

Stoking the *Fire of Passion* in Your Marriage

By Julie Baumgardner, MS, CFLE

Do you remember the first time you laid eyes on your spouse? Did your heart skip a beat? Throughout the time you dated and right into at least the first year of marriage, it was probably hard for you to take your mind off of your soul mate. You might have even gone out of your way to think of crazy and creative ways to express your love.

And then it happened. You can't pinpoint exactly when, but somewhere along the way, children, career, and other commitments seemed to steal the

time that you used to set aside for fun and games with the love of your life. You still love your spouse, but things in the bedroom have become dull and predictable. You may be finding it almost impossible to spend any time together, just the two of you. Sometimes you wonder if this is all there is to marriage.

When I talk with newlyweds about sexual intimacy, they usually say it's strange to think of sex NOT being an important part of their marriage. How-

ever, what most couples are never told is that you usually get a free dopamine ride during the first two years. Everything is new and exciting and couples have an elevated sex drive. After the two-year mark, dopamine levels drop and spouses begin to wonder what's wrong, but rarely do they ever have a conversation about what is happening. Sadly, there are plenty of sexless marriages out there with two people who are just going through the motions of marriage.

2S + I = Passion

Dr. Pat Love in her book *Hot Monogamy* makes this point: if you have two sexual beings but not intimacy, you cannot have passion. Consider this: two-thirds of women have "sexy brains," meaning they don't desire sex until they're in the midst of doing it. The majority of men have "sexy body brains," meaning that if their heart is beating, they're interested in sex. Interestingly, men need two to three times more touching than women. Most men are touch deprived. This is important information for couples interested in increasing

passion and intimacy in their marriage. You have to do your homework.

- Know what arouses you—it can't be a mystery.
- What is it that your spouse does that is such a turn on?
- What are three activities that make you feel close to each other?
- When do you feel closest and most connected to your spouse?
- When do you feel most loved?

Tell your spouse the answers to these questions. This can set the stage for passion and intimacy to grow in your marriage.

GOOD READS

Sex Begins in the Kitchen
Dr. Kevin Leman

The Sex Starved Marriage
Michele Weiner-Davis

Things I Wish I'd Known Before We Got Married
Dr. Gary Chapman

The Sexually Confident Wife
Shannon Ethridge

Hot Monogamy
Dr. Pat Love

Intended for Pleasure
Ed and Gaye Wheat

The Gift of Sex
Dr. Clifford Penner



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Rekindling the Flame

Whether you're in a marriage where the embers have grown cold or you want to keep the embers hot, hot, hot, here are some things to consider:

STICKING TO THE SAME ROUTINE GETS DULL.

If you always make love in the same place, in the same way, or at the same time, consider spicing things up! Ask yourself: What brings you sexual fulfillment? How often would you like to make love? What changes do you need to make to keep sex fresh, fun and adventuresome?

INTENTIONALITY IS KEY.

Be purposeful about keeping your energy and focus on your marriage. The number one reason couples grow apart is they turn their interest and energy away from their relationship.

INTERRUPTIONS CAN RUIN THE MOMENT.

Teach your kids that your bedroom is *your* bedroom. While this may sound totally unrealistic, you might be surprised how well it works once they get used to the idea.

MEN AND WOMEN APPROACH SEX DIFFERENTLY.

In general, men are focused on intercourse. Women, on the other hand, are focused on the relationship. Gary Chapman in his book, *Things I Wish I'd Known Before We Got Married*, makes a great point about this. If harsh words have been spoken, if she feels disrespected or if there has been irresponsible behavior, it will be challenging for her to be interested in sex. Men believe that sex will resolve whatever difficulties are going on between husband and wife. For women, sex is an emotional engagement. A pre-requisite for desire is feeling close, calm and connected.

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FOREPLAY BEGINS LONG BEFORE THE BEDROOM.

Look for small ways to re-connect with each other. Think about all of the creative ways you came up with to flirt when you were dating, and do the ones that got you the best response!

Think your embers are stone cold and past the point of no return? Doubtful. Regardless of what your spouse is doing, you have to decide what kind of

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spouse you are going to be. Take responsibility for what you're doing that may be throwing cold water on your marriage, and be courageous enough to love your spouse in the way he or she needs to be loved. Whether you're a "sexy body" or a

"sexy brain," you might be pleasantly surprised with the results.

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