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How To Keep Love Alive In Your Marriage

By Patty Apostolides

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by: **Patty Apostolides**

In the beginning of a relationship, love seems to have a life of its own. Without much effort, you feel like you are on top of the world. You catch yourself smiling and laughing often, and feeling warm inside whenever you are with your loved one. Everything and everyone suddenly appears better through the rose-colored glasses of love. This euphoric feeling does not last forever, however. After the first year of marriage, the day to day activities of being married, working in a job, raising a family, buying and maintaining a home, etc., all take their toll, and romance takes a back seat.

Love has to be worked on, just like a gardener with his garden. Although he has planted the seeds, and expects the sun and rain to do most of the work, he still has to pull the weeds out of the garden, to fertilize it, and water it if there isn't enough rain. That is the same with a healthy, loving relationship. When love becomes a high priority in a marriage, it is taken care of and nurtured daily. The resulting love rewards you by growing into a more mature, mellow, committed feeling, and when tested, rises up to meet the challenge. How does one keep love alive in a marriage?

Make Time

You need to designate quality time with your loved one. Don't take it for granted that he/she will always be there when you want them. Remember all those dates you took when you were courting? Now, it's not so easy. There's usually someone else making demands on him/her - whether it's the children with their homework, or the boss expecting you to work late hours, or even an elderly parent that requires assistance. Also, it now might require finding a baby-sitter, or juggling the time with another activity that might take precedence. Whatever happens, make time for each other. Also, make time to hug and/or kiss each other often. You'll be glad you did. The time you spend together will re-energize you and make you feel good for the rest of the day.

If you can't get away, you can still set a date at home, after the children are asleep. The important thing is to have fun together. Here are a few things you can plan to do at home together: Physical

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intimacy - might put some soft music in the background, maybe even dance together. Pour a favorite drink, make an ice cream sundae, or grab some munchies, and have fun talking with your loved one. Play a favorite board game or card game, anything that makes you enjoy yourselves. Make popcorn and watch a favorite video.

This is not the time to solve life's problems or issues. If there are any lurking issues in the background (and these may be keeping you from enjoying yourself), then sometimes you just might have to talk about it first, get it out in the open in a loving environment, then continue with your plans. Often, positive energy is tied up within us when a problem or issue has not been resolved.

Use these times to tell him/her how special they are to you (how intelligent, how thoughtful, how loving, how caring, etc.).

What is Romance?

Romance is the opportunity to show your loved one how special he/she is to you. It means taking the time for them, and making time, even if you don't have it. It doesn't mean thinking only about yourself, or having only your needs met. It means putting the other person first. Here are some ideas to spice up your romance: Do small acts of kindness - give him/her flowers, or a little gift, or write a poem, etc.

Say "Thank you" and "I Love You" often. Be considerate of his/her feelings, etc. Take long walks

together - anywhere. Share jokes at mealtime. Laughter is a great way to share one's love. Visit a museum, visit community festivals, tour a new site, or attend a lecture together. Hug and kiss often.

If your spouse doesn't do things for you, then show him/her by gently pointing out what you like. If you like flowers for your birthday, and you haven't gotten flowers, then let them know, particularly when he/she asks you what you would like. Don't think they can read your mind, let them know.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Over time, we learn how to read our spouse. Their behavior, their actions, are important clues that alert us to how they are feeling. Often, we think we know what they are thinking, and we become sloppy, and don't talk about it, or they don't bring it up.

For example, if he had a bad day at the office, and comes home snapping at the children and being tense, the last thing to do is to take it personally. Invite him to relax, as dinner is prepared, then after he's eaten, ask him how his day was. Sooner or later, the truth will come out, and you will learn what happened. You need to be a responsive listener, and not criticize your spouse, for he will surely clam up. The last thing he wants to hear is criticism.

Other signs that can bring on a spouse's anger/tenseness:

Hunger: If your spouse hasn't eaten for awhile, not only their stomach growls, but they growl also. Keep your husband well fed (but not overfed)

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Criticism: Try and avoid criticizing your partner. If there is something bothering you, then voice it in a way that you don't point fingers or blame him/her. Try not to keep distance between you. Communicate your feelings, how his/her action affected you, and how you were hurt by that action. Never, ever criticize your spouse in public. An apology is forthcoming, no matter how right you thought you were.

Tiredness: If your husband has been working all day, and you ask him to do a bunch of chores when he gets home, don't expect him to thank you. See if you can spread the chores out, so they include the weekend. Planning ahead helps here.

Take Care of Your Body

Although you may not look like you did when you were dating years ago, you can take measures to look just as good if not better. Physical wellbeing – make sure you stay in shape, eat the right foods, and dress nicely. All these actions not only get more compliments your way, they make you feel good about yourself, so that you can be more confident in yourself. Spiritual wellbeing - don't neglect this powerful aspect of life. Pray, go to church, believe. Studies have shown that families that pray together, stay together. Mental wellbeing - if you are a stay-at-home mother, find some good books to read, or read the newspaper or magazines. This will allow you to keep abreast with interesting topics, and will provide your spouse an interesting partner to discuss life issues with.

Don't Substitute

Don't substitute anyone or anything else for your loved one. Don't go to a coworker or a friend, and share intimate secrets, because you may be betraying your loved one's trust. Don't watch television or be on the computer all the time, when you could be spending quality time with your loved one. Don't spend all your time with the children, ignoring your spouse, because your husband or wife should be number one on the list. If people, organizations, or children clamor for your attention, put your spouse first, and then them. When you put your spouse first, you'll notice you won't need to be going to all these other people for emotional support. You'll also notice you'll be having more fun with the person you'll spend the rest of your life with. Don't underestimate the importance of love in a marriage. Cherish and nurture it, and you will have made the best investment in your life.

Patty Apostolides is author of *Lipsi's Daughter*. She has also published poetry and written several articles. Her website showcases her work:

"Does Living In A Loveless Marriage Necessarily Mean That You Should Get A Divorce?"

By Karl Augustine

Being in a loveless marriage is a frustrating predicament, but it may not necessarily mean that a divorce is eminent. Solving the quandary of a loveless marriage requires self-reflection to assess the situation, courage to try to create a team effort for the best decision with your spouse, and gumption to face the reality that a divorce may be the best solution for the loveless marriage.

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But, before you jump right to the easy way out and decide on divorce, you should go through the process of making sure that you have logically thought through long-term implications of ending the loveless marriage.

Being in a loveless marriage and deciding whether to get a divorce based on this one fact alone is a misuse of an opportunity. It's not like deciding whether to stay married due to an extramarital affair or other marriage problems like abuse or living in a sexless marriage, choosing the right divorce decision when it comes to a loveless marriage is a totally different situation.

The opportunity is great to grow personally that is present when you're deciding about divorce because of being in a loveless marriage. Let's take a look at some of the items that are relevant to this situation regarding a loveless marriage and how you can approach this time in your life from a mature standpoint and come to the right choice while growing at the same time.

Loveless marriage item 1: Define love as you see it and assess whether or not your spouse agrees somewhat with you, at least in a complementary fashion.

For a loveless marriage to be assessed properly, making sure your idea or definition of love is "clear" is a solid way to make sure that you know what you've lost. And, if your spouse's idea of what love is differs from yours so much that you both can't somewhat reap the benefits of love, you may need counseling to get to the root issue of your loveless marriage.

Loveless marriage item 2: Make sure that you are in fact out of love before you go further with steps to divorce or try to work it out.

Ask yourself, "Am I really out of love or am I giving up?". Keeping love alive can take work and strong communication with yourself and spouse. List the reasons why you think you're out of love and decide if those reasons prohibit a rekindling of love, assuming you were actually in love at some point. Being in a loveless marriage doesn't necessarily mean that it has to stay that way!

Loveless marriage item 3: Decide if you were ever really in love as you define love.

Your loveless marriage could have always been loveless, you may have just been too distracted to notice. You may have received other benefits from being with your spouse in the past that you aren't getting now and that could be why you're frustrated and living in a loveless marriage.

Of course, if you were in fact in love with your spouse at one time in the past, you both might not have done what needs to be done to keep love alive. Before you do anything about your loveless marriage, make sure you understand how your idea of love may have changed over time, and really contemplate if you were really ever in love.

Loveless marriage item 4: Assessing whether or not you need to be in love to stay married and if so, can your love be re-kindled?

This item regarding a loveless marriage is a crucial point in your decision making process. Some

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people stay married even when they are in a loveless marriage because the benefits they get from being married psychologically outweigh the need for love. These benefits could many things and could stem from lack of self confidence, money, fear of loneliness, etc.

If you're a person who needs love to stay married, make sure that you really think about how rejuvenate the love in your loveless marriage before you decide on divorce. If you're struggling regarding a decision about your loveless marriage, it means that it is worth fighting for.

If you really do soul searching and talk with your spouse openly about the lack of zest in your marriage in the hopes of making it better, you may find that your spouse feels the same way that you do!

Being a loveless marriage can be a drain on your day to day energy if you need love to stay happily married. If your marriage is worth it to you, be mature about the situation and do all you can to rekindle the love before you do anything else. If you do, you'll grow personally as will your spouse regardless whether or not you get a divorce.

Author of "A Practical Guide ToDeciding Whether Or Not To Get ADivorce", the eBook recommended bycounselors to thier clients.

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