

Take Good Care of Your Marriage!

Sue and I just finished mentoring another couple before they get married. The more I do this, the more I realize that marriage is a dynamic, but fragile, relationship that requires a lot of effort, love, forgiveness, compromise, and Father's Grace for it to last a lifetime. We come together in marriage from different life experiences growing up and try to navigate through life's challenges and adventures as one flesh. Sue and I have learned from our 46+ years of marriage, there are lots of demands and stressors on marriages from finances, children, jobs, and just the everyday activities that seem to consume all our time. The "cares of this world" can not only choke the Word, but they can also choke the life out of our marriage and love for each other, if we let them.

For many couples, this slow drifting apart and loss of passion for each other goes unnoticed until one day the children leave home to start lives of their own and we realize that there is little we do or have in common with our spouse. The memories and thrills of our courtship and early marriage are just faint memories of a life we seem to have lost somewhere along the way. However, there is hope even if you find yourself already dealing with the "empty nest" reality or want to avoid this pit fall before it happens. As Sue and I have learned, we can revive and bring new life into our marriage if we are willing to take the time and effort to turn things around. So here are some things to help lift your marriage to a new level and fill your "couple balloon!"



Make Time for Each Other

This is more than just being in the same room or vicinity of each other! I'm talking about focused attention, eye contact, touching, engaged in conversation or some activity you're doing together. Research has shown that most couples in the US spend only four minutes per day in a deep, heart-to-heart conversation with each other. The National Marriage Project weighed relational quality based on the amount of time couples spend one-on-one and found that spending frequent couple time together more than doubled or tripled happiness with the marriage, satisfaction with communication, sexual satisfaction, and commitment among both the husband and wife. Make it a priority to take time for each other as often as possible. Sue and I have picked Friday as our **date night** and we try to protect it from any other commitments. We also have agreed to stop working on other things by 9 PM each day and spend the rest of the evening doing something together.



Keep Romance in Your Marriage

(This one is especially important for the men!!)

Romance is a regular feature in a great marriage.

To put a guy's perspective on it, "romance is serious business to a woman. A woman going through marriage without romance feels like a guy who goes through life without sex!"

Be creative! Think back of all the things you used to do trying to win her heart to marry you when you were dating and engaged. Men need to do what their wife thinks is fun or romantic. So ask your wife what you could do that would be romantic to her and start doing it! I know for Sue it is the times when I plan ahead what we are going to do on date nights or make special plans for our anniversary or a weekend away from home. She also likes it when I create an atmosphere of low lights, candles, quiet music, etc. that makes her feel special and loved.

Surprise her with giving her something you know she loves or doing something with her that she likes to do. (It proves to her that you know her and want an intimate relationship with her!)



Keep the Lines of Communication Open

There's a lot that could be said about this area, but I want to focus on more than just the spoken words or conversations we have. These are important and I don't want to lessen their value in resolving issues, expressing love and affection, and keeping each other informed. But 90% of communication is non-verbal and women are experts in reading and sensing between the lines of what we men say! Things like body language, tone of voice, gestures, and actions often speak louder than words. One of the most powerful ways we communicate is through our eyes. The eyes are the window to our heart and we can pick up on what someone is really thinking or feeling without a word being spoken. Sue and I have begun to start every day, often before we get out of bed, by looking into each other's eyes and expressing our appreciation or love for each other. We do the same thing each evening when we go to bed. Keep communicating with good eye contact and watch your marriage and intimacy continue to grow!



Have Fun and Laugh Together Often!

Watch funny movies, tell jokes, play games, and do silly things together. Be childlike and skip rocks, throw snowballs, have water battles, run through a sprinkler, make snow angels, build a snowman upside down, kiss in the rain, have a pillow fight, make smiley-faced cookies, laugh out loud! Don't let life get too serious or overwhelming that you still can't have some fun!

I hope that this has encouraged you and maybe given you some hope for a better tomorrow and future in your marriage. Remember, we all get to start over again tomorrow! If we continue to invest in our marriage, we all have a 100% chance of having a Life-Long Love Affair with our spouse!

Check out this great Christian website on marriage: <https://marriagemissions.com/>

Dialogue Questions

1. List three fun memories from when you were dating each other and for each one express how that made you feel about yourself and your relationship at that time.
2. Recall three romantic moments that you have had since you were married and describe your emotions and how each one made you feel about yourself and about your spouse.

Fun Night Ideas

1. Go to a park and have a picnic. Fly a kite. Play on the playground equipment. Push each other in a swing. Take a walk around the park holding hands.
2. Look through photo albums, photos on your computer, or family videos and reminisce about the memories they bring back to you. Make a list of 25 reasons "why I'm glad we're married."