

Are You Still Having Fun in Your Marriage?

“Men and women fall in love because they do fun things together. Without important elements like fun and sex, marriage is little more than a business relationship.” Jimmy Evans



Fun, laughter, and joy are all healthy ingredients to build resiliency (the emotional capacity to bounce back from negative emotions and difficult situations), intimacy, and an increasing peace and security in a marriage. With a high level of joy, a marriage just seems to work better. Part of the attraction that begins to draw most couples together is when they find someone that they can have fun with. Sue and I started our 53-year relationship with just doing fun things together like picnics, movies, swimming, and going for an ice cream cone! It wasn't until later that we began to become more romantically attracted to each other. My mother had a great saying, “Love is friendship caught on fire!” We all start out as friends and fall in love somewhere along the way!



It's important to make joy a priority in your marriage. In 2008 the Center for Marital and Family Studies at the University of Denver published a study that showed the more couples invest in fun and friendship, the happier their relationship will get over time. Another study from the University of California found that people in happy relationships “generate fun.” These activities keep their relationship strong, healthy, and fresh. In this study Thomas Bradbury found that cities with a Major League Baseball team had a 28 percent lower rate of divorce than cities that had expressed an interest, but did not have a professional team! The more opportunities there are around you to have fun, the better it can be for your marriage, if you choose to take advantage of them!



Even if you don't have that many fun activities available nearby, you can generate your own fun things to do together anyway. Living in a small town with a big university like we do, does provide a wide range of fun things that Sue and I have taken advantage of over the years we have lived here. We can have fun attending concerts, sporting events, and special performances and activities through the university. We also have a beautiful arboretum and many miles of biking paths in town and hiking trails in the woods around us to explore and enjoy together. Over the years Sue and I have on purpose gotten away together at least once every year since our children were little to focus on each other and enjoy many of the beauties of Father's creation. Beside all of that, we still do lots of fun crazy child-like things like make snow angels after a fresh snowfall, build a snowman, have a snowball fight, race go-carts, watch funny movies, and take silly pictures. If you use your God-given creativity, I believe that you can come up with some fun things to do together with your spouse too!



In previous Marriage Encouragements I have talked about the needs of men and women and how to understand and meet those needs for each other. One of man's deepest needs is for his wife to be his friend. He wants someone to hang out with and is willing to do fun things together with him. Women need relationship and to be able to connect emotionally to their husband. Men tend to be emotionally guarded (there are exceptions of course!), but often they will open up more when they are having fun. They also tend to be more conversational when they are convinced you are their friend. Having fun together fulfills both the man's need for friendship and the woman's need for connection!



So, back the title of this lesson, “Are you still having fun in **your** marriage?” The daily demand on our time, stresses from jobs, children, family drama, finances, and health, besides the “big things” going on in the world right now, can damage your marriage and health. Recent research shows that couples visit friends less than they used to and go out for leisure activities or dine together less than before. We can be into our phones, Facebook page, the news, or even sit in the same room watching a movie and not talk or make eye contact with each other. I want to encourage you to sit down with your spouse and talk about where your relationship is at right now and how much fun are you having. When was the last time you experienced joy together? Marcus Warner in his book *The 4 Habits of a Joy-Filled Marriage* talks about shrinking you joy gap (the amount of time that has past since the last time you experienced joy together). The longer the gap, the more we can feel hopeless about our marriage and begin to fill the time with other activities. The more joy we build into our marriage the more we will have the feelings of “being in love.”



If you haven’t already, begin to schedule date nights together, look for fun activities near you that you might like to do and events you might go to together. Laugh, play, be child-like, and even do something silly once in a while! A great book to help you build joy back into your marriage is the one I mention by Marcus Warner and Chris Coursey *The 4 Habits of Joy-Filled Marriages*. There are also lots of fun ideas on the internet for couples to do together.



Most of all, just take time to have some fun together!

Dialogue Questions

1. What are five fun things that I would like to do with you? How does that make me feel when I think about each one of them?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, (one being the lowest and 10 the best) where do I see the joy level in our marriage right now? How long has it been since we experienced a joyful time together? How does that make me feel?

Fun Night Ideas

1. Make some popcorn or break out your favorite snack and drinks, put on some quiet music, sit facing each other making eye contact and tell some joy stories (stories that brought a smile, made you feel good, were funny or silly) from your past. Be expressive as you tell the story, and at the end, tell your spouse the major emotions and feelings you experienced from each story.
2. Together plan a fun evening or day together with activities, favorite foods, special places to explore, new adventures, or events to attend. Take pictures and make a special memory!
3. On a clear evening, drive to a place where you have a good view of the sunset. Park the car where you can watch the sun go down while you sit together in each other’s arms. You may need to take a blanket or folding chairs! Play some of your favorite music. Then after sunset go somewhere and enjoy a favorite treat together.