

Getting Connected, Staying Connected

Why Did We Get Married Anyway? What to Do When Passion Fades

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Over time, passion can fade in a relationship but there are things couples can do to bring back some of the old sparkle. This is No. 16 in a series of 20 NebGuides that focus on building and maintaining strong couple and family relationships written by a team of University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension Educators.

Over the years, couple relationships have the wonderful capacity to grow. Happy couples know this very well. They have seen how their partnership has become stronger over the years as they get to know each other better, and as they learn more about life and how to live it successfully.

In the early months and years, passion and the sexual bond the partners have with each other can sometimes carry them through tough times. They may not be very good at understanding and dealing with each other's differences yet, but a profound physical attraction for each other helps keep them together when their partner's quirks and thoughtless actions threaten the relationship.

Passion inevitably cools down, but hopefully by the time that happens, the two have created a sound friendship on which to build their marriage. People really aren't in a good position to judge how strong and loving their relationship really is until they have been living together over a considerable period of time and have met the countless major, modest, and minor challenges life can present a married couple. In essence, you don't know how good a marriage is until you have been tested by fire. No one really knows how they will react as individuals and as a couple when very difficult times strike. But, given the passage of enough time, the very dif-

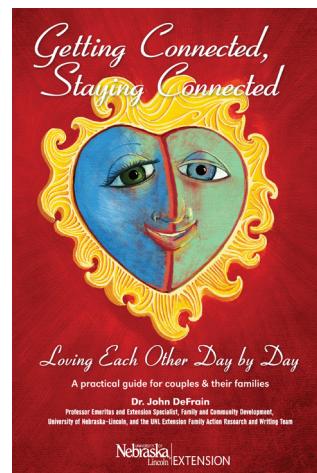
ficult times will strike every couple and every family. We don't know when we will be tested, but we know the test, inevitably, will come.

If a couple manages to stay together through thick and thin, the partnership is likely to improve with age. If the two can preserve their love for each other through the stress of life's inevitable ups and downs, their partnership is likely to become stronger and stronger. The two have grown more mature and understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses.

The couple has settled into a comfortable routine and routine makes life easier and happier for most of us, most of the time. They know what to expect from each other, and that can feel very, very good. The passion is still there on occasion, but not quite as overwhelming. Something better has replaced the passion: The partners are now *best friends*. They are companions in life.

A comfortable routine, then, is good. Being best friends is wonderful. However, too much routine is too much of a good thing. There's got to be some sparkle sprinkled in here and there if the marriage is to retain its luster and survive over time.

The fact of the matter is that most of us want to feel loved and needed. This is an ongoing feeling that needs to be



For more information about strong couple and family relationships, refer to the book *Getting Connected, Staying Connected*, which can be ordered online at amazon.com.

regularly nourished. Without regular attention, the warmth, the sparkle, the fire are likely to burn out, and the couple is left with a devitalized relationship. A lifeless marriage is a sad place in which to spend your days.

When the partnership is at the point where the passion has inevitably faded a bit, where the sparks just aren't quite there like they were earlier in the marriage, what can be done to bring back some interest and a bit of the old flame?

Here are some tips:

S-L-O-W your lives down. Count up all the different things you're involved in and cut 35 percent of them out. They aren't as important as you think. You've just gotten yourself in the habit of running too fast and too long, and now you don't know how to slow the pace.

Cut the things that are not as important as your marriage. And if they are all more important than your marriage, you're in real trouble marriage-wise.

Spend more time together. Now that you've cut the nonsense and wasted motion out of your life, use some of this extra time to nurture your personal spirit and the rest of this time to nurture your marriage. You loved being together when you were dating, and you can love being together today.

Do something new and different together. It doesn't have to be expensive. Many happy couples have told us that their most memorable and meaningful times as a couple over the years have been when they were together, doing something new and different.

Sometimes this means traveling to a new place in the world, such as going to a lake a few miles away from home that you've never visited or having lunch in a restaurant that just opened. The travel experience doesn't have to be elaborate or cost much money. The key here is that you are experiencing something new and interesting together.

Have at least one date a week. Better yet, two. Couples are never too old to quit having dates. Go fishing, see a movie, go horseback riding, whatever ... the main thing is that it's just the two of you. No kids, no cares, just like the early days of your partnership.

Spend time with other happy couples. Be sure to cultivate solid friendships with other loving couples. You find that every couple struggles in life on occasion, and that couples find ways to meet these challenges and continue loving each other. Limit time with negative couples.

Get away from the kids. Have some alone time. The best thing a couple can do for their children is to love each other and nurture the marriage day-by-day. The kids will quickly learn that you are not abandoning them if you spend some time alone together.

They will learn, instead, that you love each other and love to be together and just focus on each other for a while each week.

Work together to do some good for the world. Live your values. Show your children that you know how to put your beliefs into action. Instead of focusing all the time on your own troubles, focus on making life better for other people who are probably in more difficulty than you are.

Be active together. Join a dance club, a gym, a volleyball team, go walking together regularly. It's hard to be depressed or angry with each other when you're physically active.

Throw your TV away. Or, if you aren't quite ready to do that, at least turn it off most of the time and invest your energy in talking with your partner and being physically active together.

Make love. Making *true* love is not just sex. It's much, much more. It starts long before bedtime, early in the day as you talk together, listen to each other, attend to each other's needs.

And, this kind of making love is a strong indicator that there is a huge amount of life left in this wonderful, mature marriage that you are creating together.

For greater understanding of the topic in this publication, refer to *Getting Connected, Staying Connected: Loving One Another Day by Day* written by John DeFrain and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Family Action Research and Writing Team. (2012). Bloomington, IN: iUniverse.

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