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Loving Your Spouse When Your Spouse is Not Loving You

By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

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LOVING YOUR SPOUSE WHEN YOUR SPOUSE IS NOT LOVING YOU

Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

Marlo and Jack have been married for twelve years and have two young children. Marlo and Jack each state that they love each other, yet Marlo does not feel loved by Jack, while Jack states that he is content with the relationship.

In their relationship system, Marlo tends to be the caretaker, while Jack is the taker. Marlo often thinks about what would please Jack, while Jack rarely thinks about what Marlo wants or feels.

What should Marlo do? Should she leave Jack, even though she loves him? Should she continue to try to get him to care about her, which has never worked? These are the questions Marlo had for me when she had a counseling session with me on the phone.

Marlo was quite surprised when I told her that neither action was warranted at this time.

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"Marlo," I said to her, "there is a good possibility that the way Jack treats you is a mirror of how you treat yourself. How often do you think about what you want or feel?"

"Not very often. I usually think more about Jack and my kids than I do about myself. I think it's selfish to think about myself. I want to be loving, not selfish."

Marlo was confused between selfishness and self-responsibility. Actually, in their relationship, Jack was the selfish one in expecting Marlo to give herself up to take responsibility for his feelings and needs. By not caring about her own feelings and needs, Marlo was training her children to be selfish as well. They were already learning to blame her for their feelings and expect her to give herself up for them. As soon as Jack or the children would get angry or withdraw, Marlo would feel guilty and responsible and give herself up to do what they wanted.

Marlo would not know whether or not Jack really loved her until she started to love herself. What if she left him and met another man? I assured her that the same thing would eventually happen if she remained a caretaker, because people usually end up treating us the way we treat ourselves.

"So what do I do?" asked Marlo. "I'm so used to taking care of everyone else. I have no idea how to take care of myself."

"Imagine that your feelings and needs are a small child that you've just adopted. What would you do to help her begin to feel loved?"

"Well, I would spend time with her, and listen to her, and hold her. I would let her know that I'm here and not going away. I would do lots of things to help her feel safe and loved."

"Exactly!" I stated. "This is what you need to start to do for yourself. Keep imagining that your own feelings are a small child and you are the parent of this child. You really do know how to be loving - it's just that you've never thought about being loving to yourself. Take all that you've learned about giving to others and now give some of it to yourself."

Then we moved on to another subject. "Marlo, do you have a source of spiritual guidance you turn to?"

"Yes," she replied. "I'm a Christian and I turn to Jesus."

"Good," I said. "Now you need to start asking Jesus for information regarding the loving action toward yourself. You do this by asking a question, such as, 'Jesus, what would the loving action be toward myself when Jack is angry with me?' or 'What is in my highest good when my children are being demanding or disrespectful toward me?' Then imagine what Jesus might say to you. You might have to make it up for awhile, but after awhile you will begin to experience that Jesus is actually answering you. You will begin to experience two-way communication between you and Jesus. Are you willing to try this?"

Marlo was willing. I cautioned her that Jack and her children might be upset with her for awhile, because they were used to her being a caretaker, but that if they really loved her and wanted her to be

happy, they would end up supporting her in loving herself.

"But what if Jack just stays mad?" she asked.

"Well, then you can decide what is in your highest good. But until you are loving to yourself, you will not know the truth about Jack. Most of the people I've worked with have found that when they are loving to themselves long enough, their whole relationship improves. I can't guarantee it, but isn't it worth a try, rather than just giving up?"

"Yes, I don't really want to leave Jack. I'm excited about this. I finally have some hope for our relationship!"

Margaret Paul, Ph.D. is the best-selling author and co-author of eight books, including "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You?", "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By My Kids?", "Healing Your Aloneness", "Inner Bonding", and "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By God?" Visit her web

site for a FREE Inner Bonding course: <http://www.innerbonding.com> or <mailto:margaret@innerbonding.com>

How To Share Romance In Your Relationship

By Codrut Turcanu

If someone asks you "What's the best thing about romance in a relationship?", what would you answer? In my opinion, the best thing about romance in a relationship is that it is shared. While one partner may initiate it, both end up enjoying any romantic effort. Romance is a relationship activity and cannot work if both partners aren't participants.

When you decide that romance is the way you want to go in order to improve your marriage or even work towards having an outstanding marriage, start planning your romance in advance with both you and your partner in mind. Even if you are giving a gift to your partner, keep in mind how it will affect you when you present it to him or her. I'm not kidding, some gifts are actually meant for both of you although it is presented to only one partner (ex. Massage oil). Both of you must enjoy the romance in order for it to be effective in your relationship.

While being romantic often draws to mind gifts and planning outings together, you don't have to spend money in order to be romantic! You can plan a day where you are completely at your spouse's disposal. Devote yourself entirely to your spouse for an entire day. He or she can ask you to do chores, rub their feet, give them a massage, watch a movie you normally wouldn't watch together or try an interest of his or hers that you haven't tried. Your spouse may also decide that you are best put to use in the bedroom!

When you want to do something extra special, take your spouse on a local 'honeymoon' trip! Find a local hotel that has a honeymoon suite and book it for one night. Do it up right and make sure it is

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stocked with champagne, strawberries and whipped cream. Have flowers and your song available to play in your room. For her, have new lingerie laid out on the bed. For him, have new lingerie laid out on the bed. For an extra special twist, pack a bag for your spouse, hire a sitter if necessary and tell him or her that you're going out for the evening. Blindfold your spouse and lead him or her to your honeymoon suite.

Find an affordable card shop or see if your local greeting card store offers any type of multiple card purchase discounts. Buy as many cards for your spouse as you can. Store the cards and send them to your spouse intermittently. You can choose to send them every few months, every month, every week, each day or every waking hour!

Take the time to create your own loving edible baked goods for your spouse! Make heart shaped cookies, a heart shaped cake or make your own heart shaped chocolates. Find a heart shaped bowl, pop popcorn to serve in the bowl and spend the entire day watching romantic movies together.

No matter which one of this ideas you will use for special occasions, always remember that it doesn't really matter when or how you do something romantic as long as you do it together.

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