

For a Better Marriage, Act Like a Single Person

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Especially around Valentine's Day, it's easy to find advice about sustaining a successful marriage, with suggestions for "date nights" and romantic dinners for two.

But as we spend more and more of our lives outside marriage, it's equally important to cultivate the skills of successful singlehood. And doing that doesn't benefit just people who never marry. It can also make for more satisfying marriages.

No matter how much Americans may value marriage, we now spend more time living single than ever before. In 1960, Americans were married for an average of 29 of the 37 years between the ages of 18 and 55. That's almost 80 percent of what was then regarded as the prime of life. By 2015, the average had dropped to only [18 years](#).

In many ways, that's good news for marriages and married people. Contrary to some claims, [marrying at an older age](#) generally *lowers* the risk of divorce. It also gives people time to acquire educational and financial assets, as well as develop a broad range of skills — from cooking to household repairs to financial management — that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives, including when a partner is unavailable.