



RELATIONSHIP MATTERS

ADDING MORE ROMANCE TO A BUSY MARRIAGE

Q: I'm wondering how to add more romance to our busy marriage. We used to leave each other sweet notes all the time. We used to go out to dinner. We bought each other little gifts. Now, we have two kids, two full-time jobs, and never-ending chores.

The romance has fizzled to nothing. We rarely see each other and we both feel exhausted. Romantic dinners have become the leftover peanut butter and jelly sandwiches from our kids.

How can I add more romance while trying to balance everything else?

A: Exhaustion is a common complaint among busy parents. It's not easy to find time for romance while raising children and working.

It's normal for relationships to evolve and change as you raise children and age.

Your expectations of romance may need to be adjusted. This is a normal process of an evolving marriage.

It's not possible to go out for a romantic dinner every night if you have to help your children with their homework, finish a long list of chores, and complete other tasks at home. Marriage changes after children appear, and romance tends to diminish.

The good news is, however, that you *can* find ways to add more romance, even while balancing your other obligations.

It's important to have realistic expectations and create plans that fit your current situation.

One of the first steps you may want to take is to create a date night once a month.

By creating a monthly date night, you're committing to adding more romance to your marriage. However, you're not creating an enormous amount of stress or expecting things to change immediately.

It's important to schedule the monthly date night ahead of time and stay committed to the idea. Put it on your calendar and plan for it.

Once you're used to the idea of a monthly date night, then you may want to add a second one each month. You may even want to add a weekly date night.

Date night is a simple way to reenergize your marriage and make it a priority.

Q: I love the idea of date night, but I also miss the little romantic gestures we used to do. I want them to return, but I'm not sure how to get started.

I'm worried my husband will think it's a silly idea and dismiss it.

He thinks he doesn't need to leave me sweet notes or buy me flowers anymore. He says we're not dating anymore.

How can I convince my husband that the little romantic gestures still matter?

A: It's a common issue for couples to become comfortable and forget that the small romantic gestures are important. They become preoccupied with work and other duties, and falsely believe that their dating days are over.

However, research has shown that the strongest marriages still have dating gestures.

Instead of expecting your husband to adjust to the idea, you may want to take the initiative and begin doing small romantic gestures on your own.

You can start by leaving him sweet notes and buying him small gifts.

You may want to wear his favorite perfume or make his favorite dish for dinner. These small gestures may seem insignificant at first, but they quickly add up.

You can add other romantic gestures that will show him you still care. In all likelihood, your husband will begin to reciprocate and also start doing small romantic gestures. However, if your husband ignores you, then you may want to discuss it with him.

Boring routines are an issue for many couples. Between work and raising the kids, it's easy to allow habits to take over. Nevertheless, you can challenge this by adding little romantic gestures.

Q: *My main concern is how to find time for all of these ideas.*

How can I find the time to buy my husband little gifts or leave him notes? I'm already overwhelmed with work, chores at home, children, and other obligations.

I feel like I never get a moment of peace, and I'm exhausted every day.

Our two children are involved in multiple extracurricular activities and several sports, so I feel like a taxi driver who never gets any rest. Plus, they attend different schools, and I have to work every day. I barely see my husband.

I'm also worried about finding babysitters and keeping the kids occupied while we enjoy date night or other romantic outings.

What can I do to find the time to add romance to my marriage?

A: You have to make your relationship a priority and think of it from a different perspective.

Instead of viewing romantic outings and gestures as another obligation and chore, try thinking of them as a fun way to get away from daily life.

If you want to make your marriage a priority, then things must change from the way they are now.

The changes may include convincing a family member to babysit or hiring a nanny. You may also want to adjust your family's schedule.

You mention that your children are involved in multiple activities and sports. This may be an area that could be adjusted. If you're exhausted and have difficulty coping with the amount of driving, then you may need to cut down on the activities.

You don't have to cut out all sports or activities for your children. However, your family's schedule may need to be simplified, so you can spend more time together.

Adding more romance to your marriage requires a promise to cherish each other.

You have to make time for each other, so you may want to add reminders to your schedule as you cut down on some other activities.

Q: We have a tendency as a couple to fall into routines, and it's hard for both of us to make changes. I'm worried that even date night will get boring after a while. In the past, we always ended up in the same restaurant and ordered the same food.

I want things to change and to have a spicier existence.

How can I avoid the same routines? ***What can I do to convince my husband to try new things?*** He's often hesitant to do things differently because he has his favorites.

A: You can take the initiative again and plan your romantic outings. You may want to start by gathering ideas from your husband. However, if he leaves the decision up to you, then you can choose new places.

Instead of the same old restaurant, you may want to try a new venue.

You may also want to expand your options by going to a play or seeing an art show. The goal of date night is to spend time together.

If you want to change things and add more spice, then consider looking at venues and ideas outside of your usual routines. ***You can both benefit from new experiences.***

Q: One of the issues we had in the past with trying to find more time for romance is the children.

They feel left out if we don't take them with us. They complain about us going out without them, and they say they hate the babysitters we pick out. I've tried to pick fun babysitters that keep them active, but they still complain and whine.

My husband listens to their complaints and gives in easily. He lets the children win the argument and changes our plans. We either take them with us or stay home. It ruins date night and all the romance we had planned.

How can I make date night an activity that is just for us and help the children understand this?

A: Create boundaries for your children, so they don't control or run your entire life. Although they need to know you love them and want to spend time with them, they also need to understand you need time alone.

It's important to stay strong and not allow your children's complaints to sway you.

Help your children learn that their parents need time to be alone. They need to appreciate that you value your marriage and relationship.

You're already selecting fun babysitters and trying to keep the children active. You may want to continue with this plan and add more fun activities that will help them get through your date night happily.

It's important to find a balance between date nights and family nights.

If you can find this balance, then your children will feel they're still being included in events and activities. You'll also be able to enjoy a beautiful date night without worrying about them.