

Make Time for Your Relationship

"We don't have to wait till Valentine's Day to think about relationships, whether we're in one or would like to be. Most people would agree that romance is the key element beneath the relationship pot.

Be it a steamy, sizzling wok or a warm, steady slow cooker, romance is the flame that generally gets-and keeps-the heat of love alive. But what exactly is ""romance""?

When my wife and I were dating, we were ultra-romantic in the usual sense of the word. There were roses, love letters, surprise gifts, spontaneous adventures, and hours upon hours of talking and... you know, that other stuff.

To be honest, though, some of the initial romantic heat has cooled off a bit. Like couples everywhere, we find ourselves pressured by the demands of daily life: work, children, finances, household chores and commitments to extended family. Yet, through all our years together, we have somehow found a way to balance these things.

And while our definition of romance has changed somewhat according to our altered circumstances, we still manage to keep our relationship fresh and exciting. White-hot all-consuming passion has melted into love, consideration and affection.

But most of all, romance for us has become a way of making the ""everyday"" exciting. It doesn't take a lot of money or effort - just a commitment to making our relationship special by paying attention to it and a willingness to make (here is the four-letter secret)...

T-I-M-E

Romance keeps the spark alive. It keeps a relationship vital and interesting. And... it takes time!

Nurturing your relationship, enhancing it, and keeping it flourishing takes time, which is all too precious for many couples.

But by establishing priorities and setting goals, by making better use of the time you have, and by creating time you thought you didn't have, you CAN find more time for each other.

The first thing to do is prioritize!

You can spend your time in one of four ways, doing things that are:

- ♥ Important and urgent (such as caring for your child that has fallen down and is bleeding);
- ♥ Important but not urgent (sitting together sharing about your day);
- ♥ Not important but urgent (taking your suit for dry cleaning, before tomorrow's meeting);
- ♥ Not important and not urgent (switching on the TV and zapping between the channels).

When you look at all your time-consuming tasks, let go of any task that is not important.

By focusing most of your time on doing what is important but not urgent, you can eliminate a lot of the crises (important and urgent) as well as the unimportant things. Your perspective on what constitutes ""urgent"" will also change.

Here are a few important, but not urgent, activities to put high on your priority list:

1. **Have a regular daily chat.**

Turn off the TV and the cell phone and sit together for a short time, uninterrupted and face-to-face, every day to share your thoughts and feelings. Tell each other the little details as well as the big news. Focusing on each other for as little as fifteen minutes can make a huge difference. You will both feel appreciated and heard.

2. **Spend one evening together each week.**

Plan a specific night each week for your special date. Get a babysitter or trade childcare time with a friend. Once scheduled, treat the commitment as if it were written in stone. Don't break the date! Take turns planning the activity (and occasionally surprise each other). Take in a movie, go for a bike ride, have a bubble bath, dance in your kitchen. Whether it's a dress-up home-cooked meal or a picnic dinner on the living room floor), make it special. It doesn't have to be expensive, just generous.

3. **Spend some "day" time together.**

Get up earlier than normal and have breakfast together at a coffee shop. Commute together if at all possible. Meet at lunchtime for a quiet meal or a "stolen moment". Rendezvous after work for a drink and an appetizer before dinner. Meet at a park for a walk in the fresh air. You'll be surprised how lively conversation can become when you're meeting in the middle of the day, away from the household chores. The anticipation of a planned evening or activity can be fun and exciting, even if (especially if!) you've been together for a long time. By making a date, you'll set aside the special time your relationship deserves and rediscover the romance that started it all.

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