

Navigating Midlife



A SERIES DESIGNED TO MEET THE CONCERNS AND NEEDS OF OUR AGING POPULATION

Making Love Last A Lifetime

Joyce Fittro, FCS

OSU Extension, Delaware County

Marital love means caring for another person rather than taking care of or taking from another person. Mutual understanding and consideration nourish the marriage. If caring, understanding and consideration are evident in the marriage, it becomes possible for the marriage to endure and be a source of support, even when the couple feels low or the energy drain is high.

What can a couple do to ensure that their marriage has every opportunity to succeed? Here are some suggested behaviors and attitudes that may contribute to that success.

- Only when you feel good about yourself and feel strong inside can you be caring and nurturing toward your partner. Take care of yourself, be kind to yourself, fulfill yourself and keep your self-esteem high.
- Remember that you are always responsible for yourself. Your partner is never responsible for your happiness, self-worth or well-being.
- Be willing to risk exposing your innermost self. The more you let your partner know you and feel accepted for who you are, the more deeply loved you will feel.
- Let the other know your needs. Don't assume your partner is a mind-reader.
- Realize that your partner may at times reject you for expressing your feelings, but unless you're willing to take that risk, you will not establish intimacy.
- Never air your difference or put your partner down in public, no matter how angry you may be.
- Deal with conflict when it occurs. Otherwise, all the small irritants will build into one gigantic eruption.
- It's better to reward and reinforce a partner's good behavior than it is to criticize him or her for bad behavior.
- Be willing to forgive. Holding on to angry feelings don't make people feel very loving.
- Play, laugh and have fun.
- Remember that sex is only part of marriage. The fires of passion will at times go out, but they can be rekindled. When a person feels truly loved, sexual responsiveness flows more easily.

- Keep the channels of communication open. Intimacy cannot be achieved until both partners are willing to be open and honest.
- Remember that trust is the basic link that holds you together.
- Try to be alert to clues that indicate your partner needs support or help even though he or she hasn't asked.
- Don't be reluctant to seek outside help if necessary. Sometimes a professional, objective third person can help clear up issues that seem unresolvable.
- Don't allow children to damage your relationship. Children are demanding. Marriage should remain the priority even when there are children. The best thing any parent can do to raise healthy loving children is to be a good role model.
- Accept each other as you are and for what you are. You married each other because you liked what you saw, inside and outside. Think about that when you find yourself trying to change your partner to fit a different or new mold.
- A good marriage needs a balance of separateness and togetherness. Allow each other room to breathe – to have privacy and quiet time. Possessiveness has no place in a health marriage.
- Try to do some activity together at least once a week. Plan to do something you both enjoy on a regular basis. It adds fun to your lives while also allowing you to be close.
- Be spontaneous. Marriages that are structured and rigid can become boring and dull. Don't do the same things in the same way every day. Vary routines a little.
- Always consider your partner's needs. Partners shouldn't have to sacrifice their personal desires or needs for each other, but they should always consider what kind of impact meeting their own needs will have on the other person. Be responsible for your actions.
- Try to create an atmosphere in which each partner feels free to be open and confrontive if necessary without the fear of being attacked, punished or lectured.
- Show affection openly and often.
- Say, "I love you" out loud to your partner. It's true that actions speak louder than words, but we still like to hear the words.



All educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a non discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, age, disability or Vietnam-era status.

Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President for Ag. Admin. And Director, OSU Extension TDD no. 800.589.8292 (Ohio only) or 614.292.1686.