

*“I like my body when it is
with your body.
It is so quite new a thing.”*
– E.E. Cummings

Keeping the Romance Alive



Valentine's Day All Year

BY PATRICIA HEROLD

*S*trike a match quick, then watch a bright spark sail off and disappear. That's how fast passion flies for some couples. Love? Maybe it lasts. But where'd that hot glow go?

And how to get it back?

On any given Valentine's Day, Godiva, red roses or a club level room in New York's Central Park Ritz Carlton may provide a hearts and flowers fix. But after the splurge, wouldn't it be great to enjoy a real romance every day?

New Jersey Savvy Living searched for the secret to staying in a Valentine's mood all year-round and discovered these simple ways to keep the love (and romance!) alive.

Appreciate

WHAT TO DO:

Just Say It: Good. Thanks. Beautiful. Handsome. Well Done. Wow.

A compliment a day. Simple as that. “Couples who have been together a long time forget to compliment each other,” notes Melanie Davis, a counselor with the New Jersey Center for Sexual Wellness. Expressing appreciation of even the obvious builds your partner’s self esteem and strengthens the bond between you. Your nod can be spectacular: “That dress looks sensational.” Or simple: “I really appreciate that you do the dishes every night.” Either way, compliments bring you closer.

HOW TO DO IT

Speak it: Face to face. “No one stops to say, ‘You look beautiful,’” laments Dana Kaspereen, a clinical psychologist and licensed professional counselor with a private practice in Florham Park. But when you take the time, the impact can be huge.

Write it: Tuck a note with a compliment in his or her briefcase or put a sweetheart sticky note on the dash.

Tech it: Send a mid-day appreciation text or email.

WHAT THIS COULD DO FOR YOUR LOVE LIFE:

Self esteem has a huge impact on intimacy,” says Kaspereen, “It’s important to feel attractive.”

BUT BEWARE...

of the auto-pilot compliment: “Nice dress!” is fine, but not every time you go out. Pay attention to a variety of positive things: Strive to be creative and specific!

Imagine

WHAT TO DO:

Envision your perfect future together: Children. Time to travel. A wonderful home.

Take time to focus on where your love and commitment will take you as a couple.

HOW TO DO IT:

Speak it: During a private dinner out or at home, talk about just the two of you and your mutual goals.

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Write it: Create a “vision” list. Relationship counselors Betsy and Bruce Bergquist ask couples in their workshops to brainstorm, then “create a vision of what they want their relationship to be in 5-10 years,” by listing goals like “Great Sex” or “Fun Every Day” or even “Financially Secure.”

Tech it: Research dreams online, then forward regular updates to inspire and connect with your mate.

WHAT THIS COULD DO FOR YOUR LOVE LIFE:

Just listing “Great Sex” as a goal might help. “People want to feel desired... People want to feel wanted,” says Davis. “There’s no wrong reason to have sex: It’s a great way for couples to maintain closeness and fun.”

The Experts:

Dana Kaspereen
Melanie Davis
Betsy & Bruce Bergquist



BUT BEWARE...

of letting irritating Fix It or Money Trouble topics crop up when talking about future plans! “Who wants to have sex and be intimate when you’re pissed?” says Kaspereen. Keep the conversation positive and soaring: “Live in a Beautiful Home Together” lifts hearts and inspires; “Patch The Roof” kills the mood.

Innovate

WHAT TO DO:

Experiment! Instead of pressing the “Reset” button every time you choose a restaurant, make love, or talk to your partner, hit “Surprise Me!” Ask questions you never asked. Pretend you’re getting to know a stranger. Sprinkle rose petals on the bed as an invitation. Once a week – even once a month – try a totally new approach, new place, new touch.

HOW TO DO IT:

Speak it: “Couples don’t know how to talk about sex; they know how to do it,” notes Betsy Bergquist. Speak up about what you’d like to try or do differently.

Write it: Send an old-fashioned love letter. Set your partner’s photo in front of you, get a pen and paper and then let it flow: 10 wonderful things about your beloved and your dreams for the future. Spritz the paper with your signature perfume or aftershave, select a stamp that symbolizes a shared passion (or the 2010 United States Postal Service’s annual “Love” stamp) or deliver by hand.

Tech it: Google up new lessons, hobbies, adventures you can try together. Book a surprise online and send your honey an invitation to join you. Hot Yoga? Mid-Winter Picnic in a Romantic Park? Ballroom Dancing? Give something different a whirl!

WHAT THIS COULD DO FOR YOUR LOVE LIFE:

The addition of one novelty can work wonders. Davis suggests choosing a “non-threatening way to experiment...There’s nothing wrong with fantasy,” she notes. “Most people use fantasies during lovemaking...and while your partner might not be willing to smear chocolate all over your body, it might be arousing to feed each other blueberries.” Even the simple addition of a scarf can enhance pleasure, she says: “Putting a blindfold on can be freeing; you focus on how you are feeling.”

BUT BEWARE...

of discomfort on either partner’s part. “Both people,” stresses Davis, “need to be sure nobody finds anything offensive.”

Focus

WHAT TO DO:

Make your partner – and relationship – a priority and make sure he or she knows it. Make time together,” suggests Kaspereen, “when nobody’s on the phone or computer.”

HOW TO DO IT:

Speak it: Ask questions, urges Betsy Bergquist: “What do you like? What gives you pleasure? What is your fantasy?”


Write it: Pencil a date night into your calendar every week (even if it’s at home after the kids are asleep).

Tech it: Turn off the tech! Stop surfing, drop that remote and pay attention to the man or woman in your life. “Tech is great,” acknowledges Kaspereen. “But with relationships, you need that one-on-one, intimate, face-to-face connection.”

WHAT THIS COULD DO FOR YOUR LOVE LIFE:

“If you make time for the person you love, being with them and having conversation, bringing back the spark...you feel the connection, and you are going to want to hold and hug and kiss,” notes Kaspereen.

BUT BEWARE....

of thinking that “focus” means flawless communication. “Every conflict is growth trying to happen,” explains Betsy Bergquist. The Bergquists’ Imago workshops teach couples a communications process “that gives you a deeper understanding of your partner, of yourself, and what’s driving your relationship.” 

RESOURCES

Betsy and Bruce Bergquist
Imago Center for Relationships
“Getting The Love You Want”
908.735.7650
betsyandbruce.com

Melanie J. Davis
Honest Exchange LLC
908.722.1632
honestexchange.com

Dana Kaspereen
Counseling of Life
973.255.9580

**New Jersey Center for Sexual
Wellness**
908.532.0144
njsexualwellness.com