

## Reflections on Weddings, Donkeys and Maids



Who has not gone to a wedding only to see, years (if not months!) later, the Prince and Princess having slipped into their roles as donkey and maid? For as “enlightened” as we have become, most men effectively are still the donkeys of their homes (Kings? Are you kidding me!) while their wives are, in point of fact, the maids.

From seemingly having the world at their feet, not being able to do enough for each other, the Bride and Groom later stop asking: “What can I do for you, honey?” . . . complaining instead . . . “I am tired!” . . . to . . . “What am I a donkey (man) maid (wife)?” . . . to . . . “OK, I don’t especially like it, but I accept my position under the condition you fulfill your responsibility . . .”

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Is it possible to meaningfully define and shape our lives and future? If so, how? To what degree? Is it worth the effort?

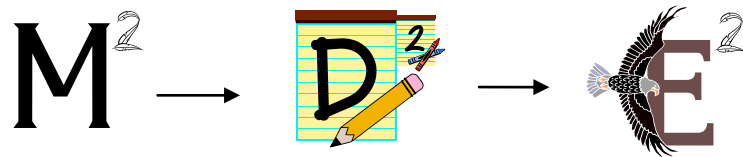
The correct answer to the 1<sup>st</sup> question is “Yes” and “No;” there are some things, no matter the desire or effort, which will ever change. Helen Keller was born, lived and died blind and deaf. She demonstrated, however, how to mitigate the “Nos” and, simultaneously, to meaningfully shape and define her life and the lives of many more!

Continuing our example of the wedding, donkey and maid: is it possible to meaningfully define and shape a marriage? If so, how? To what degree? Is it worth the effort?

- Is it possible to meaningfully define and shape a marriage? **Yes!**
- To what degree? **To a GREAT degree!**
- Is it worth the effort? **Of course!**
- If so, how? **Ah! This is the key question!**

3 Options

Give up Give In	Get by Do just enough	Grow up Grow in
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The Prince and Princess being wed demonstrate the mirage of excellence in a new marriage; the bride and groom have the opportunity to build a great marriage, but being married is just the beginning! They have a new marriage, not an excellent one. Their marriage will slid into M<sup>2</sup> (the **Morass of Mediocrity**) without D<sup>2</sup> (**Defining Disciplines**); an excellent marriage requires developing and exercising D<sup>2</sup> for a period of time – the longer, the more excellent the marriage.

We all too often think now is forever so that, when things are good to great we tend to take them for granted until will find ourselves in M<sup>2</sup> – **The Morass of Mediocrity**. Is it logical and possible to successfully **Seek an Equilibrium of Excellence** – E<sup>2</sup>? **Yes! Yes! Yes!** Through **Defining Disciplines** – D<sup>2</sup>! Make no mistake, we are either improving (ascending toward excellence)/or descending and declining to mediocrity. **Defining Disciplines** are those consistent actions that shape our lives to the positive.

Let's look at just one easy (albeit, important) discipline that would revolutionize most marriages, going a long way towards E<sup>2</sup>. And if we find we can meaningfully shape a marriage, with one small defining discipline, why not look for more simple and helpful disciplines?

What is the discipline that will go a long way toward alleviating the problem of a couple sliding into the donkey and maid paradigm of so many marriages? And, worse yet, without this very seldom developed discipline, we train little ones to, likewise, see Dad as the donkey of the family and Mom as the maid! What can we do, what defining discipline can we develop, so that Dad and children see Mom as The Queen of the house and are thankful to Dad for “bringing home the bacon?” We do this by **Dad verbally thanking Mom** during and after every meal as well as looking for other opportunities to thank her, within earshot of the children, for what she does around the home. **Mom can vocally thank Dad** for his help around the home (even just taking out the garbage) and his work out of the home. **Dad and Mom can, from time to time, remind the children to thank the other parent** for all they do for them.

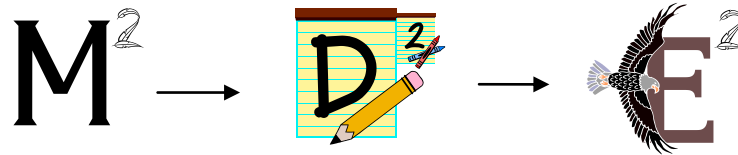
Parents work so hard teaching their children to say “Thank you” to non-family members – isn't it even more important that they learn to say “Thank you!” to those closest to them? And they learn this only from their parents modeling it day in, day out, over and over and over again! Dad will train his children that Mom is not the maid of the house while, at the same time, reminding himself of this! This simple D<sup>2</sup> will greatly improve the marriage, make the children generally more thankful and provide a legacy for the childrens' marriages.

Learning the discipline of family thankfulness demonstrates a significant point – our common thinking that “No pain – No gain” (the idea that there is a direct relationship between the level of difficulty and the reward) is often very false! Defining disciplines do not have to be hard – they just have to be consistent! The best Defining Disciplines are the easy ones that provide great rewards.

Developing the simple discipline of saying “Thank you” is aimed at making us more thankful – to change, not just our words, but our hearts as well!

Family “Thank yous,” is just one example of a small (in terms of effort) D<sup>2</sup> that can have great rewards. It is amazing what can be gained and accomplished by even small disciplines – and, while often slower to manifest itself, what is lost by a lack of disciplines.

## In Summary



*From the Morass of Mediocrity through Defining Disciplines to Seeking an Equilibrium of Excellence.*

- 🦁 All disciplines are not equally beneficial. The objective isn’t “any old” discipline — some simple disciplines can provide great rewards while other disciplines, like dieting, are even destructive!
- 🦁 Good disciplines are not temporary and cosmetic but lasting and real. In the case of learning family thankfulness, Dad and Mom train the children, while also reminding themselves, of the blessing of the other.
- 🦁 Too often (and too many), people define themselves 1-dimensionally — as their money and things, job/position, body, personality (positive, friendly . . .), intelligence, awards/titles, etc. We should define (and redefine) ourselves as real, multi-dimensional, people! Effective disciplines are not 1-dimensional; disciplined people are looking for more and better disciplines to help them Seek an Equilibrium of Excellence across all areas of their lives, not a single discipline to be excellent at one thing.
- 🦁 Related to this, contrast D<sup>2</sup> with this the stereotypical “high achiever” — although, in some respects they may appear similar, they are not even close! High achievers typically are those with special talent combined with hard work and great focus resulting in quite a high level of accomplishment in one area. Recognition and accolades can drive the high achiever to greater focus in a single pursuit while neglecting other areas of their lives that may be suffering.

D<sup>2</sup> is also not recommended so we can necessarily do more, but so we are well balanced. In many cases it leads the high achiever to “tone down” their obsession with their primary gift, concentrating less time and energy there and more in other areas of their lives suffering from a lack of time and attention.
- 🦁 Because the connotation most people give to “discipline” is negative, few seek and find the joy of disciplines or seek disciplines in “good” things. We tend to take good things for granted (until the good is often lost or seriously diminished). This need and should not be!
- 🦁 D<sup>2</sup> (Defining Disciplines): The only bridge from mediocrity to where we are to where we want to be (E<sup>2</sup>); making Princes from donkeys and Princesses from maids!