

These 3 Daily Exercises Will Strengthen Your Marriage

Throughout my years of counseling couples, I have found many marriages have no structure in place that encourages intimacy. This lack of structure and skills can limit the future success of the marriage. We grow up believing we get married and live happily ever after. Yet we are often not equipped for intimacy and can be disappointed when our spouse doesn't possess the secret code to get there.

The early part of marriage can often be fun as you begin to learn about your spouse, go to work or school, get your first apartment, pick out furniture, go to church and are physically intimate together without shame. The sheer new complexities of life along with the multitude of new decisions can keep couples talking and sharing regularly.

Slowly and subtly, it happens. No one really knows when or where it happened, but something has changed within the relationship. You don't seem to talk as much.

Decisions are not met with the same glee as when you were first married, but instead, they are delegated, then discussed. Purchases become fewer, sex and life begin to take on a certain level of routine. You don't seem as close but seem to be just living together. What happened? How did the passion for each other leave?

Let's go back a minute to when you were dating and you were selling the idea that being married to you would be a good idea. Remember the passion you had for your wife? Of course, you remember the passion, but what you may have forgotten is the foundation of that passion: the priority of the relationship.

Do you remember how you "made" time to be with her? You

planned your days and weeks around each other's work schedule including your days off. Those of you who were like me and moved away from a future spouse to go to school have the phone bills to prove it. Those phone bills took a good portion of the little income I made just to tell her about my day.

Do you remember how spiritual you were? You prayed individually and together as often as you could. Some even read the Bible together. The desire was in you to know God's will, and you needed Him to help you stay pure and yet express your love to one another.

Do you remember the gratitude you had for the smallest things your spouse did for you? I found this especially true if my future spouse cooked for me. I was so grateful! There was a constant stream of praise that you offered toward your future spouse. Do you remember when you thought she was so smart and attractive, that she had so much potential? You believed in her and regularly encouraged her.

Understand that passion is a result of the setting of priorities. So many people try to get the passion back instead of getting their priorities back. Once you get the priorities back, the passion naturally follows and grows. "What priorities?" you ask.

No matter how sprained or broken, healing can and does take place. I have seen literal miracles in restored marriages when priorities were put back into the relationship. One of the structures I apply is what I call "the three dailies."

Daily No. 1: Prayer

Prayer is an absolute necessity to have active in your marriage. I am constantly amazed when couples tell me that the last time they really prayed together was years ago. Usually their rationale goes something like this, "We both pray, just not together." That's fine, but I really don't see how that can in anyway be optimal. Prayer is an active way to have the

Lord be a part of the building of your marriage.

Men, prayer is your job. You can like it or not, you can even gripe about it, but get it done. You serve a holy God, and I believe He will hold you accountable to the return on His investment: the precious talent of His daughter to you.

Remember that prayer is just talking aloud to God with your wife, similar to talking with a friend. Prayer doesn't have to be hours long or done in any particular position. The principle of connecting with God together is essential.

Daily No. 2: Feelings

Emotional intimacy is a second very important skill you need to develop and maintain throughout your marriage to be sexually successful. Often early in the dating relationship and then eventually in marriage, we readily share our feelings about life situations, people, God and our dreams with each other. Many don't know what happened to their feelings when they got married, but for many couples, they appear to go into hiding. Life gets more complicated, and your conversations seem to get more managerial, such as who does this or how is that going to get done, did this or that need to get paid and all those great conversations about children.

Identifying and communicating feelings is a skill. Skills can be learned by anyone. I can testify to that personally as well as anyone. I have witnessed many couples who have grown in the skill of identifying and communicating their feelings. Please email heart2heart@ for a free feelings list.

Daily No. 3: Praise and Nurturing

Praise and nurturing one another is an essential ingredient for a vibrant ongoing intimate relationship that breeds sexual success. By practicing praise and nurturing, you will get skilled and comfortable with the exercise of giving and receiving. For some husbands and wives, the giving of praise

is difficult. For others, receiving or acknowledging praise is more difficult. For still others, both aspects of giving and receiving praise is difficult.

Both the giving and receiving of praise is a skill. Again, anyone can learn skills. Anyone can praise and nurture a soul. As you practice praising your spouse daily, you and your spouse will experience the oil of intimacy drip into your soul and heal areas of dryness you didn't even know existed. It is your job to put the intimacy into the relationship. My advice and my experience is this: Do the basics, and better is always ahead of you! {eoa}

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