



Celebrating Marriage



Making Couple Time a Priority

The demands of work, schedules, and households can prevent the type of couple time most of us want and need in order to make our marriage a high priority. Research shows that marital satisfaction declines slowly as the years go by, particularly after having children. Togetherness, positive experiences, and happy interactions are essential ingredients to maintaining a healthy and satisfying marriage. More importantly, a healthy marriage provides the foundation for fostering a healthy family... so what's a busy couple to do?

Own the choice. Some people who complain about no free time fail to own the choices they have voluntarily made. Accept that every allocation of time involves choice.

Command the time. Actively find ways of creating and protecting your time together. This might involve decisions to work less, reduce the number of children's activities, watch TV less, or schedule more time to be alone together. If you have children, set clear boundaries around your private time (and space) as a couple.

Enjoy regular dates. Unfortunately, many couples stop dating after they get married, especially after having children—these special times alone brought you together and are important in keeping you together. If you have children, work out a support system that allows for regular dates. For example, develop a method of childcare exchanges with another couple.

Think small. Frequently, people become convinced that they have no time for their relationship because they are thinking exclusively in large units of time. However, just 10 minutes alone together opens up many possibilities. Take advantage of those small units of time and live in the present moment.

Remember, you are not alone! Many couples struggle with protecting their couple time from their kids, work, and other aspects of life. Talk with other couples about the strategies they use to make time—share your struggles and successes with other couples.

Think of your marriage like a car. You want both to last forever, and as such, both require regular maintenance and care. Similarly, your marriage is like a plant that needs time and care in order to thrive. Neglecting to invest time in nurturing your relationship can, over the long haul, result in a “broken-down” or “wilted” marriage. *Make time for each other so that your marriage runs smoothly and flourishes!*

"Marriage Matters" Volume 3, Issue 1 by Ted Futris, Ph.D. OSU Extension

Not sure how to spend your time together? Talk about it! Choose a time and place when you can be alone to talk about activities you've done in the past and those you'd like to try in the future. Be open to each other's interests. Be creative, and have fun!



Catholic marriage offers faith and communion. Faith in a God whose love shines in marriage. Communion of two people who let nothing come between them; who share their lives freely with each other and with the world; and who believe in a God who empowers their being together.

Joel Schorn in "What Is a Catholic Marriage?"



Couples in the second half of marriage can reconnect with one another in a more meaningful way through the successful navigation of these challenges :

To let go of past marital disappointments, forgive each other, and commit to making the rest of the marriage its best.

To create a marriage that is partner-focused rather than child-focused.

To maintain an effective communication system that allows the expression of deepest feelings, joys, and concerns.

To use anger and conflict in a creative way to build the relationship.

To build a deeper friendship and enjoy one's spouse.

To renew romance and restore a pleasurable physical relationship.

To adjust to changing roles with aging parents and adult children.

To evaluate one's spiritual pilgrimage, grow closer to each other and to God, and together serve others. Our faith in God should make a difference in the quality of our marriage—especially in the second half.

www.marriagealive.com



World Marriage Day

Marriage, as instituted by God, is a faithful, exclusive, lifelong union of a man and a woman joined in an intimate community of life and love. They commit themselves completely to each other and to the wondrous responsibility of bringing children into the world and caring for them. The call to marriage is woven deeply into the human spirit.

(from Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 1602-1604)

Essentials for Creating a Fulfilling and Lasting Marriage

Get to know each other's inner world: likes and dislikes, needs and desires, vulnerabilities, values, defining qualities. Learning what each of you wants from life and needs from each other will increase your sensitivity so you can respond lovingly.

Be sensitive to each other's feelings and kind to each other. Realize that things that are important to you may not be important to your partner. That doesn't mean that either of you is wrong. Feelings are neither right nor wrong, they just *are*. Everyone experiences life uniquely; it is inappropriate and even insulting to judge another's feelings.

Take time to make each other feel special. It takes effort to learn what makes your spouse feel cherished, but is well worth it.

Listen to each other's emotions as well as words. Frequently emotions are far more powerful than the words used to convey them. Listen carefully and respond appropriately in a manner that expresses deep caring.

Respect each other's differences. Don't try to remake your partner. Enjoy one another's differences.

Avoid being defensive. Placing blame, finding fault and making excuses are common defensive behaviors. Decide what you want to accomplish and pursue it together.

Jack H. Grossman, Ph.D., *After the Wedding/A Postnuptial Recipe for Creating a Happy Healthy Marriage*, (adapted).



Good conversation breathes life into a marriage. But what do you say to keep communication fresh? Check out these reads full of helpful suggestions:

Love Talk Starters: 275 Questions to Get Your Conversations Going by Drs. Les and Leslie Parrot

Love Talks for Couples: 101 Questions to Stimulate Interaction with Your Spouse by Gary Chapman and Ramon Presson

Creative Conversation Starters for Couples by Robert and Pamela Crosby

201 Great Questions for Married Couples by Jerry D. Jones

What do you love about your spouse?



On separate pieces of paper write all the things that make her/him special to you, and put them in a jar. Present it to your spouse on Valentine's Day or your anniversary. They may be read all at one sitting, or one every day until the jar is empty.

When a woman and man vow to be true in good times and in bad they are confirming a decision to love one another.

"Follow the Way of Love," USCCB

10 Secrets to a Joyful Marriage

Dream a Dream. Create a vision for your life together.

Get Tough. Marriage takes a lot of work; commit to the task.

Maximize Trust. Be truthful and trustworthy.

Get Healthy. If you have personal issues, consider counseling.

Work on Chemistry. Keep the romance strong.

Learn to Talk. Learn and use good communication skills.

Work it Through. Learn conflict resolution skills.

Negotiate a Mutually Satisfying Physical Relationship.

Get Connected. Remain one another's priority.

Pursue Spirituality—it enhances personal and marital fulfillment.

Dr. Neil Clark Warren, *Learning to Live with the Love of Your Life... And Loving It!* (adapted).



What I love about you...

