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8 Tips to Spring Clean Your Marriage

Clean up your relationship messes and start anew

By Stacy D. Phillips

Many of us look to spring as the time to give the house in which we live a good cleaning. We throw away what is no longer necessary, get rid of a great deal of clutter and debris, and spiff up what we want to keep. The latter of which are often things we even forgot we had! We often make the items we keep handier – and use them regularly. When we are done with this stem-to-stern task we may be exhausted, but almost always feel refreshed and rejuvenated. I believe we can do the same for our personal relationships – those intimate partnerships that often get dusty and dirty.

The following are my suggestions for giving your relationship a good “cleaning.” I think each one of these suggestions will make you appreciate what the two of you have together.

1. Air out your differences. Couples often have opposing points of view which is normal, however, they do not always express them openly. If you really want to wipe the slate clean choose a mutually convenient time for an open-ended Powwow. During this clean-up session, make sure you have gotten your divergent points of view on the table and off your chest. You may not change one another’s opinions on things – like how to raise the kids, where you should vacation, or how to spend your discretionary income – but expressing your thoughts will serve to cleanout any debris, like the "stuff" that often accumulates when you just sweep things under the rug.

2. Clean out your emotional closet. In addition to differences – like he thinks you should drop the kids off at school, but you think he should do that regular chore – talk about those feelings you have neglected to confront and share, whether they have to do with wanting more physical contact outside the bedroom or hurt feelings when he/she teases about your weight gain. Maybe it has been out of fear of disturbing the status quo of the relationship or your inability to put your feelings into words, but now is the time. Do not continue to stuff your internal closet full of hurt feelings. They will pile up like a closet full of items shoved away until the door is opened and an avalanche of junk tumbles out, nearly crushing you – your relationship could suffer the same fate. The two of you could find yourself buried with no way out of the rubble.

3. Put a fresh coat of love on all parts of your relationship. From sending special greeting cards, to surprising each other with small but special gifts, you can renew your bond by making your union brand new again! Remember those romantic feelings you two once had and how you went out of your way to make each other feel special and loved? Now is the time to revisit that magic and spruce up both the interior and exterior of your relationship. Every couple needs to take time out to take the old and make it new again. Just like the paint on the outside and inside of a home, the kindness and consideration that once showcased the beauty of your relationship could have cracked, peeled and faded over time.



4. Open up and breathe some fresh air into your relationship. It is easy to become complacent with one another, take each other for granted and eventually have your relationship grow stale. But opening one another up to some new adventures and activities – like taking up ballroom dancing together, spicing up your sex life, and sharing some type of spiritual journey together – could be just what you both have needed for some time now to punch up the oxygen level that keeps your relationship healthy and fresh.

5. Scrub the slate clean. Right now would be a very good time to take all the old hurts and resentments and pile them on the table for both to sort through, many of which you can easily get rid of. It is very common for all of us to avoid the “dirtier” parts of our intimate and personal relationship – like keeping silent when you find it unfair that you remain the person in charge of planning all the holidays and keeping the in-laws happy – but such feelings of inequity can mount and fester leading to a heap of grudges. But just like the laundry that piles up that we promise to get to later, if we don’t clean things up regularly – wash out the hidden resentments – they will accumulate and stink up what we once regarded as brand new and special.

6. Polish off your rough edges. Your love can be as strong as steel, but like steel it can get rusty. Take the time and effort your relationship needs and make it shine again. You will both be glad you did. But how? Agree to spend one day just showing appreciation for one another; agree to stop with the irritating habits that bug one another; think before you criticize and be more gentle and considerate all the way around. A relationship is like a precious metal, it can become more valuable if we take good care of it, but let it go and it can diminish and accumulate gunk that does not make it very appealing.

7. Find a safe place to store those precious things about your relationship you once regarded as sacred, yet promise yourself you will use them from time to time. I am talking about putting back (into play) those little things that meant so much to both of you but that you have neglected. Was it the medicine cabinet where you used to put silly love notes, the foyer glass-top table where you left the yellow rose of apology, the turn down service of folding back his/her side of the covers if you went to bed first? Was it that pet name of which only the two of you understood the meaning? Do not let these precious little acts of love and kindness become scattered and forgotten. Round them up, put them safely away and take them out on appropriate occasions when your mate least expects you to.

8. Refurnish your favorite part of the relationship. Once you have conducted a thorough cleaning of all parts of your relationship that need the “spring clean” touch, refurbish it with something new. For instance, what “room” in your relationship house could use a makeover? Is it together-time? Recreational hobbies as a twosome? Sex? Family time? Every relationship needs a little redecorating as it ages.

Whether you and your significant other decide to do all or a few of the tasks above I am certain you will be glad you did. Relationships need to be well taken care of in order to retain their value. Here are two good questions to ask yourself before you embark on any relationship “spring cleaning” effort: Like a home, what is my relationship worth? And what am I willing to do to retain its value?

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