

Hot Monogamy

Remember how you felt right after you were married? Romance, passion and excitement were high on your list. You enjoyed each other's company and you placed a high priority on spending time together. Fast-forward five years. You still love your spouse, but things in the bedroom are dull and predictable. Children and careers make it almost impossible to spend any time together, just the two of you, and sometimes you wonder if this is all there is to marriage.

Pat Love, marital therapist and author of *Hot Monogamy: Essential Steps to More Passionate Intimate Lovemaking and How to Ruin a Perfectly Good Relationship*, believes that couples who have been married a number of years and have lost "that loving feeling" can make their relationship hot and meaningful again.

"After years of working with couples, I came to the conclusion that no matter what couples were saying to me, the real problem was they no longer felt connected to each other," said Dr. Love. "They lost the closeness that brought them together in the first place. We are a species that survives on relationships. We need that connection. Eighty percent of couples who divorce say they still love each other, which indicates that love is not enough. People long to feel that surge of energy that comes from connection."

According to Dr. Love, for couples to keep their marriage going strong they must find ways to continually re-connect with each other. Happy, stable couples have hundreds of ways they connect throughout the day. It is the way they look at each other, listen and consider the other person's feelings that create opportunities for connection.

"I believe researcher Dr. Linda Duncan discovered something very important when she encouraged people to pay attention to moments of natural transition," said Dr. Love. "When you first wake up, how do you greet your partner? This will set the tone for the day. How do you leave your partner in the morning? That is the feeling you will hold all day long. When you arrive back home, how do you greet your partner? And how do you say goodnight to your partner right before you go to bed? One of the ways we stop ourselves from having connection with our spouses is to dishonor their method of connecting."

Dr. Love believes that women have been sold a false bill of goods by saying that men are not relational. The truth may lie in the fact that women have a narrow definition of what it means to connect. Men don't have to connect in exactly the same way as women. Dr. Love encourages individuals to ask their spouse, "When do you really feel connected to me?" You might be surprised what you find out.

If your relationship has lost its umph, Dr. Love suggests trying the following:

Do something physical together every day – Exercise, dance, make love, garden, romp, or walk together. Physical exercise generates new brain cells and that feels

good. When you do this with your partner, your brain associates these times with pleasure.

Have fun together – Do something that is fun for both you and your spouse on a regular basis.

Search for the positive– Train your mind to see the goodness in your mate. When you think negatively, it is a slippery slope. The more you allow yourself to be negative, the more you will think negatively. You have to be intentional about wiring your brain to think positive. The latest research on extramarital affairs points out that the cause is not sex or excitement, it usually stems from someone outside the marriage taking the time to make the person feel wonderful.

Demonstrate thoughtfulness with your actions – Random acts of kindness really work wonders in a marriage.

Play fair – Keeping score is no way to build a strong marriage relationship. If you are constantly nit-picking and keeping track of who gets what, you've missed the mark. Emphasize equity in your relationship.

Stop the side conversations – Women frequently turn to their female friends for support at the exclusion of their husbands. If you are looking to increase intimacy in your marriage, there are some things that should stay just between you and your spouse.

Spend time with people who support your marriage – Spend time with couples who are happy in their relationship and happy themselves. Couples who are having difficulty can undercut your relationship, and marriage in general. It is easy to start behaving badly when other people around you are behaving badly. Surround yourselves with people who support the institution of marriage and truly believe in you as a couple.

Instigate a mutual laugh – People bond through laughter. You should laugh together at least once a day.

Develop the art of ownership – Admit your mistakes. Apologize and practice humility. It is an endearing trait.

Do something a little different each day – Novelty gets your attention. Delight your partner by doing the unexpected.

The secret to putting the spark back in your relationship does not mean waiting until you get to the bedroom. Make an effort to connect with your spouse throughout the day. You might be surprised at how these simple actions can lead to greater intimacy in the bedroom.