

This might be the key to a happy marriage

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(Photo: Andre Penner, AP)

NEWSER – The key to a happy and lasting marriage might be as simple as regularly expressing gratitude. So report researchers from the [University of Georgia](http://news.uga.edu/releases/article/research-links-gratitude-positive-marital-outcomes-1015/) (<http://news.uga.edu/releases/article/research-links-gratitude-positive-marital-outcomes-1015/>) in a new study published in the journal *Personal Relationships* (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/per.12094/abstract>).

After interviewing 468 married individuals on relationship satisfaction, covering everything from communication habits to finances, they found that the "most consistent significant predictor" of happy marriages was whether one's spouse expressed gratitude. "Feeling appreciated and believing that your spouse values you directly influences how you feel about your marriage, how committed you are to it, and your belief that it will last," says

study co-author Ted Futris.

And that goes for good times but perhaps especially bad ones—when couples experience stress and their communication devolves into what the researchers call a demand/withdraw cycle (i.e., one partner demands or criticizes; the other tries to avoid a confrontation). Gratitude can disrupt this, acting as a buffer.

"What distinguishes the marriages that last from those that don't is not how often they argue, but how they argue and how they treat each other on a daily basis," says Futris. Adds lead author [Allen Barton](#), the study "goes to show the power of "thank you" and suggests a "practical way couples can help strengthen their marriage."

And while expressing thanks has been shown to boost one's health, reports the *Huffington Post* (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/study-says-gratitude-is-key-to-happy-marriage_5628ff63e4b0443bb562e328), this shows how doing so can positively impact someone else, too. (See why women are [more likely to end a marriage](http://www.newser.com/story/211726/oddly-women-are-more-likely-to-end-a-marriage.html) (<http://www.newser.com/story/211726/oddly-women-are-more-likely-to-end-a-marriage.html>).

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