

Can you remember how much time you spent nurturing your relationship when you were first dating? Everything else took a backseat to spending time with your future spouse. No wonder your relationship grew so quickly.

Over time you started spending less and less time nurturing your relationship. This often occurs out of necessity since the neglected areas of your life demand your attention.

However, relationships are like plants. You can only neglect them for so long before they begin to die. The longer you neglect plants and relationships, the more time and effort it takes to revive them.

The best approach to nurturing plants and relationships is to give them what they need to stay healthy.

The following steps will help you take time to nurture your marriage:

First, place nurturing your marriage at the top of your priority list.

Next, find time to nurture your marital relationship. Write down what you do each day and go through the list asking yourself, “Can I sacrifice some or all of this activity and use that time to strengthen my marriage?” You will be surprised at how much time you “find”.



Now ask yourself if you can change any of the activities on the list so it nurtures your relationship at the same time you are doing the task.

Look for activities you both do each day. Coordinate your schedules so you can do them together. For

example you both have to eat and shower. Why not use these times to nurture your relationship?

Housework also provides you with an opportunity to spend time together. Doing housework together will only nurture your relationship if you have an attitude of *relationship efficiency* instead of *housework efficiency*. For instance, if your goal is to wash the dishes as quickly and efficiently as possible, you might do more damage to your relationship by washing them together.

Most importantly, set aside time to go on a weekly date. Choose a time of the week to be your regular date time. Do not let anything keep you from going on a date each week.

Increasing the ***quantity*** of time you spend together is important, but to receive the greatest benefit to your marriage you also need to increase the ***quality*** of the time as well. One way to do this is by choosing activities that allow you to interact with your spouse.

Action Plan

Finding time and energy in your busy life to nurture your marriage is not easy. However, by making it a top priority you will experience more of the joy and happiness that comes from a healthy marriage.

Make a list of five activities you will do to nurture your marital relationship.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Take some time each week to add new ideas to your list.



For more information on gaining the skills and knowledge to form and sustain a healthy marriage please visit:

The Atlanta Healthy Marriage Resource Center

atl.healthymarriage.org

To print copies of the other topics in this pamphlet series visit www.healthymarriage.org

© 2005 The National Healthy Marriage Institute

Marriage

Increase the Joy
Decrease the Misery



Time

A Key to Unlocking the Door to
a Healthy and Happy Marriage