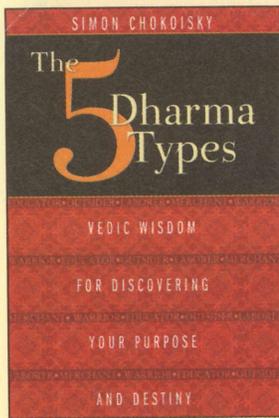


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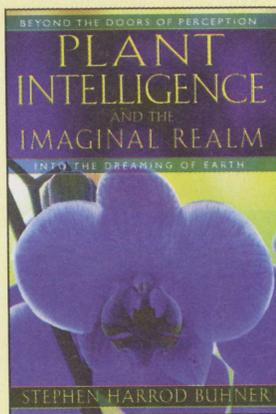
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Love, Factually

IN TRADITIONAL WEDDING vows, husbands and wives promise to stay together for richer or poorer, and through sickness and health. That's all well and good, but it offers little practical direction. If you want a relationship that's lasting and fulfilling, consider these research-based vows that actually help couples keep their promises to each other. —Samantha Joel



“I promise to support and protect your freedom. Although our lives are intertwined, your choices are still yours alone.”

It's crucial to maintain individuality in long-term relationships. Research suggests that people who are pressured by a partner into making decisions feel less fulfilled, which is problematic for any marriage. Support each other's right to make decisions independently.

“I promise to respect, admire, and appreciate you for who you are, as well as for the person you wish to become.”

Striving to see the best in each other, and supporting each other's attempts to grow and improve over time—what researchers call the Michelangelo phenomenon—is highly beneficial for you, your partner, and your relationship.

“I promise to show you, every day, that I know exactly how lucky I am to have you in my life.”

Research shows that when we express gratitude to our partners and make them feel appreciated, they tend to feel happier, more committed, and more appreciative themselves.

“I promise to keep our lives exciting, adventurous, and full of passion.”

Couples are happier when they engage in new, interesting things together. Keep courting each other, keep traveling and exploring together, and keep sharing novel and interesting experiences.

YOUR FUTURE SELF IS...SATISFIED

Dreading old age? A Swiss study suggests that for many, the best—or, at least, the most positive outlook—is yet to come. Young, middle-aged, and older adults rated their life satisfaction in the past and present as well as expectations for the future. Each group, on average, reckoned that their present phase of adulthood would be most satisfying, but the top ratings came from subjects in their 70s. —Matt Huston

