

Keeping the Flame Glowing in Your Marriage!



When Sue and I got married almost 53 years ago, I thought our relationship would always be the same and our love and passion would only grow as we were now free to enjoy each other in every way. However, my lack of understanding and unrealistic expectations about married life nearly caused me to lose the lifetime love affair that we are now enjoying. Because our lives and circumstances continue to change throughout life, our marriage, like many others, has gone through different seasons of spring, summer, fall, and winter. Some have lasted longer than others, but as we have continued to work on our marriage, we have enjoyed the good parts of each season with the hope of better times to come!

We are all born with the need to be loved by Father and others. The need to have our "emotional love tank" filled up on a regular basis is as essential as putting gas in your car or oil in the engine. Without those things a car will not run. Without each spouse receiving love regularly, their "love tank" will be empty and their marriage will struggle. It takes continued, consistent effort to have the deep, intimate, loving relationship God desires for a husband and wife to experience.

Passion springs from the sense of love that is felt between a man and woman as they are drawn closer and closer to each other. This is what Sue and I experienced after over three years of dating and led us to get married. Passion is more than just lust or a drive for sexual encounters with another person. Wikipedia says, *“Passion is a feeling of intense enthusiasm toward or compelling desire for someone or something, ranging from the admiration of an idea, an enthusiastic enjoyment of an activity, or a strong romantic/sexual desire for another person.”* We can be passionate about many things, but one of the most important is to have passion for your spouse beyond just your sex drive. I see passion and sexual fulfillment as part of the glue that helps keep a couple together and their marriage alive, exciting, and everlasting!

The “falling in love stage” lasts between one to two years after the wedding, and then the maturing of our love begins which takes more effort and commitment from both the man and woman to keep the marriage alive and growing. Neglect can creep into any marriage as the demands of children, careers, home ownership, and life put extra demands on our time and energy. At the end of a day, we may not have much motivation to maintain a passionate marriage. Passionate marriages require work, commitment, and intentionality to keep flourishing. You might be thinking, “So, how do I do that?”



Here are a few of the things Sue and I have learned and do to help us keep the flames glowing in our marriage:

1. Stop trying to change your spouse. Just like opposites attract in nature, we often are attracted to and marry our opposite! This can quickly become a major annoyance and turn-off after we get married and begin living with that person 24/7. Sue liked my calm, quiet, steady nature while we were dating, but after we got married, it quickly became a major distractor to our relationship. She tried for years to change me, which pushed us apart. The heavenly Father finally gave her a different perspective and attitude towards me, and she started to show me more love which then allowed the Father to work on me!

2. Have fun together doing things that you enjoy. Sue and I enjoy taking walks, exploring new areas, putting together puzzles, playing games, and hiking. **Variety helps break up the routines that we can get stuck in doing.**

3. Keep a short “Joy Gap” A joy gap is the time that passes between experiencing joy together. We on purpose try to inject humor, laughter, watch funny videos, old TV shows, funny movies, or just to be “childlike” with each other. We also tell joy stories of fun times from our past, things we have seen, heard, or done that are funny, or express appreciation about things our spouse has done for us. **Joy is a major ingredient to a healthy and fulfilling relationship.**

4. Make time to be affectionate with each other. We like to cuddle together when we watch TV or when we lay in before we fall asleep every night. We hold hands while we walk and often hug and kiss during the walk. “Official walks” are only counted when we have an affectionate embrace somewhere on the walk! We also kiss each other during the day.

5. Communicate daily on more than just the “nitty-gritty” details about the day. When our boys were still at home, we used to talk primarily about them and little else on our walks. We realized this was not helping our relationship and stopped doing it. Some of those discussions may be necessary but save them for another time other than when your focus needs to be on each other! It’s important to create an atmosphere of trust and peaceful acceptance so your spouse will feel comfortable and free to share what is in their heart.

6. Have a Date Night every week. We have for many years tried to set aside one evening where we do something to specifically focus on each other. We try to vary what we do and look for new things to add to our list. This is one you must be intentional and determined to honor the time you set apart. My experience has been that if I’m not intentional, it’s too easy to let other priorities and demands overrule that time. Also, for Sue if I’m proactive and tell her ahead of time what we are going to do, it gives her something to look forward to during the week!

For more helpful ideas and resources, check out the **Marriage Encouragements** tab on our website <https://www.abbasarmsintl.org/category/marriage-encouragements/>

Dialogue Questions

1. What are some things that you are grateful for about your spouse? For each one, express how that makes you feel. Share your list with your spouse and express your appreciation for them as you look into their eyes!
2. What are 5 or more things that you could do for me that would help stir my passion and my desire for me? How does that make you feel? Exchange lists and pick one from their list about you that you will do for them in the near future.

Fun Night Ideas

1. Fix a special dish or meal you both like, turn the lights down low, cuddle together and watch a fire, listen to quiet romantic music, or watch a romantic movie together.