

## WIVES

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Three out of ten guys will lose their lives if they lose their wives.

### Wealth.

Men tend to think of marriage as a financial burden.

But science suggests marriage is a wealth-producing institution that may be as important as education in boosting a man's earnings.

Married men earn, by some estimates, as much as 40 percent more money than comparable single men.

And the longer a man stays married, the more he earns.

### Mental Illness.

Married men are less depressed, less anxious, and less distressed than single, divorced, or widowed men.

Divorce lowers a man's self-esteem, sense of personal mastery, and purpose in life.

Forty percent of married men, compared with about a quarter of single men, say they are "very happy" with their lives.

### Sex.

Despite messages to the contrary from the media, husbands are more likely to report a satisfying sex life than single men.

In fact, husbands are more likely to *have* a sex life.

Single men are 20 times more likely not to have had sex even once in the past year.

Almost a quarter of single guys lead completely sexless lives.

Sexually active husbands succumb to fewer illnesses, and heal faster after wounds and surgery.

How can a piece of paper generate such medical miracles?

The wiring for emotion in our brains turns out to sit directly next to — and is deeply connected to — the circuits that control heart rate, blood pressure, and adrenaline secretion.

"You can see the two circuits talking to each other on imaging machines," says Dr. Harry Lodge, a New York City internist and co-author of *Younger Next Year*. "A bad emotional state makes needles jump. A really good marriage is harder to measure — it's an absence of those jumps."

Married men have a different sense of their future, and a stronger desire to stay alive, according to researchers.

In short, marriage gives men — and the women they love — a reason for living.

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## Marriage isn't miserable for women either

A 2002 finding challenges the long-standing feminist belief that marriage makes men happy but women miserable.

Published in *Family Matters*, an Australian journal, the study, which involved 10,641 people, found 25 percent of divorced women and men suffered emotional problems compared to 13 percent of married women and men. Depression and anxiety was more common among women while drug and alcohol abuse tended to afflict men.

While it's clear married people are emotionally better off than divorced or single people, it remains to be proven that marriage itself reduces the risk of an emotional disorder.

"This view of the effect of marriage on men and women has been enormously influential and has become part of the 'common knowledge' about marriage," says David De Vaus, professor of sociology at La Trobe University in Melbourne, who conducted the study.

It could be that people with better mental health are more likely to get married, while those with problems shy away from marriage, are not able to attract partners, or end up divorced.

"Certainly that's a factor, but it's not just that," says David Popenoe, co-director of the Family Research Project at Rutgers University in New Brunswick.

The most likely meaning of the findings, he says, is that the conclusion that marriage emotionally oppresses women is wrong.

"There are going to be many things that, rightly, are going to enter into the decision whether or not to marry," he says. "It would be a pity if women decided not to get married based on information that it damages their mental health, when in fact the evidence shows the opposite."

— ROBIN FRIEDMAN

