

One Sure Way to Enliven Your Lackluster Marriage

When you get married, intuitively you sign up to have fun. You know there will be some responsibility, but really you think there will also be some fun involved. After all, it took you all these years to find your ultimate playmate, your spouse.

That was my idea when I married Lisa. Actually, that's one of the things I love and loved about Lisa: She enjoys doing a broad range of things. And she was as beautiful riding a horse, bicycling, getting all dolled up to go to the theater or just going, in jeans and a T-shirt, to a coffee shop.

I loved dating Lisa and all the long walks and talks we had together. Countless times we just sat in her car for hours, talking. You probably have similar memories dating your husband or wife. Remember the smiles, relaxed attitude, dreams, brilliance that attracted you to each other? I'll bet that at the time, you were projecting to your future spouse that you were and would be fun as well.

What happens to so many couples as they go through the various stages of marriage? Before children, many couples still go out on dates. They have fun, are still creative, and don't think getting together takes too much effort.

It's the next stage of the marriage where couples begin to struggle with prioritizing dates. You guessed it: the arrival of the first, second and possibly third child. The wife is thrown into motherhood. The couple are coping with sleepless nights, long days and working hard to try to afford that larger apartment, first house and probably bigger or safer car.

Those early child-rearing years are a critical period in which dating can fall by the wayside because of time constraints.

That is the stage where couples lose sight of the importance of maintaining an active dating lifestyle. It's the stage when your junior-high and high-school aged children don't drive yet and are involved in several activities—sports practices, dances, band—that you are driving all over town for. You also have school, dentist's appointments, doctor's appointments, birthdays, church events, extended family events—and don't forget holidays and summer vacations.

You can get tired just reading about what parents at this stage of life do. Yet here is where a couple needs going out the most. The demands of life are great, and if a couple aren't careful, they will move into a functionship and out of a relationship. In a functionship, couples work on completing their to-do lists but not on their relationships. They may eat together, but that's often on the road, quick and with the kids.

In a functionship, both people are prone to burnout, adopt weird eating habits, only occasionally exercise, and feel like members of an assembly line—not like anyone's beloved. None of these is conducive to a good marriage and being the love of each other's life. In a relationship, time together has an equal or even higher value than all of this other stuff. In a relationship, you make sure that your going-out night is as sacred as going to church.

Going out is a fundamental aspect to having a successful marriage.

If you don't keep oil in an engine, it eventually will get hotter and hotter until the engine can become severely damaged. Like a motor, a marriage is a moving entity. What the support principle of going out provides is oil or lubricant that softens the friction between these moving parts so it can operate optimally. Honestly, the laughter, chatting, dreaming or just relaxing together is a great stress release so you can enjoy your lifestyle. This piece of going out is very helpful

for the longevity of your relationship.

If you don't go out, you will eventually spend more time arguing and have to see someone like me, who will suggest you start going out again. {eo}

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