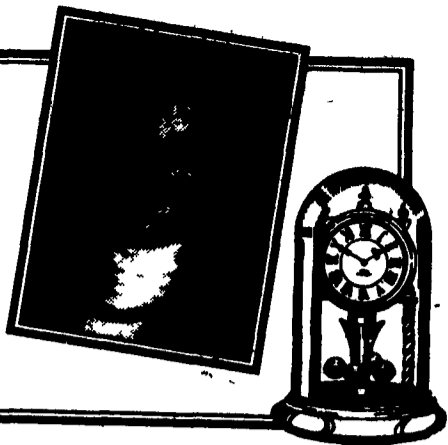


Taking Time

by
Rebecca Escott



Taking Time for Your Marriage

Recently I've been thinking a lot about marriage and the importance of finding/creating special times together as a couple. Just a few weeks ago my husband and I celebrated our anniversary. I really enjoy looking ahead to the day and concocting something special to do. Last year I sent him on a treasure hunt. I may never top that one.

This year's idea was simpler but still special. We made reservations for a late dinner at a tiny, local restaurant and spent our time answering two questions. This first was, "What were some of your favorite times that we spent together this past year?" The second was, "What hopes/visions do

you have for our marriage and life together down the road?"

We took turns recalling memories. Taking the time to list these favorite moments allowed each of us to celebrate good things about the past year. Incidentally, this whole conversation probably wouldn't have happened if I had sprung the question on my husband. He always does better with a little warning!

Patricia Kramer, author of *The Dynamics of Relationships*, points out that the bottom line for a successful marriage is the commitment each person makes to the relationship. Making the marriage a priority by each person putting his or her partner first, without sacrificing other areas of one's life

is essential. She advises that partners, early in a relationship, recognize that marriages take constant nurturing and work to keep them strong. They have peaks and valleys; they include conflicts and crises which do not need to be deadly to the relationship.

Recent research conducted by several marriage and family therapists reveals that couples who have a common vision of what they want to be/do in the future maintain healthy marriages. Their companionship and energy are directed in a common goal. Do you now what your spouse's hopes are for the future?

Last night I was reminded of the importance of not only celebrating anniversaries in creative ways but also finding "couple time" regularly throughout the year to bring some security and stability to a relationship. During a parenting workshop one couple expressed their frustration with not being able to get their one child to stay up in bed so that they can have some time alone in the evening. It was great to see how the other parents in the group surrounded and encouraged them to be consistent with their expectations for regular bedtime.

Finding couple time is difficult. If you're struggling, here are a few

ideas to spark some special times with your companion or to renege your emotional connection to one another.

- Send your spouse a note at work.
- Cook the other person's favorite meal.
- Read a book of common interest together (I like *Pennsylvania Magazine*). You could try a newspaper, movie review, political editorial. Then discuss it. Try this in the car or over dessert sometime.
- Drive with the radio off for more than 15 minutes and see what happens.
- Turn off the TV, and try something new like reviewing old picture albums. Or take turns picking favorite music to listen to on the stereo. Create a list of five things you'd like to do together in the next year. Set a date for one of the items.

- Go to the gym together, or participate in an athletic activity (driving range, volleyball) as a twosome.
- Work in the yard together or work on other side-by-side projects.
- Light candles and pour two mugs of coffee or cool drinks after the kids go to bed.
- Take a walk together, sit on the porch and watch the night settle in.
- Say I love you out loud to your partner.

These are great ideas for enhancing your couple time and reconnecting. But Kramer reminds each of us that our partners are not responsible for our happiness, sense of self-worth or well-being. They may be deeply concerned and committed to us, but they are not ultimately responsible for our feelings, actions, and attitudes.

Healthy Snacks For Kids

COLLEGEVILLE (Montgomery Co.)—Montgomery County Cooperative Extension is offering a free two-hour training for workers in child care centers or family day care homes on Wednesday, November 8 at 7:00 p.m. The topic for the evening is "Healthy Snack-Time for Kids." The program will highlight inexpensive and nutritious snack ideas for children of all ages. Many ideas will be shared for involving the

children in simple food preparation and for using common food items found in most kitchens to prepare the foods.

The training will be held at the Montgomery County 4-H Center on Rt. 113 in Creamery, one mile west of Skippack. Attendees will receive two DPW approved training credits and a certificate at the session. For directions or more information, contact the extension office at (610) 489-4315. Pre-registration is requested.

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