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Marriage Tactics by Rev. Becca Bateman, Pastor for Family Ministries, San Marino Community Church

The standard advice we all receive early on as newlyweds is always about equality. Husband and wife are on equal footing. A couple must share, compromise, and sacrifice for one another. A couple needs to be aligned in their values on important topics. Managing day to day stress is challenging. We have to remember to listen each other, hear what's being said, don't try to immediately fix it, or try to be right - just listen. I also find it very helpful, and comforting to be spend time with other couples who are in a similar stage in life. It's very grounding when you not only gain practical tips, but can also be a support to friends who need it. Creating a community, a support system of family and friends is essential to the health of any relationship.

But at the end of day, it still comes down to just the two of you. I ask myself, How can my husband and I be the best version of "us?" Add children, and that "us" has just been re-defined. Someone told me once, if you want to survive a marriage, "Hire a housekeeper, get a gardener, and install a dishwasher." However superficial those things may seem, for me it has proven useful in keeping our household calm! But in all seriousness, it takes work to keep peace and harmony in your life together. Couples are so busy these days that they don't take the time and effort to work at their relationship. It is important to be reminded that romance and intimacy, problem solving, creating shared memories, communication, goal-setting, are just a few things that keep a marriage strong. But these things don't happen on their own. Couples need to make the effort and aren't always successful at it. They may just need to learn a few easy techniques.

Whether you're in a new relationship or celebrating your 25th wedding anniversary there is an opportunity to explore your relationship coming this month: A Marriage Enrichment Class is being held Tuesday evenings, 6:30 – 8:00 pm, February 6-February 27 at San Marino Community Church. This 4-week course is based on Dr. John Gottman's "Seven Principles of Making a Marriage Work", and will be led by Lisa and John Massaro, Certified Gottman Couples Workshop Leaders. Through a combination of lectures, exercises, readings and journaling, couples can take what they have learned and immediately apply it at home. The Massaros teach with energy, experience and passion the proven techniques that help couples transition into better habits, and a more loving connection with their partner.

The cost for this 4-week program is only \$50 per couple, which covers a copy of Dr. Gottman's book, *Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, plus two workbooks. **Please register at: tinyurl.com/smcc-marriage by February 5.**

Note: This course is not therapy. You are not expected to share personal details of your relationship with course leaders or others in attendance. Questions? Please contact Lisa Massaro, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, at ldmassaro@outlook.com