The finest strivings of the human heart.  
The "I," the "me," the "mine," the self apart  
Must yield some portion of its separateness  
And say a risky but unguarded yes  
To this third thing, this marriage you create..." (p. 26)*

*"Any marriage worthy of the name,' writes psychiatrist Peter D. Kramer in Should You Leave?: A Psychiatrist Explores Intimacy and Autonomy--and the Nature of Advice, 'entails repeated remarriage' --to the same partner--'active choices to stay on in the face of new perspectives on self and spouse.' It also entails the brave, hard work of transforming these new, and sometimes shocking, perspectives into something expansive and creative, into an opportunity for a husband and wife--and a marriage--to grow up." (p. 46)*

*"Although we can't, in the midst of a fight, imagine why we married such a rejecting, demanding, selfish, insensitive, critical, domineering, withholding person, chances are that we'll think of a reason later." (p. 170)*

*[regarding fighting] "...Reach out a hand and say to each other, 'Life is short. We have no days to spare. Let's make up.'" (p. 182)*

*"The more grown up we are...the better aware we'll be of our good fortune in finding someone to have and to hold, and the harder we'll work to nourish and keep what we've found." (p. 231)*

*"No man or woman really knows what perfect love is until they have been married a quarter of a century." Mark Twain (p. 233)*

*"Erikson's study of couples who have grown old together has found that most of the husbands and wives describe 'marriages of lifelong mutual affection, supportiveness, understanding, companionship, and ever-increasing appreciation.' However, when he checked his files, he was startled to discover that some of these very same husbands and wives had--several decades earlier--complained at length about their marital difficulties. Perhaps, Erikson speculates, they prefer to believe, and do believe today, that they were 'devoted from the very beginning.' Perhaps their later-life intimacy has transcended and colored their earlier marital history, allowing them to forget past discontents and recall only a 'long lifetime of marital satisfaction.'" (pp. 250-251)*

*"Married for decades, she knows, as all of us long-time marrieds know, what it takes to stay married and why it's worth the effort. Not perfect love, and no bed of roses, marriage can nonetheless be the best place to be as we grow older together." (p. 253)*

*"Says Mrs. Antrobus in Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth, 'I married you because you gave me a promise. That promise made up for your faults. And the promise I gave you made up for mine. Two imperfect people got married and it was the promise that made the marriage....And when our children were growing up, it wasn't a house that protected them; and it wasn't our love that protected them--it was that promise.' The promise we make to each other is that we'll protect and preserve our marriage, that we'll feed and watch*

*over our marriage, that we'll defend it against attacks--even our own. The promise we make to each other, and to ourselves, is that our marriage will endure." (pp. 256-257)*

*"In our efforts to stay married through the disenchantments of couplehood, through the disarrays of parenthood, through the rut and routine of everyday married life, we might try to embrace and enjoy domestic dailiness. Through marriage's 'soars and slumps,' we might try to discover a few sonnets at the supermarket. And when romantic passion succumbs, as it must, to the mundane, we might consciously choose to see married love not merely as what we possess at the start of our marriage, but as a heroic adventure, a magnificent accomplishment that we strive to achieve together over the years." (p. 258)*

*"The lengths we go to to stay married might include attempting to live by the following precepts, which tend to be more heroic (and a hell of a lot more difficult) than they may sound: Try to be nice to each other even if you don't particularly feel like it. Try to give to each other without being asked. Remember that, like charity, courtesy and charm begin at home. Offer a little more praise and a lot less criticism that you think your spouse deserves. Honor each other's goodwill and good intentions, even when you don't get what you need. Don't expect to get all that you need from each other. Figure out how intimate you can be without suffocation and how separate you can be without alienation. When possible, laugh. When possible, say yes to having sex--with the husband or wife to whom you are married. Keep in mind that fidelity is not in the lap of the gods but a choice that you consciously make, again and again. Compromise. Compromise some more." (pp. 258-259)*

*"Being happily married means hanging out with each other and never--well, hardly ever--being bored with each other. It means knowing each other well enough to know what lies within the other's heart, and trusting each other deeply enough to, sooner or later, allow ourselves to be known. It means, as one wife told me, 'being loved and valued by the person we married for what we love and value in ourselves.'" (p. 261)*

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## **Inder says**

I wanted to like this book (I admit, because I like the title of this book), but Judith Viorst writes in the strangest way, I found it difficult. She rambles, goes off on tangents, she talks about poetry and literature a lot, and generally loses me. I read the whole book, but now I can't remember anything that it actually said. The title is better than the content - which is a bad sign for a book.

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## **Erin says**

Someone gave this to me for a bridal shower gift, I think, but it sat on my to-read shelves for the past 8 years until I picked it up almost at random last month. I'm actually pretty glad I didn't read it prior to getting married or even in the first few years of my marriage, as I found the tone of much of it quite dismal and depressing and focused on unhappy people.

On the bright side, I appreciate my own marriage and husband even more now that I've finished the book! Perhaps it's a generational thing, since Viorst is substantially older than I am, or maybe her intended audience is the generation younger than I, who might be getting married before they've figured out who they are and what they want? Really, though, there aren't a whole lot of earth-shattering revelations. Much of the book boils down to:

- 1) Choose your life partner very carefully (I personally recommend eHarmony!)
- 2) Communicate honestly, kindly, and frequently
- 3) Treat each other with respect
- 4) Don't cheat on your spouse and expect *anyone* to feel good about it
- 5) Really, just *don't cheat on your spouse*
- 6) Maintain your sex life (with your own spouse--see #5)
- 7) Have fun together because those memories will help sustain you through the rough patches
- 8) Everything will change all the time as you move through the stages of life, so expect continual adjustments and plan to do the hard work of making them in concert with your spouse.

I don't want to give the impression that I hated the book--it wasn't awful, it just wasn't as helpful as I'd hoped. Clearly there are plenty of other reviewers for whom it clicked. Maybe they recognized themselves in some of the couples or situations, maybe they had some "Aha!" moments while reading one or more sections, or maybe they just read it at exactly the right moment in their lives. That's great! I will donate my copy to the Friends of the Library for a book sale so perhaps it'll make its way to someone who'll get that kind of benefit from it.

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### **Kirsten Kowalewski says**

eh... she has some good stuff to say, but she's not writing for my generation. If young marrieds are her targeted audience, I think she's missing the boat. My mom thought she was right on, though.

Not quite what I expected from the genius behind *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*.

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