



Marriage Matters

Making Couple-time a Priority

You wake up, get ready for work, get the kids ready for school, drop the kids off, work all day, get home and fix a quick meal, run the kids to their activities, help the kids with homework, get the kids to bed, and go to bed yourself . . . exhausted! For most American families, this is a typical day. So where do you fit in the time for your marriage?

For “time-poor” couples, the demands of work, schedules, and households prevent the type of couple time most of us want and need in order to make our marriage relationship a high priority in daily life. Research shows that marital satisfaction declines slowly as the years go by, particularly after having children. Togetherness, positive experiences and happy interactions are essential ingredients to maintaining a healthy and satisfying marriage (and family). More importantly, a healthy marriage provides the foundation for fostering a healthy family.

So what’s a busy couple to do?

- ♥ **Own the choice.** Some people who complain about no free time fail to own the choices that they have made voluntarily about their use of time. Accept that every allocation of time involves choice.
- ♥ **Command the time.** Actively find ways of creating and protecting your time together. This might involve decisions to work less, reduce the number of children’s activities, watch television less, or schedule more time to be alone together. If you have children, set clear boundaries around your private time (and space) as a couple.
- ♥ **Enjoy regular dates.** Unfortunately, many couples stop dating after they get married, especially after having children—these special times alone brought you together

and are important in keeping you together. If you have children, work out a support system that allows for regular dates. For example, develop a method of child care exchanges with another couple.

- ♥ **Think small.** Frequently, people become convinced that they have no time for their relationship because they are thinking exclusively in large units of time. However, just 10 minutes alone together opens up many possibilities. Take advantage of those small units of time and live in the present moment.
- ♥ **Remember, you are not alone!** Many couples struggle with protecting their couple-time from their kids, work, and other aspects of life. Talk with other couples about the strategies they use to make time—share your struggles and successes with other couples.

In guy terms, your marriage is very much like a car. You want both to last forever and, as such, both require regular maintenance and care. Similarly, in gal terms, your marriage is like a plant that needs time and care in order to thrive. Neglecting to invest time in nurturing your relationship can, over the long haul, result in a “broken-down” or “wilted” marriage. Make time for each other so that your marriage runs smoothly and flourishes!

ACTIVITY



Not sure of what to do with your time together? Talk about it! Choose a time and place you can be alone together to talk about activities you’ve done in the past and those you would like to do in the future. Be open to each other’s interests. Write your ideas down, cut them apart, and put them in a jar. When you’re stuck for an activity to do, pull one out. Be creative and have fun!



This resource supports the following principles of healthy relationships:



For more resources, visit www.gafamilies.org and www.nermen.org.

