

STRATEGIES TO KEEP THE SPARK

If you completed all the exercises, you have a greater understanding of who you are, what you want, and what to do if difficulties arise. Your reward is a relationship which can last for decades.

What you'll learn in this lesson is as important as the previous 22 lessons. You'll find suggestions which have kept many a relationship strong through the difficult times.

Life gets routine. You each have a daily routine of work and responsibilities. If you have children, they can take up much of your time. To support your commitment to each other, carve out time just for the two of you.

REVISITING THE BRAIN

The chemicals in your brain, your physiology, may have brought you together. It can also make life fun and exciting.

The Love Hormone

Oxytocin is a hormone known to start the birthing process. When women have difficulty delivering their child, they are sometimes given an IV with oxytocin in it to start or increase contractions.

Oxytocin has another crucial role. It assists the mother in bonding with their bawling, red-faced newborn.

It's also present during times of positive emotional response, increasing bonding with others. **Your relationship will benefit from conscious action which produces oxytocin.**

THESE STRATEGIES CAN ASSIST IN MAINTAINING PASSION IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP:

1. **Use your partner's Love Language daily.**
Spontaneity is overrated. Until you get into a habit of using it all the time, schedule when you're going

to use your partner's Love Language.

- Life gets busy. You don't want to forget the special gift, time, affirmation, errand, or physical closeness your partner wants and needs.
 - **Scheduling expressions of Love Language is symbolic of how important they are.** Don't you put the things you don't want to forget in your calendar?
2. **The power of the 20-second hug.** Hugging someone for 20 seconds activates oxytocin. With a 20-second hug you are connected heart-to-heart. You relax into each other. Trust increases.
 3. **Cuddling.** Just rest in each other's arms when watching TV, before going to sleep, after sex, and whenever you can.
 4. **Gazing into each other's eyes.** Hold hands to strengthen the connection. For an even stronger experience, hold hands and imagine a beam of energy going from your heart to your partner's heart.

CONTINUE GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

If you do an internet search for common complaints that marriage therapists hear, you'll read things such as trying to change the other, lack of intimacy, emotional infidelity, focus on work or kids rather than each other, lack of time, and money issues.

Communication is the solution to many issues.

PRACTICE THESE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES:

1. **Share yourself, not just information. Revealing yourself to each other is the crux of a healthy relationship.** Share thoughts and concerns about money, raising children, your wants, and needs. Share your feelings, dreams, and what you hope will happen in your life.
2. **Communication Tools:**
 - **Share your day.** Spend time debriefing each day. When there isn't much time, as happens when you have children, carve out at least 10 minutes each to share the successes and challenges of the day.

Share more than information. Share your feelings about the day.

- **Write out your thoughts and feelings.**
Some people do much better writing than speaking what is important to them. It doesn't matter how you communicate it, just communicate.
- **Set aside time to problem solve.** When a challenge is discovered during your daily communication, schedule a time that week to sort it out. Taking care of a small challenge prevents it from becoming a huge issue.
- **Date night!** Reserve one night a week for just the two of you. The only role you have during date night is to be each other's partner. **You don't have to go anywhere fancy, just be with each other, share your lives, and have fun.**

DAILY RITUALS

Daily rituals make life easier. They can also become positive habits that keep your relationship alive. Small daily rituals can cement your relationship through the challenges which arise in life.

FORM YOUR OWN MEANINGFUL DAILY RITUALS, SUCH AS:

1. **How you greet each other each morning.** Most people have a ritual to begin their day. What are your rituals with your partner? How will you greet your partner when you awaken? How do you say goodbye when you leave to begin your day?
2. **How you greet each other when arriving home.** If you have a dog, you know what it's like to be greeted as if you've been gone for years. How would you feel if your beloved greeted you the same way? **Greet your partner with joy and delight when you've been apart.**

REMEMBER WHO YOU FELL IN LOVE WITH

I'm sure you've heard the expression, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Let's rephrase that, "Familiarity leads to taking someone for granted."

People have a tendency to believe that the longer they know someone, the less there is to know. You become familiar with their mannerisms. You might lock them into a particular way of being and miss the wonder of who they are.

Challenge that tendency!

You and your partner will continue to grow. Your commitment to each other can continue to grow as well. **Each day, remind yourself why you love your partner.**

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Daily positive rituals are important to keep the spark alive with the one you love. A weekly date night and other positive patterns of behavior are also important. Having a strong positive relationship makes life easier no matter what comes your way.

The next lesson will be the last one, as you summarize and reflect on everything you've learned in this module.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TODAY

REFLECTION

Spend a few moments planning the rituals which appeal to you. Write them down so you can refer back to them as you build these positive habits that strengthen your love.