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How to Keep Your Romance Awake While the Kids are Asleep

7 Ways - without a babysitter - to regain intimacy in your relationship

By Stacy D. Phillips

When couples have children living in the home—especially small children—it is hard to carve out time for couples to spend together nurturing their relationship. It seems that by the end of the day—weekdays and weekends—both mom and dad are so spent from a heavy workload, and dealing with the many tasks required to run a household, that both parties are exhausted. Neither feels terribly romantic. The quiet time they do sneak in is not necessarily romantic time. After the children are fast asleep most couples are content simply lounging in front of the television set where they usually nod off before their favorite show is done.

Through my many years of practice, through no real fault of their own, I have seen couples grow apart far too many times because they put romance on the backburner. Understandably, the children's needs often took precedence over the needs of the relationship. But, what I tell those who are about to marry is that one day the children will be gone, but hopefully their relationship will not. With that in mind, I urge them to spend time fostering it, and that means putting romance at the top of the to-do list every single day.

The following are my suggestions on how couples can create the spark for romance during those wonderful and precious moments shortly after the children have gone to bed. By the way, none of my recommendations require a babysitter!

- 1. Pick one night of the week for your "rendezvous" and make it sacred.** Maybe it is Wednesday. If one of you is required to travel due to job duties, and Wednesday will not always work, pick an alternate night for a make-up date and stick to it.
- 2. Make a calendar of events.** Perhaps one evening it is a late-night dinner in bed (pick up something from a caterer earlier on or keep it simple with a bowl of soup). On another night (when the kids are fast asleep), maybe it is taking a bubble bath together during an equally shared conversation over what turns you on. No lights during this bath, only lit candles.
- 3. Take turns planning something romantic.** Do not make the mistake of assuming it is the other person's job to come up with romantic ideas for your date nights. Agree that the two of you will share 50/50 by trading off on making plans—concocting that list of items that comprises your upcoming "romantic menu."



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4. Take a cold shower together or jump in the pool. Many people can still stay awake after a hot bath, yes, but if hot water puts you to sleep, jump in the shower with your mate and let the tepid or cold water wake the two of you up. You may only remain alert and aroused for a short time, but chances are it will be long enough to share some romance. It does not always have to be lovemaking, either. Maybe some cuddling or romantic chatter will give your romance a shot in the arm!

5. Lock that bedroom door. And keep it locked. This is your playtime and your playpen and you should not feel anxious or concerned that the children or the nanny may walk in on you. If the door is locked you will feel far more relaxed and much less inhibited. Put a bell out side the door or a magnetic alarm that sticks to the doorjamb and instruct them to ring or press those devices if they really need you. Remember not to lock that door until the children are safely tucked in their beds and asleep. For teens, explain that the two of you need some quiet time – some uninterrupted down-time together. Teens get that! The little ones may need an explanation, but they too, will probably understand. It's also good to remember that it's healthy for children to see their parents taking time for themselves and relationship. Naturally, if any of the children awake in a fright and you hear them calling for you, you can unbolt the door and rush to his/her aid.

6. Take a nap, but set the alarm. Some couples are too exhausted to think about a romantic timeout once they have put the kids down. That is normal and perfectly okay. Go to bed and set the alarm for midnight. Once that alarm goes off, give yourself an hour or so to get romantic. Then take turns giving one another a massage until you both go back to sleep.

7. Turn off all electronic devices – that includes the telephone, computer, Blackberry, pager and cell phone. A romance-buster is none other than the device that goes off during a passionate or intense moment. The temptation for the person who owns that device is to immediately check his/her e-mail, take the call or glance at the pager to see who is trying to reach you. If you are addicted to your Blackberry, you will have to leave it in another room, locked up. Nothing breaks the continuity or ruins the momentum faster than an out-of-the-blue interruption.

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