

Katy couple Kelby and Lauren Grohmann say the best piece of advice they received as newlyweds was to always make time for each other

With only 35% of couples making it to their 25th anniversary, it's never been more important to continue to nurture marital relationships as years go by. The bad news is, there really is no way to affair-proof your marriage. The good news is there are some great marital practices that will help keep your love alive, hopefully for years to come.

FIVE WAYS TO STRENGTHEN *Your Marriage*

Katy Magazine's guide to dating, appreciating,
and celebrating your spouse

Written by Katy Magazine's Editors

Photo by Ashley Cullen Photography

1 NEVER STOP DATING

A report released by the National Marriage Project found that couples who devote time specifically to one another at least once a week are more likely to enjoy high-quality relationships and lower divorce rates than couples who do not. Katy couple Joel and Nancy plan a variety of dates including romantic getaways, road trips in their RV, and movie nights. Nancy says, "It's important to continue to do those things that attracted you to each other in the first place. Dating should not stop once you're married." Dating regularly helps reinforce why you got married in the first place. Remember, dating doesn't have to be expensive. A picnic and a walk in the park can be more meaningful to you than seeing a Broadway play. And Katy parents, no, going to your son's soccer game together does not constitute a date night.

2 STEP INTO THEIR WORLD

Remember when you first started dating and you were totally enamored by this other person? If he loved football, suddenly you loved football. If she loved chick flicks, you were right there beside her with popcorn and a tissue. Now after a few years, there are kids, activities, schedules, work, and so many pressures distracting you from celebrating his or her interests. Experts warn that not being interested in the other's hobbies or interests brings distance - and distance never gets better with time.

3 APPRECIATE AND RESPECT

When was the last time you gave your spouse a heartfelt compliment or bragged up one of their strengths within earshot? If you're too busy to notice all the good things your husband is doing or how handsome he looks in his new turquoise shirt, he may be ripe for picking when the woman at work compliments him - and the same goes for wives. Don't ever miss a chance to notice, to say something nice, say "thank you," or just say "I love you." Also, respect each other's opinions and listen even if you don't necessarily agree with the other person.

4 GET REGULAR TUNE-UPS

In every marriage there will be peaks and valleys so don't despair if you're currently in a pit. There is no shame in marriage counseling and it's actually one of the ways most long-married couples get through the low points. If you have a spouse unwilling to go to counseling, remind him that you both need to find your way back to each other and that each of you is partially responsible for the breakdown.

5 COMMUNICATE WELL

A wise person once said, "At the root of all conflict is miscommunication." If your husband keeps hurting your feelings, sweetly tell him. If you need more affection from your wife, tell her specifically what you need. It sounds simple, but many people expect their spouse to know what they need and how they feel. But here's a secret that will change your life. They really don't know...so tell them. Teach them how to make you happy and vice versa. Lastly, never let your words go into the gutter. Remember that name-calling, lying, and trash-talking have no place in a healthy marriage. **KM**

Tips for Dating Your Spouse

CHOOSE A REGULAR DATE NIGHT - Try to schedule a weekly or every other week date night. If you're 'round the clock busy, you may need to schedule time in the bedroom as well.

TAKE TURNS PLANNING - Rotate who plans each date so each of you can do what he or she likes. Be open-minded in trying your spouse's idea for a date night even if it's not what you would pick.

KEEP IT POSITIVE - Date night is not the time to get into heavy, painful subjects or dredge up the past. Keep it light-hearted and save the heavy discussions for another time. This is your time to connect and celebrate each other.

GIVE COMPLIMENTS - Set a goal to give three compliments or thank yous during the date.

BE AFFECTIONATE - Flirt, hold hands, kiss, and snuggle just like when you were dating.

TURN IT OFF - Disconnect from technology and reconnect to the person you married whenever possible.

BE FLEXIBLE - Make an effort to show your other half that you will cancel or reschedule plans just to be with them. Making them your number one priority will reinforce the strength of your bond and encourage them to go out of their way for you.



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