

1-2012

# Five Habits that Can Ruin Your Marriage

Susan E. Murray  
*Andrews University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Murray, Susan E., "Five Habits that Can Ruin Your Marriage" (2012). *Lake Union Herald*. 239.  
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/239>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Lake Union Herald at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Lake Union Herald by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact [repository@andrews.edu](mailto:repository@andrews.edu).



## Five Habits that Can Ruin Your Marriage

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

*It takes wisdom to have a good family [marriage], and it takes understanding to make it strong. It takes knowledge to fill a home with rare and beautiful treasures. Wise people have great power, and those with knowledge have great strength. —Proverbs 24:3–5 NCV*

**H**abits are those behaviors we acquire in life, some being intentional and many unintentional. They may not seem like a big deal in the great scheme of life, but some, even small ones, can wreak havoc on our relationships. Fortunately, we have some good habits, but we also have some bad habits!

Breaking bad habits isn't easy, especially if we have spent years honing them to perfection! The key to changing anything in our life that's not working is to first acknowledge that what we are doing isn't effective. Those closest to us can often be our best sources of information; unfortunately, all too often, they know they are putting their life on the line to tell us.

So, instead of waiting for your spouse to inform you of habits that are hurting your marriage, I invite you to consider if any of these might be long-held habits that describe your actions.

**Forgetting the little gestures.** In courtship, couples tend to spend a lot of time and energy doing things for their partner. Sweet gestures — like kissing her when she walks in the door, asking him if he needs something while you're up, touching his arm or leg when sitting next to him, or saying thank you when she does something for you no matter how big or small — lead toward intimacy and help keep romance alive.

**Endlessly criticizing and nagging.** Finding fault with others is so easy! When we are constantly criticized, our well-being and confidence suffers. While we can justify that a reminder, or several, is for the other's ultimate good, this behavior erodes a relationship. Think of it this way: If what you are doing isn't working, *it isn't working!* Avoid personal attacks and criticism on the person you promised to love and cherish. It's that simple!

**Sweating the small stuff.** Rich Carlson\* has made a mint off his books about sweating the small stuff. His point is that



when we focus on the smaller annoyances in life, we miss out on so many big, wonderful opportunities. If you don't like dirty dishes in the sink, wash the dishes. If you don't like wrinkled underwear, fold them. If your partner doesn't take the garbage out, don't let it turn into a mountain (literally or figuratively), take it out.

**Playing the victim game.** Never being the one at fault is so tiresome to a spouse who isn't always to blame either. Playing the victim is a controlling behavior that reaps no positive rewards. When we play the victim, our partner feels punished, which eventually erodes our relationship, and they lose trust and respect for us.

**Spending too much time and energy with others.** Having interests aside from our partner is important, but not having our priorities straight eventually will be destructive to a relationship. Sometimes we use our friends, our jobs, our church responsibilities as a welcome distraction from home. If you are talking more with your girlfriends, mother, buddies at work or the gym, your kids or whomever else you can reach on your cell phone, this is a wake-up call!

Cultivating positive habits in a marriage unleashes great power for good! It's what God calls us to do!

---

Susan Murray is a professor emerita of behavioral sciences at Andrews University, and she is a certified family life educator and licensed marriage and family therapist.

---

\*Rich Carlson has written more than 20 *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* books; some co-authored with his wife, Kristine. They may be purchased at Amazon.com, and many can be found at local libraries.