

A Woman's Perspective

Romance in Marriage?

Not a Fairy Tale

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Ladies, what would you pay for an inspiring love story written about you and your spouse? Would any amount be too high; would any task be too difficult? It is possible to be fulfilled in your relationship and rise above the ordinary. An extraordinary relationship will take time, effort, creativity, and commitment. There is an old saying that the best things in life are free. But, relationships worth having aren't things and they are definitely not free. They will require your energy, time, love, and companionship. As little girls dreaming of our Prince Charming, we envision a man that rides in and sweeps us off our feet. My prince didn't arrive on a horse but he makes me feel like a princess everyday. When we enter into marriage with another we don't plan on saying, "Glad we got together - I'll see you around now and then." No, we enter into a relationship because we want someone with whom we can walk this journey called life, someone who "has our back" and on whom we can trust implicitly.

Ladies, think back to when you met your spouse; did you talk about him with your friends? Consider what struck you about him and caused him to stand out from the crowd. How about later when the initial infatuation wore off; what kept you interested in

continuing the romance? For many the attention they received was the driving force. They loved having someone think they were so important they would block off time out of their schedule for them. Others found comfort in the common interest they could share and the time to discuss common goals and visions of their lives. We all appreciate the sudden surprises of notes, hand-in-hand walks, flowers, or calls during the day just to say, "Hi." There is nothing to say that should stop after the honeymoon. To keep our marriages fresh, exciting, and protected from outside influences we have to continue to keep the emotional "love bank" filled. That is where time and energy come in - along with a little creativity.

Once the reality of life starts to push into our marriages we need to make the effort to keep the romance in our marriage. Helping your husband feel appreciated will go a long way toward protecting against his looking for validation outside of marriage. And for the men: catering to, pampering and indulging your wife will make huge strides in fanning the flames of physical desire she has toward you. We must remember to keep the priority in our marriage relationship when kids, work, deadlines, and a variety of background noises invade our lives. It will take scheduling set times just to focus on and remember what you love about one another. Wives, make a special treat for your husband; and fellows, bring home flowers for your wife. Revisit special places you discovered while you were courting. Just make the time to stay connected to each other. It may even require budgeting in a few extra dollars a month for babysitters or arranging kid swaps with other parents (Guys, would you ever have let a couple of dollars here or there or some other logistical hurdle stand between you and that beautiful young lady you

were courting? Why would you allow that to happen now?). But, just do not make the mistake that “it can wait till the kids get older” because “it” will not wait. Keep putting your mate on hold and when the kids are gone you will wake up to a stranger beside you and a lot of wasted years behind you.

What are some ways to build emotional intimacy? Above all, to reach a level of intimacy with your spouse, you must be trustworthy. If someone does not believe you have their greater good at heart they will never give themselves to you with their whole being (and this goes for husbands and wives). Husbands, have you ever belittled your wife in front of others; or wives, have you picked on some trait of your husband’s that annoys you. Both instances are recipes for disaster. We have all been in uncomfortable situations where couples disagree in front of us and you want to blend into the walls to get out of there! Just think what kind of tension those occasions build in a relationship. How is one supposed to let his or her guard down behind closed doors when the spouse has been proven untrustworthy? It is such a more pleasant experience to witness the adoration people have for one another and know that that display of love in front of others is a reflection of the intimate relationship they have going on at home as part of a loving, satisfying , private relationship they alone share.

Understand, the development of companionship is a long process. We must discover those little things that make our spouses unique. What can you do to help them feel better when life gets difficult? How can you make them smile when all they want to do is cry? This knowledge will not come overnight but through trials and time spent together.

How can a relationship be built when no effort is put into the construction? Again, think back to courtship. Did you spend endless hours talking? Did you get together even if you weren't hungry, seeing a show, or solving the world's problems? Keep doing it – or start doing it again. You may have a job but you have off time to recharge and think on something other than what needs to be done tomorrow. Leave the work for another day and take a walk around the block. Have kids? Take them outside, run around with them awhile and then sit down and reconnect while they entertain themselves. Break up patterns and routines and celebrate for no particular reason. Have a candlelight dinner when the kids are in bed. Do something special like a massage or run a nice bath to show they are special to you. Life will pass by and all you will have to show for it is a healthy retirement, kids who have started their own journey, and a mate who you do not know (and may not even want to know). Make your relationship a priority and everything in life will benefit. You will find yourself less stressed in the day to day and the kids will have a wonderful example of marriage to emulate later in their lives.

We all have our own idea of the ideal intimate relationship. Men and women tend to differ on the absolutes - but one thing is for sure: when both sides feel loved, cherished, nourished and committed for the long haul they are willing to be more open to the needs of their spouse. Selfishness is a dangerous root that grows into an unwillingness to be what the other spouse needs and the refusal to make any concessions in the marital relationship. So, first go back to the foundation and build upon (or rebuild) your relationships on the bedrock that got you started. Go back to the days of trying to win the heart of your spouse. Go back to courting your spouse. Go back to the Song of Solomon

if you need inspiration to further your marital relationship. Through it all, please realize, Prince Charming and a “marriage made in heaven” need not be a fairy tale, but it always will be a work in progress.