

Building Your Own Marriage Enhancement Initiative

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Routine. Monotonous. Set in stone. Comfortable. You adore your spouse. You believe that they and the family are paramount in your life. You've settled into a cozy routine, acknowledging the love and appreciation of your family. Your daily grind consists of work, dinner, TV, then bed. When you converse with your spouse, the most significant person in your life, the topics usually revolve around household chores, kids' activities, shopping lists, or work anecdotes. These conversations barely scratch the surface of genuine interaction between you and your spouse.

Occasionally, you consider using a holiday or special event to do something special for your spouse. Yet, your ideas thus far have been the usual roses or box of chocolates. Your creative juices seem to have dried up, leaving you mildly frustrated.

If you are serious about engaging in a loving gesture that can spark a reconnection of emotion and passion, ask yourself these questions: What has my spouse been telling me they want from me? Perhaps it has been verbally; maybe it has been through their actions. Have they complained about a lack of shared interests? Is there a desire to spend more time with me? Are date nights wanted, and have they indicated that they want me to take the lead in planning? Are they missing my presence? Maybe they are feeling neglected, taken for granted or bored. If your spouse communicates any of these sentiments, it could mean that your relationship needs a boost. You can revitalize your stable but stagnant marriage by developing a personalized marital enhancement initiative. By intentionally investing time and attention into the marriage, a couple can reignite the spark in their relationship, rediscover romance, and mend any erosion in their sense of "us."

Prioritizing the relationship can create special moments. Communication between couples encompasses more than just words. Acts of support, shared experiences, and simple gestures enhance the relationship and illustrate your attachment. Enjoying leisure activities together goes a long way in restoring positive emotions and a sense of connection.

Moreover, restoring neutral conversation is crucial. Over time, couples might run out of topics to discuss, having exhausted childhood stories, political views, and life philosophies. Sometimes, reviving conversational interest requires a conscious effort to move past familiarity and regain the ability to simply talk.

Here are steps to craft your own "marriage initiative:"

Set aside a "sacred time" for the relationship. Agree on a daily slot for couple communication and designate a day each week or every other week for a "date night." Treat these times as sacred, prioritizing them over other commitments. Anticipate potential obstacles that could hinder your efforts and brainstorm solutions in advance. For instance, arrange for babysitters and backup plans to prevent minor issues from derailing your plans.

Engage in communication exercises like "The Honey Jar" or Couples' Daily Feelings Meetings. Alternatively, consider participating in a marital enrichment program or attending a weekend retreat at church to kickstart your efforts.

As communication begins to flow, brainstorm a list of activities you enjoy together (e.g., ballroom dance lessons, gardening, volunteering, fishing, etc.). Develop your "Ing List." Couples who spend time together, share common interests, communicate regularly, and problem-solve tend to report higher marital satisfaction and stability over time. Devoting deliberate attention to the relationship yields numerous benefits, including increased cohesion and commitment, a heightened sense of being loved, and confidence in the marriage's ability to withstand challenges. Individuals in happy marriages typically enjoy better physical and emotional well-being than those in distressed relationships.

As you are trying out some of the activities on your "Ing" list, you may discover a joint passion and set aside time to regularly engage in this activity. For example, a kayaking passion could reignite romantic feelings for each other.

Pay attention. Practice consistent consideration of your spouse, and when you see that they could use a little help in whatever they are doing, provide it. Don't expect praise or accolades for being considerate. You would probably be considerate of strangers. Extend that same courtesy to your most important relationship. Notice them. Give compliments freely.

Be slow to criticize and complain. If you have verbalized a complaint before, don't keep repeating it. If it is a real problem, set aside time to apply problem-solving. If it does not reach that level of seriousness, practice some acceptance. Everyone wants to be accepted for who they are.

The demands of daily life can strain your relationship. Building your marriage enhancement initiative is about prioritizing your relationship, investing time and effort into nurturing your connection, and actively seeking ways to reignite the spark. By dedicating sacred time to spend together, engaging in meaningful communication, and exploring shared interests, you can revitalize your marriage and foster a more profound sense of love and commitment. Remember, small steps taken now can lead to significant rewards in the future, enriching not only your

relationship but also your overall well-being and happiness. **Note: This article has been revised and edited from its original version, which was previously published in 2011 on this site. The content has been updated for contemporary language, clarity and accuracy.**



Couples Feelings Meetings: A Brief Lesson - \$4.95

The Honey Jar: A Couples Communication Exercise - \$19.95

Both are digital downloads, available immediately.

