

# 15 Ways to Enrich Your Marriage



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## Introduction

Does your marriage sometimes taste like burnt toast? Has your spouse come to look like part of the furniture? Do you feel as if your relationship is withered?

I'm not suggesting here that you are having major problems—that is beyond the intention of this pamphlet. Instead, you may be experiencing what most marriages sometimes experience: the excitement and interest has gone stale and although things are okay, you both have the “blahs” about your relationship.

Or perhaps you are newly married and you are determined to avoid this all-too-common fall into an uninteresting marriage.

Here are suggestions for keeping—or making—your marriage alive and fresh. They are relatively simple things you can do so that you will always be glad to see your spouse coming, even if it's only across the parking lot. These ideas come from a lifetime of working with

relationships, yes, but most of all from the delightful experience of my marriage that did not go stale because one or the other of us knew each of these principles. We learned them from each other. When my husband died, these customs left me with countless precious memories.

They are only roughly ordered here. I suggest that together you read through them and choose one or two that seem the most attractive, the most fun to practice. You may begin with a different one than your spouse—so much the better.

They work. You will discover your own sweet variations. Here's my promise: do all of these as a normal, daily approach to your relationship and it will zing like spring.

## 1. Welcome Each Other

A cherished memory from my marriage is a particular habit of my husband's. Every time he came into a room where I was, and whatever his purpose was, he first came to me and kissed me. It didn't matter how long he had been gone—maybe all day at the golf course, maybe an hour in the backyard. It didn't matter who else might be in the room. Many times I was with others when he came home, or he was meeting me in a group of friends. Whatever the occasion and regardless of what else was happening, he greeted me with a kiss before he turned to other people or his other intentions. And he didn't demand a response, so if I were busy, I just kissed him back and went on with what I was doing.

This worked miracles in my heart. It was so astounding and glorious to feel that I really did come first in his heart. Gradually, I learned to do the same for him. This is welcoming the beloved.

There are other ways, too, to welcome each other. It is beautiful when partners welcome each other every morning, with great love. A kiss before arising. A “how did you sleep, love?” A caress. Any expression that lets your spouse know that you acknowledge his/her presence with gladness. You welcome each day together, as you welcome each other once again into living.

The same is true for going to sleep at night. Before you let go for the night, say something sweet, something kind to your beloved. It needn't take a lot of energy or time. A word, a touch, a gentle thanks. Now you acknowledge the importance he/she holds for you and you send each other into dreams with affection.

In these ways, you tend carefully the opening and closing of your days. You keep fresh your ever-new delight in each other's presence.

## 2. Cultivate Courtesy

One of the saddest things that anyone can observe is how marital partners often speak to each other in tones they would never consider using with a stranger or a friend. When we let our hearts go dry with daily-ness, we lose awareness of the simple courtesy that places people at ease with each other. Please look at your own habits of speech with your partner. You may also become aware of how he/she speaks to you. But don't judge your partner's habits! Tend your own corner, because that's where your power is.

Now you can start to simply be gentle in speech, be courteous. To begin, say "please" and "thank you." Let go of shouting or harsh words. Speak kindly. You know how to be nice! You're nice to every new acquaintance. Be even a little nicer at home. If you think this is too obvious, consider how you feel when your spouse is discourteous to you.

Of course there are times when intensity reigns and impassioned speech is necessary to be true to yourself. So be impassioned then! But the rest of the time, when normality is dominant, cultivate courtesy. Be mannerly, especially when no one else is present.

Courtesy comes from a loving awareness. It's not about rules of etiquette. When I arrived home from the grocery store, John helped carry in the packages. When his arms were full of tools, I opened the garage door for him.

Acknowledge your spouse when something lovely has occurred. Compliment his/her appearance. Appreciate every kindness, every contribution to your shared welfare. When one of you makes a meal, be sure thanks are given. When one of you brings home a check, be sure to cheer. Offer kind words for every little goodness in your daily life.

Then be sure to acknowledge everything you do appreciate about your partner—the qualities you like, the fun you share, and the work