

Solutions

FAMILY SERVICES  EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

NEWSLETTER

Issue 44

Rekindling passion in long-term relationships

Almost everyone knows the excitement of falling in love. Conversations go on forever, gifts don't need a special occasion, and you can barely keep your hands off one another. At the beginning of any relationship, your partner may appear to be the most perfect person in the world, and it may seem certain that nothing can dampen your passionate affair.

But as we grow and change over time, our relationships must change too. Exciting new adventures—such as raising a family—begin to take up the time and energy we once saved for each another. It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day struggle of getting chores done, taking care of children and paying the bills. In today's busy world, it is all too easy to forget to take time out for romance—time to remind you, and your partner, why you embarked on this journey together in the first place.

And yet, a recent study in *Psychology Today* found the root cause of most divorces is not conflict or a cheating partner. While fighting and affairs tend to be the “last straw” in a relationship, the real problem begins when people stop feeling loved and showing affection to one another.

Listen to your partner

Many people worry when the passion that heated up the early part of their relationship begins to cool down. But while some amount of cooling off is normal and necessary (or nothing would ever done!), this doesn't mean we should take our partners for granted.

Feeling unloved or unappreciated is a huge turn-off. Couples trying to reignite their sex life should always begin with a good look at how they communicate with one another. Do you really listen to what your partner is saying? Are you able to talk openly about your emotions, fears and hopes? Or has the conversation been limited to what's for supper and when to pick up the kids?

The most successful (and passionate) relationships are those based on a deep friendship. Put aside

some time each week when you and your partner can talk to one another. Whether you are discussing a specific problem or just the day's events, really listen to your partner and try to understand what he or she is saying.

Developing good communication skills will help you deal with conflicts and arguments when they come up, and build trust, intimacy and respect into your relationship.

In fact, good healthy communication (including the inevitable arguments that occur in all relationships) can actually increase passion in the bedroom. When both partners feel loved and accepted, it is easier to talk honestly about touchy subjects like sex. And feeling secure and appreciated in a relationship can help you let your wild side show!

** Permission to photocopy with credit given to Jennifer McCarthy, Family Service Canada Consultant.*

Rekindling passion (*continued*)

Make daily connections

While communication is an essential ingredient of a happy relationship, there isn't always time in the day for a quiet cup of coffee or a heart-to-heart chat. Children, work and obligations with family and friends keep us running.

But there are many small ways that couples can reconnect throughout the day to remind one another just how much they are loved, appreciated and even lusted after!

Here are a few examples:

- Call just to say, "I love you." Or leave notes where you know your partner will see them during the day.
- Lend a hand with household chores. Folding sheets and doing dishes are easier—and more fun—with two people.
- Dress up from time-to-time. Making the effort to look good for your partner is flattering, and will remind them of the early days of dating.
- Hold hands more and cuddle on the couch watching TV. A simple touch can say, "I love you" easier than words.
- Surprise your partner with flowers, a night out or even breakfast in bed.

Remembering the details is what romance is all about. Think back to the beginning of your relationship, and all the ways that you and your partner made each other feel special. It is often the little things that mean the most.

Stay independent

The biggest mistake you can make in a relationship is to give up on the activities, hobbies and friendships you enjoyed before you met your partner. While you may not have the same amount of time as before to participate, it is still important to make time for the things in life that make you feel happy and inspired.

Having friends and interests outside your relationship is healthy and invigorating. Expecting your partner to fill in for all your favourite activities and old friends is unrealistic, and trigger feelings of resentment on both sides when they are not able to live up to these expectations. As well,

only ever talking to one person can quickly turn conversations stale and boring.

Both partners should spend time with creative or social activities they enjoy. As the saying goes, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." And as both you and your partner are allowed to grow as individuals, you may very well discover new and exciting things about one another that add new zest to your conversations and love life!

Get creative

But even in the best of relationships the "spark" sometimes needs a bit of a boost. Parents of small children often find getting in the mood for romance especially difficult. But children actually feel most secure when they know their parents are passionate about each other. So don't be afraid to take time out for love.

- Get a babysitter and have a night out. Recreate a memorable date you've had. You may even want to rent a room!
- Meet your partner in a restaurant or bar and pretend you are both strangers. Reconnect with your ability to flirt!
- Challenge your partner to a game of strip monopoly.
- Put on sexy lingerie, light some candles, turn on soft music, lock the door and transform your room into an adults-only love retreat.
- Leave your partner messages throughout the day explaining what you plan to do to them later that night.

If you are thinking about big changes in your usual bedroom routine, always speak to your partner about the idea first. Discuss your fantasy together, and be careful not to make it sound like criticism. When (and if) you both feel comfortable, start small and allow yourselves plenty of time to develop confidence and your sense of adventure.

Finally, whether you are putting more spice into the bedroom, doing the dishes or bathing the kids, remember to laugh. It keeps us feeling young and refreshed, and reminds us to "not sweat the small stuff." It is truly the best medicine for keeping passion in any relationship.

Family Services offers confidential professional assistance on a wide variety of personal and work-related issues. For more information on your EAP, call:

1-800-668-9920