

RE-ROMANTICIZING YOUR RELATIONSHIP *

Life today is stressful and harried. Over the years marriage can build up resentments and unresolved anger which color how we see our spouse and how we therefore treat them. During dating we were probably thoughtful, romantic and positive-thinking. After years of marriage we may not feel romantic or thoughtful and everything may seem negative.

In this re-romanticizing exercise we can begin to rebuild a more positive experience of each other. Even without any other changes this exercise can make married life more pleasant.

EXERCISE 9

1. Set aside some time (about an hour) when the two of you can be alone without interruptions (over a cup of coffee in a restaurant if necessary).
2. Give each person a piece of paper and pen and, for the moment, work alone on compiling a list. Finish this sentence: "I feel loved and cared for when you....." List as many ideas as you can.
 - a. Start by writing down the things your spouse already does that pleases you. Examples: "Kiss me goodbye before going to work," or "Turn on the electric blanket half-hour before bed for us," etc.
 - b. Then list things you can remember he/she **used** to do when you were dating – back in your more romantic days. Examples: "Bring me flowers," or, "Cooked my favorite meal (specify)".....
 - c. Finally, think about a "wish list" – things your spouse has never done but you'd like him/her to do. Examples: "Give me a back rub," or "Read a book aloud with me."
3. Now rank each item from 1-5 with 1 being most important, 5 being least.
4. Exchange lists. Read over your partner's list and put an X beside any item you feel you cannot do right now. (The remaining behaviors should be non-controversial.)
5. Starting tomorrow: for two months, do at least two behaviors a day from the list (without an X) starting with those which are easiest.
6. These behaviors you do must be done voluntarily as a gift with no "strings attached". There should be no sense of obligation. But they should be given regardless of how you feel at a given moment and regardless of how many your partner seems to be reciprocating.
7. Be sure to express appreciation anytime you notice that your spouse has "gifted" you.
8. If either of you feel resistance to receiving these pleasing gestures, keep it up until you no longer feel resistant.

* Based on Harville Hendrix book, Getting The Love You Want. If you enjoy this exercise we recommend you read this book and/or try other exercises listed in the back.