

## 5 Hours of Magic

Dr. John Gottman, revered marriage expert, has done extensive research in the field of marriage. One of his most helpful findings is what separates successful marriages to ones that fail. The answer: Those that spend an extra 5 hours per week investing in their spouse tend to live a more fulfilled marriage. He calls it the magic 5 hours. Below, I've adapted and commented on the 5 categories he uses in his book, *The 7 Principles for Making Marriage Work*.



### **1. Partings/Departures – 2 Minutes per day**

Spend two minutes per day warmly and intentionally departing from your spouse for work, the gym, or social activity. This can include a brief description about the forthcoming appointments or activities that you will encounter during your day. Take a moment to do this without rushing and, as you depart, let your spouse know they are an important part of your day. Two minutes per weekday, 10 minutes per week.

### **2. Greetings/Arrivals – 20 Minutes per day**

At some point shortly after your return home from work or daily activity, spend twenty minutes debriefing about the events of the day. Like the 15-Minute date, each take about ten minutes of this time to share your high and low points of the day. This is time to reconnect after spending the majority of the day living in separate worlds. Spending 20 minutes per weekday is 1 hour and 40 minutes per week.

### 3. Physical Affection – 5 Minutes per day

The more familiar and routine we become with our spouse, the less we take time to physically be together. Unfortunately, the physical proximity of each other in a home gets to be sufficient. For most marriages, the only intentional physical connection occurs during sex. Without non-sexual touch (touching that is not leading to sex), sex can become a chore and obligation. Gottman suggests spending 5 minutes per day, not necessarily in one setting, intentionally touching, hugging, kissing, and physically interacting with one another. These 5 minutes will likely be the easiest of this list to do with each other, and will likely enhance your sex life. Five minutes every day is 35 minutes per week.

### 4. Admiration, Affirmation, & Compliments – 5 Minutes per day

Those who are loved by touch have had their five minutes, now it's time to spread some love with words of affirmation. Make mention about something you admire about your spouse or something they did. In his research, Gottman says that it takes 5 positive affirmations to counteract one negative interaction. Think of this category as your emotional bank account. Each time you find something enjoyable or affirming about your spouse, make a deposit. Five minutes every day is 35 minutes per week.

### 5. Weekly Dates – 2 Hours per week

Doing the previous four exercises will net you 3 hours of foundational time spent investing in your marriage. The cherry on top of this is the weekly date. Dating is the time that you and your wife leave the confines of the home, and live life together. Dates do not have to be dinner and a movie, nor do they have to be talking dates. My wife and I actually try to have dates together where we are not sitting face-to-face with each other for the entire evening. This can involve a movie, putt-putt golf, serving dinner at the local homeless shelter, or another activity that is not routine.

Dates are usually the first activity to go in marriage. A big reason is assuming the time spent together at home negates the need for an intentional date. The problem with this thinking is that your relationship was never built by staying at home. You went out, dated, and that usually ends pretty soon after marriage. Make it a point to protect your date night at all costs.

My guess is these 5 hours were present in your dating relationship, and you didn't have to think about doing them. The good news with this: You're able to do it. The bad news: You're going to need to work on it. Take the time to invest in your marriage in these 5 hours per week: You'll reap the rewards.