



### **OYF223 Bonus Content: A Health Check for Your Marriage**

Did you know that your marriage and your health are very closely linked? A vibrant marriage helps you feel strong, fight illness and stay at your best. A struggling marriage leaves you feeling run down and tired, making you more susceptible to illness.

Does your marriage need a check-up? Here are some of the ways marriage and health are linked, and how you can keep them both in top shape!

#### **Feeling Supported**

Feeling supported and knowing that someone has your back is always a huge relief. But research shows that this feeling of support from your spouse can have amazing effects on your health. One study even found that men and women who felt supported and loved by their spouses had healthier hearts than those who didn't!

So how can you get more of this miracle cure into your marriage? There's no secret to it. If you are struggling and feel in need of support, encouragement and love from your spouse, ask them for it! Just say "hey, I'm feeling a bit rough lately, can you help me out with X, Y and Z?" Your spouse can't help you if they don't know you need help, so never be afraid to involve them in your troubles and face challenges together.

The other side to this is being available to support your spouse, just like they are there to support you. You might know that you would do anything to help them out, but do THEY know that? Have you told them recently? Get into the habit of making yourself available and asking if there's anything you can do to help your spouse feel more loved and supported.

#### **Stress and Conflict**

If you've been following our show for any length of time, you'll know that high levels of conflict are bad for your marriage. Heck, you probably knew that already. But did you know that conflict, when dealt with poorly, can be just as damaging to your heart and circulatory system as smoking cigarettes? That's what the research says.

Everyone has disagreements, but not everyone tries to avoid them by putting their spouse's needs before their own. Everyone falls out occasionally, but not everyone makes up afterwards. Dealing with conflict properly isn't just good for your marriage, it's an important part of keeping yourself well. So that's one more reason to learn how to deal with conflict properly!

## **Fun and Laughter**

Happiness is the best cure for a lot of health problems. That might sound stupid, but there's some real science behind it. Feeling good releases chemicals into your body that reduce stress and strengthen your immune system. So maybe a little fun and laughter could be just what the doctor ordered!

What do you and your spouse do for fun? When was the last time you had a really good laugh together? Spend some time thinking about what you can do for fun this week, and try to make time for this regularly. Busyness is not an excuse: your health is at stake here!

## **Expressing Yourself**

Ever tried keeping something secret, or kept your real feelings about a situation to yourself? Notice how it felt like you were going to burst? That's the tension building up inside you, and it can badly affect your heart, your muscles and even your mind.

Now think of a time you opened up about how you were feeling. Didn't it just feel like a weight off your shoulders? That sense of relief, and the feeling of being connected to the other person, are great ways to get rid of tension and protect your physical and mental health.

Of course, being open and honest with your spouse is also going to be good for your marriage. So start creating more openness and emotional expression in your marriage. Even little stuff like admitting when you're worried, upset or annoyed is all good for you!

## **Checking up on Each Other**

Finally, being married is like having your own personal doctor to check up on you. Your spouse might not have years of medical training but they are an expert in all things YOU.

Think about it like this: you know your spouse better than anyone. If they're not feeling well, you'll be the first to notice. If they're doing something that will be damaging to their health, you're the perfect person to talk to them about it. If they're stressed, you're there to help share the load. If they want to try and make healthy changes to their life, you'll be there to cheer them on.

Be deliberate about this. Observe your spouse. Notice when they're down, or tired, or stressed, and ask what you can do to help. Notice little problems before they become big problems. If you both watch out for each other like this you'll be able to respond to problems much more quickly and easily.