

All married couples long for their marriage to be refreshing. To be a place of safety, comfort, love, and peace. Yet, many couples do things that break this environment or, at the least, keep this from being what their marriage is all about.

They might not do it intentionally. Sometimes, we sabotage things that feel too good to be true.

There is a beautiful picture of what a marriage should be like in Song of Solomon 1:14. The woman compares their relationship to En Gedi. En Gedi is an oasis in the desert near the Dead Sea. This oasis springs up from nowhere with lush trees, plants, water, and even a waterfall.

Yet, this is not what most relationships and marriages are like. Most marriages are filled with stress, pain, nagging, hurtful words, anger, outbursts, and even abuse.

It doesn't have to be this way, and couples don't get married to live in the desert; they get married hoping for the oasis. But how do you make the trip?

Here are six simple ways to get there:

1. Stop nagging. Many couples [nag at each other](#), [put each other down](#), get on each other's cases, and are mean to each other. This creates an environment no one wants to be in, a family working against itself. This isn't rocket science, yet many couples nag and make fun of each other to accomplish something. When a couple does this, they will say that they are trying to get something done (a project, their spouse to change, wake their spouse up), but what is happening is pushing them away. Every time nagging occurs in a relationship, it comes from a place of brokenness. [Sometimes, nagging comes from a place of disappointment](#), either in yourself, your spouse, or even where you thought your life and marriage would be at this point. Sometimes, [you must grieve that things aren't going as expected and learn to move forward](#), but that's another post.

2. Start talking. One of the best ways to make your marriage refreshing is talking. [Opening up to your hopes, dreams](#), and disappointments, and sharing your past, your hurts, and your joys. Many couples who are in marriages that are not refreshing find themselves keeping things bottled up or opening up more to someone they aren't married to than they do to their spouse. Your spouse should know more about you than anyone else. Always.

3. Start serving. If you look at couples in refreshing marriages, an oasis in the desert, you will see two people striving to outserve the other. One simple question to ask your spouse is, "What can I do to make your life easier or less stressful? How can I help you?" I asked Katie about this years ago, and her answer surprised me. She said, "Make sure the kitchen is clean before bed." That wasn't what I expected, but if that didn't happen, we all got up the

next day and felt behind or maybe had to finish cleaning something up that could've been done the night before. [Here are a few other questions to ask your spouse regularly to work as one.](#)

4. Start pursuing. What made you want to get married was pursuit. You did things together, couldn't wait to see each other, and planned date nights and trips. You pursued your future spouse, which is one reason they became your current spouse. Along the way, the pursuit ended. Pursuing your spouse is one of the fastest ways to create a refreshing marriage. [Plan date nights \(they don't have to be expensive\)](#), do things the other one likes (even if you hate it), participate in hobbies together (even if you don't like the hobby), and lastly, pursue each other sexually. Husband and wife should initiate affection and sex regularly. As I discussed earlier in this series, [long kisses are essential to any marriage.](#)

5. Start believing. Couples who have a refreshing marriage believe in each other. They believe in the best, hope for the best, believe in their spouse's dreams, and encourage them to pursue them. A refreshing marriage is one where you never have to say, "Don't you want to have? Don't you want me to pursue my dreams?" A marriage stuck in the desert has those conversations. Remember, #3? This comes from a place of serving, and when you're serving, you are willing to put your dreams on hold, if necessary, instead of fighting for them.

6. Start setting up. A refreshing marriage is one where spouses try to help the other succeed. They ask, "How can I set my spouse up for success? How can I make them look good to others? How can I help them reach their goals?" A desert couple says, "What about me and my dreams? Who's setting me up?" A desert couple doesn't fight for oneness but for themselves.

The reality is that even though every couple wants a marriage in the oasis, we will often choose the desert. It is what we know; it is easier, less work, and honestly, the desert allows us to be selfish.

Don't buy it, though. No one lives very long in the desert.

Each week in this series, we will share a couple of resources to help you process the content of this series:

[I'd Like You More If You Were More like Me: Getting Real about Getting Close](#) by John Ortberg