

How to Put the Fun Back in Your Marriage

Everything in the commercial world is colored red and pink right now. “Love” is in the air. From the marketing messages, you would think you’re heartless unless you shell out a bunch of cash for flowers, candy, cards, chocolate-covered strawberries, pajamas and who knows what else. As with most holidays, retail has hijacked Valentine’s Day. But it does point out how important it is to put the fun back in your marriage.

Parenthetically, it’s fascinating how the commercialization of this season focuses so much on what women might consider romantic. Is this sexism in reverse? It does illustrate the economic power of women, even when they’re not the ones buying.

More to the point, all the messages about how much hard work it takes to make a marriage successful too often forget the need for fun. Friends enjoy each other. Your spouse should be your best friend, and friendship includes having fun.

You may feel as though your marriage is too broken to have any fun. I contend that doing something fun together can be an important way to reconnect and move your relationship forward. Lightening up at times and enjoying something together is a great investment in your friendship.

Keeping It Fun

Your personalities and lifestyle will have a lot to say about what means *fun* to you. But here are a few things to keep in mind.

- **Fun for both of you.** If one of you is having a good time and the other is dreading every second, your friendship

is not being helped. While some fun activities will appeal to one of you more than the other, make sure your fun is something both of you can at least somewhat enjoy.

- **Be reciprocal.** A friendship takes into account the personalities of both partners. Fun should be something you engage in regularly. Take turns with your spouse in choosing or initiating fun. And when your spouse chooses, stretch yourself to engage in something they enjoy; you may enjoy it more than you expect.
- **Don't punish or embarrass.** It's possible to plan something fun that you know is likely to make your spouse feel hurt or embarrassed. That's passive-aggressive; just don't do it. You're not teaching your spouse a lesson; you're working to come closer together.
- **Think experiences, not money.** Some of your most memorable times of fun are likely to not cost a dime. If you have extra money to spend on fun, that's fine. Just know that a snowball fight may do more to cement your relationship than an expensive night of entertainment.
- **You initiate.** If you're the more spontaneous spouse, take the initiative to inject some fun into your relationship. Don't keep score on how often you or your spouse comes up with something fun. Find something that you know will draw your spouse into the experience.

What if there are serious problems in your relationship? That doesn't mean you can't still have fun. (I'm not talking about when abuse is going on. If that's the case, get some help right away.) Having fun is not the only thing necessary to grow your relationship. Learning things such as forgiveness, communication skills and character growth are absolutely necessary. And life has a way of bringing troubles when you least expect it.

But periodically breaking away from the seriousness of life is good for your emotional health and your marriage. Some of your

date nights should be just for fun. Find other little ways during the week or month to lighten up. Your relationship will be stronger for it.

A Few Fun Ideas

Here are a few ideas to get you started in thinking about something fun to do with your spouse.

- **Get outdoors.** A snowball fight, a walk in the park, a couple hours at the beach – God's green earth is endlessly creative. Go out and enjoy it.
- **Recreate a memory.** Think of something fun you did while dating, or earlier in your relationship. Go back to that restaurant. Give that gift again. Play your favorite song and dance in the living room.
- **Cook together.** Food can be a lot of fun. Choose a meal you both would enjoy, perhaps using a meal service. Find the ingredients together, and prepare it together. (Afterwards, if you're really adventurous, go outside and have a food fight with the leftovers.)
- **Old photos or movies.** If you've been married for some time, get out the old pictures or movies that illustrate your years together. Look through them and talk about what you remember.
- **Enjoy your bodies.** Who said physical intimacy had to be boring? Take a shower together. Get creative with strawberries, or whipped cream, or feathers. Dance naked in your bedroom. (Yes, that's OK for all ages!) Enjoy each other.

Go ahead and put the fun back in your marriage! You might be surprised how much you enjoy it, and how much it strengthens your relationship with your spouse.

Your Turn: What will you do with your spouse that's fun this week? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

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