

Happy Couple, Close Family

By Jessica Ludwig

It's no surprise that many couples report that their love life takes a back seat to their full time parenting duties. We all want to be the best parents and kids keep us extremely busy from infancy to their teen years – it's just a different kind of busy. Today's parents are taxis, chefs, doctors, teachers, cleaners, launderers, alarm clocks, counsellors, fans and much more! How then can we expect to have time to put into our spousal relationships?

With all the best of intentions, we always put our children first, and that shouldn't change, but we need to ensure that we are also making time to enjoy our relationship with our spouse.

The foundation of a happy and close family unit is the parental relationship. Well this should not come as a shock, since we know that parents that argue frequently add stress to the entire household. Even if children do not witness the argument, parents often carryover stress and anger and occasionally children can be unintentional recipients of it. So if this carryover effect is true of stress and anger, shouldn't it also be true of positive emotions? It is! By making more time for your relationship with your spouse, you enhance not only your overall wellbeing, but the happiness of your children as well.

Isn't it great that by being a little selfish and taking time for yourselves, that you are actually being better parents? Not only that, but you'll also experience better overall moods, increased self-esteem and self-confidence, you will enjoy your parenting duties more and you will appreciate your spouse more as well. That's a lot of benefits from a little time together.

Knowing that their parents have a strong relationship, helps children feel safe and secure. This modelling will also help them build positive relationships with peers and future partners.

There are some other strategies that you can use as well as spending a little more time together. These are ideas that you can use no matter how busy your schedule is. Try to ignore the little things. Your spouse will always accidentally do something that will annoy you. Try to look past it and remember why you love them and why you are with them. This makes the little things less important. It also helps reduce your overall stress level and improves your mood.

Many couples who have been together for a long time find their relationship becomes stagnant. They don't do anything new, they don't compliment each other and even saying "I love you" can become routine after awhile. Try to stir things up. Make a conscious effort to compliment a new outfit or tell them they are a good parent – anything to reinforce what you already feel about them. Make sure they know what you love about them!

When you see honeymooners on a trip, how do you know they are newly married? They are often so content just being together and doing nothing, they laugh in each other's company and they touch each other frequently. I think the touching is the most obvious clue that you are observing newlyweds. Once you've been married for awhile, we take the little things for granted. We know we love each other, so why do we need to show the whole world? It's not about showing affection publicly, it's about showing affection to your spouse. You would be amazed at the difference you will notice in your relationship if you touch more. This can be anything; holding hands, a kiss, a hug, sitting close on the couch or cuddling. Try increasing the amount you touch your partner each day and you'll see the results.

So try to break out of your stagnant routines and acknowledge your partner, enjoy the little things they do that you love and ignore the things that annoy you. Spend some quality time together, laugh and touch and you and your family will all soon reap the benefits of greater wellbeing and closeness.

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