**100-year-old couple on being married for 78 years**

© Provided by Independent Print Limited A centenarian couple who have been married almost 80 years have shared their secret to a long-lasting happy marriage – despite never saying “I love you”.

Morrie and Betty Markoff from Los Angeles have been married for 78 years but say there is no great secret to a successful marriage other than “tolerance and respect”.

Betty, 100, told the *Observer:* “Just don’t let every complaint turn to anger. Tolerance and respect. And you’ve got to like them. Morrie would never use the word love; I do, but the actions are the same on either part.”

“When asked why he never told his wife he loved her, Morrie, 103, explained: “To me, love is possessive; it’s controlling and demanding.

“The word that I would rather use instead is ‘caring’. You care about people. ‘Care’, to me, has a much deeper meaning.

“Love is an esoteric word, but one that people also use to mean all sorts of off-hand things. ‘I love playing tennis,’ and such.

“I hug Betty constantly, I kiss her constantly, I care very much about her.”

The couple, who met at a wedding in New York City in 1938, are now due to appear in *Ageing Gracefully*, a book documenting the stories of centenarians by German photographer Karsten Thormaehlen.

They are the only couple to feature in the book and say they are the “oddities” among their community as “We’ve outlived everybody”.

“It’s rare, I recognise that” Morrie said, “We’re very lucky. The best I can wish you is our luck.”

Morrie puts his longevity down to “divine intervention” after he survived a heart attack the day before his 99th birthday.

He was rushed to hospital when Betty called 911 but flatlined after surgeons inserted a pacemaker in his chest during an operation.

Despite technically dying for several seconds the family returned to find him awake and joking a short while later.

Betty, on the other hand, puts it down to a “seventh grade nutrition class” where she learned how to prepare a meal with protein and vegetables and the daily walk around the local lake that the couple took before breakfast for several decades.

The couple say one of the weirdest things about growing old is seeing your children become senior citizens as well. Their daughter lives in the same block as them so if one of them were to die, the other would not be alone.

“After 78 years, I can say I didn’t make a mistake. We’ve had our ups and downs, but we’re still here”, Morrie said with his hand on his wife’s knee.