

Marriage must be rejuvenated



Jo Ann
Lederman

FAMILY MATTERS

Dear Jo Ann,

The closeness in my marriage has diminished. I am afraid we have lost some of the magic of our early years. We have been married 20 years and have three teenagers. I would appreciate your suggestions.

Sandy

Dear Sandy,

We gas our cars before they run dry. We change oil every 5,000 miles. How easy to neglect these basic functions in a marriage? Short of implanting chips to ring every three days and say "lubricate your sexuality today" or "time for your monthly marital tune-up", what can we do?

Magic can't continue without your mindful input. Many couples become more concerned with the structure of a marriage, forsaking the process. With bills to pay, dreams to build, children to care for, careers to tend, the process of day-to-day tenderness can be inadvertently discounted.

In my office, couples report having lost a sense of centrality in each other's life. Day-to-day sweetness was sacrificed to fulfil long-term goals. Their marriage had lost its loving edge. I tell them not to despair, their marriage hasn't broken down irretrievably. It may need some body work, a lube job and an overhaul. It can't run without fuel. The good news is that it can be repaired; but how?

"To love" is a verb. It requires activity and tending on a daily basis, and deeper replenishment at times. Here are some tips:

TRY LITTLE TENDER ACTS FOR DAILY NOURISHMENT

- Bring your husband coffee in bed.
- Shower together.

- Workout together.
- Whisper words of endearment, promising sweetness of the night to come.
- Develop a pre-sleep loving ritual.
- Create date night each week, without friends or children, just for you.
- Do what you know he will love, eliminate what you know will displease him.

FOR DEEPER REPLENISHMENT OF MIND AND BODY

- Start a course or hobby together.
- Learn how to give each other a massage.
- Plan vacations to restore and revive.

On this last note, I am writing to you from Sheen Falls Lodge in Kenmare, County Kerry in southwest Ireland. Over the years, my husband, Alan, and I re-discover each other on these private adventures. You will too. It keeps shifting to meet our current needs.

Initially, Alan wanted to go west for horses and skiing on every vacation. I liked museums and theatre. For the first five years of our marriage we went west. Then we alternated: city, west, city, west. Now, we have discovered our mutual vacation voice and love museums, fine dining, hiking and outdoor adventure, and small, very gracious accommodations. We like to stay in one hotel instead of packing and re-packing. Most of all, our uninterrupted time together is a source of profound replenishment. We fly into a city and explore its gifts, then off to the country. We like rustic by day, fine dining by night, which we do without guilt. We come to dinner with an exercise-induced caloric deficit certain to be equalized by night's end.

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