

Healing the Time Starved Marriage

“Perhaps if you, too, search your hearts and courageously assess the priorities in your life, you may discover, as I did, that you need a better balance among your priorities” (Elder M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign*, May 1987, 13).



“Couple Time as a
Healer”



Counseling Anyone?

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Quick Review



- ❧ Intervention #1: Couple Prayer
- ❧ Intervention #2: Do Something Fun Together
- ❧ Intervention #3: Connection Rituals
- ❧ Intervention #4: Make Your Marriage Intentional
- ❧ Homework: Report on a Connection Ritual, Communication Ritual, or Greeting Ritual



Love Must Be Nurtured



“The tender flower would wither and die without food and water. And so love, also, cannot be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestation of esteem and admiration, the expressions of gratitude, and the consideration of unselfishness.

“ . . . If one is forever seeking the interests, comforts, and happiness of the other, the love found in courtship and cemented in marriage will grow into mighty proportions. . . . Certainly the foods most vital for love are consideration, kindness, thoughtfulness, concern, expressions of affection, embraces of appreciation, admiration, pride, companionship, confidence, faith, partnership, equality, and dependence” (“Marriage and Divorce,” in *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [1977], 150).

Intervention #4: Intentional Marriage



“The only way to take back our marriages from their drift south is to keep paddling and have a joint navigational plan. Paddling means doing the everyday things to stay connected, to find time for each other, to go on dates, to make a big deal of anniversaries and special occasions, to work hard to reconnect after periods when we have been distracted from each other.

“The best way to predict your future is to create it” (Stephen R. Covey, *Quotes and Quips*, Covey Leadership Center, 1993, 52).

Intentional Marriage



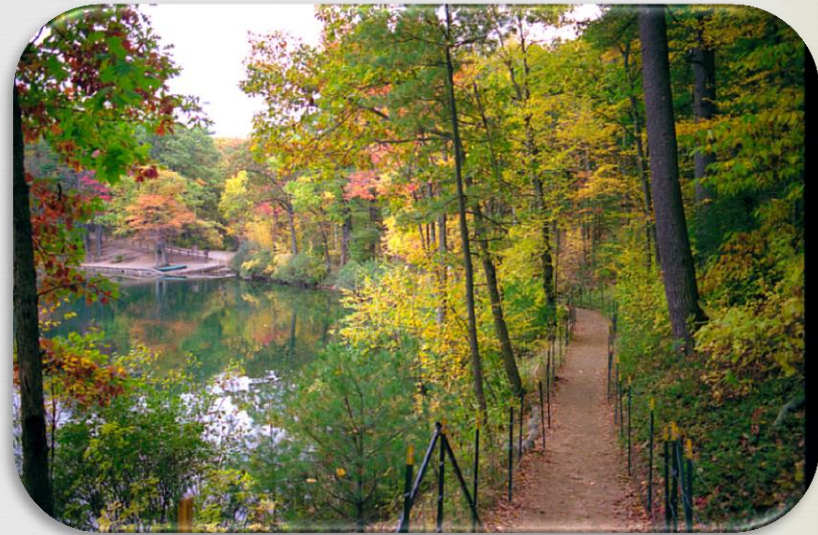
“Having a joint navigational plan means that you both are committed for keeps, with no exit strategy, **and that you both take responsibility to monitor how the marriage is doing, when it needs mid course corrections, and when it needs help in the form of marriage education or marital therapy.** Intentional marriage is about everyday attention and long range planning” (William J. Doherty, *Take Your Marriage Back*, [New York, Guilford Press, 2003], 18-19).



Set some goals together,
dream big dreams
together, make your plans,
write them down, and
review them often.

A Lesson from Walden Pond

“As the wife silently read each goal for the first time in many years, tears filled her eyes. She pondered over the many things that had happened in their lives since Walden Pond. As she went down the list, item by item, she realized that almost every goal on the list had come to fruition. It was interesting that her husband’s new job was the fulfillment of the final goal they had set at Walden Pond. It was now time to get a new envelope and start making a new list” (Margaret Nadauld, “Prepare Today for Tomorrow,” *Brigham Young University 1997-1998 Speeches* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998], 49-50).



Stale and Weak Marriages

“There are many people who do not find divorce attorneys and who do not end their marriages, but who have permitted their marriages to grow stale and weak and cheap. **There are spouses who ... are in the low state of mere joint occupancy of the home. ... These people will do well to reevaluate, to renew their courting, to express their affection, to acknowledge kindnesses, and to increase their consideration so their marriage can again become beautiful, sweet, and growing**” (President Spencer W. Kimball, *Marriage and Divorce* [1976], 22).

Keep the Garden Cultivated



“If marriage is a prime relationship in life, it deserves prime time! Yet less important appointments are often given priority, leaving only leftover moments for listening to precious partners.

“Keeping the garden of marriage well cultivated and free from weeds of neglect requires the time and commitment of love. It is not only a pleasant privilege; it is a scriptural requirement with promise of eternal glory” (Russell M. Nelson, *Ensign*, May 1991, 22-24).

Dating



- ❧ Dating is a form of recreation that renews emotional bonds and can heal the time starved marriage.
- ❧ Dating is what brings couples together initially, and steady dating can advance the relationship to engagement and marriage.
- ❧ Dating provides women with an opportunity to talk, and men with the chance to “do something.” **It is unfortunate that so many couples discontinue dating after they are married.**
- ❧ **This is a sure-fire way to kill the flame in any marriage. Some couples argue that they would like to date, but with several small children, babysitters are too expensive.**
- ❧ **To those couples, consider that babysitting is not an expense, but an investment. Besides, babysitters are much cheaper than divorces.**

The Role of the Husband



- ❧ **Husbands should initiate dating in the marriage relationship.**
- ❧ This isn't to say that wives cannot plan dates, but the husband is responsible to ensure that this part of the marriage remains strong and consistent.
- ❧ **Husbands and wives should hold a couples meeting each week to coordinate schedules, talk about finances, solve problems, plan gospel training in the home, and discuss their weekly date.**



A Most Common Mistake

- ❧ **Unfortunately, one of the most common mistakes that many couples make soon after their marriage is that they quit courting each other. Don't!**
- ❧ **Regular dating will keep a marriage relationship alive and growing. Such times together don't have to be expensive or extravagant.**
- ❧ **A walk around the block while sharing thoughts and feelings will do wonders for a marriage.**
- ❧ Go swing together at the park. Have a picnic in the back yard.
- ❧ Buy a "kiddie-cone" instead of a more expensive one.
- ❧ Split a milkshake.
- ❧ The point is, spouses can be together and renewing their relationship without having to save for it. This is an important aspect of keeping the marriage alive

Movie Night?



- ❧ Elder Richard J. Scott recently spoke to students on the BYU campus regarding their dating relationships.
- ❧ **He mentioned that attending movies on dates is “stupid” idea for couples who are trying to get to know each other. The same could be said about married couples who are trying to strengthen their marriage relationship.**
- ❧ **What good is it for couples to sit for two hours in a movie theatre where they cannot talk or even see each other?**
- ❧ One of the most significant purposes for a “date night” would be to open communication channels and restore emotional connection.

Dating Activities?



- ❧ Bowling
- ❧ Miniature Golf
- ❧ Hit balls at driving range
- ❧ Roasting Marshmallows
- ❧ Flying Kites
- ❧ Biking
- ❧ Baking Something
- ❧ Test Drive a Car
- ❧ People Watch
- ❧ Go for a Walk
- ❧ Ice Skating
- ❧ Tube down a river
- ❧ Concert
- ❧ Do something for someone
- ❧ Read a Book Together
- ❧ Alpine Slide
- ❧ Zip Line
- ❧ Horseback Riding
- ❧ Rent a Tandem Bike
- ❧ Make a craft
- ❧ Theme Park
- ❧ Zoo
- ❧ Croquet
- ❧ Ice Blocking
- ❧ Dutch Oven Cooking
- ❧ Board Game
- ❧ Build a model
- ❧ Make a Pizza

It Kind of Makes Sense



Family scholars Bradford Wilcox and Jeffrey Dew report that **“partners who put one another first, who steer clear of other romantic opportunities, and who cultivate a strong sense of ‘we-ness’ or togetherness are markedly happier than are less committed couples.”**



Friday Night Lights



Along this line, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland shared the following experience. While he was a Ph.D. student at Yale University, he and his wife, Pat, decided that Friday nights would be their date night, no matter what. This was not an easy task. Besides being a full-time graduate student, Elder Holland was running the Institute program and serving in the Stake Presidency. Meanwhile, Pat was being a mother to their two young children, and serving as Relief Society President. Whatever studying and writing and working and “stake presidencing” Elder Holland did, he did Saturday through Friday until 5:00 p.m. And whatever “relief societizing” and baby tending and laundering, and everything else a young mother does, Pat did from Saturday through Friday until 5:00 p.m. Listen to Elder Holland:

Friday Night Lights



“But on that one night for a few hours we would be together. We would step off the merry-go-round. **We would take a deep breath or two and remind ourselves of how much we loved each other, why we were doing all of this in the first place, and that surely there must be a light at the end of the tunnel somewhere.**

“I do not remember those dates ever amounting to much. I literally cannot remember ever going to dinner, but we must have. We certainly must have at least gotten a pizza occasionally. **I just don't remember it. What I do remember is walking in the Yale-New Haven Arboretum, which was just across the street from our student housing. I remember long walks there holding hands and dreaming dreams of what life might be like when things were less demanding. Down at the end of the street was a Dairy Queen where we would usually end up for a cone or, on really good nights, a root beer float.**

Friday Night Lights



“Modest as my big-time spending was, Pat has said a hundred times that those Friday nights got her through those years. **She said, ‘I looked forward to them and I counted on them. I knew that however many nights you were studying or working or away on Church assignments, I still had Friday night to count on. [And, of course, we always had Monday.] No, ‘the dates,’ she said, weren’t much as social extravaganzas go [that’s an understatement], but they were mine and I felt in control of both my own life and my husband’s for at least a few hours each week. It got me through some very demanding times.’**

Friday Night Lights

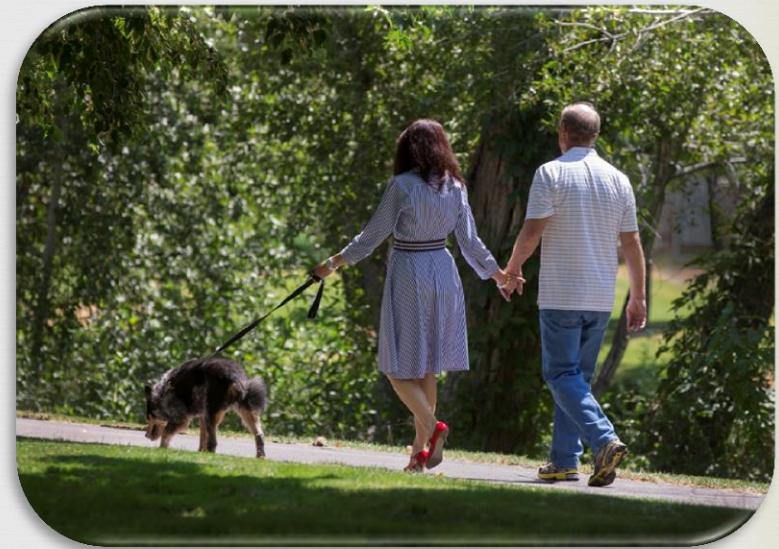


“A drugstore psychologist once said that people need three things to be emotionally healthy: someone to love, significant things to do, and something pleasant to look forward to. **Brethren, make sure your wife has something pleasant, something genuinely fun, to look forward to regularly**’ (Jeffrey R. Holland, “Our Consuming Mission,” *A Evening With a General Authority*, 5 February 1999 [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Salt Lake City, 1999], 2-3).



Intervention #5: Regular Dates

“Keep your courtship alive. Make time to do things together – just the two of you. **As important as it is to be with the children as a family, you need regular weekly time alone together. Scheduling it will let your children know that you feel that your marriage is so important that you need to nurture it. That takes commitment, planning, and scheduling**” (Joe J. Christensen, *Ensign*, May 1995, 65).

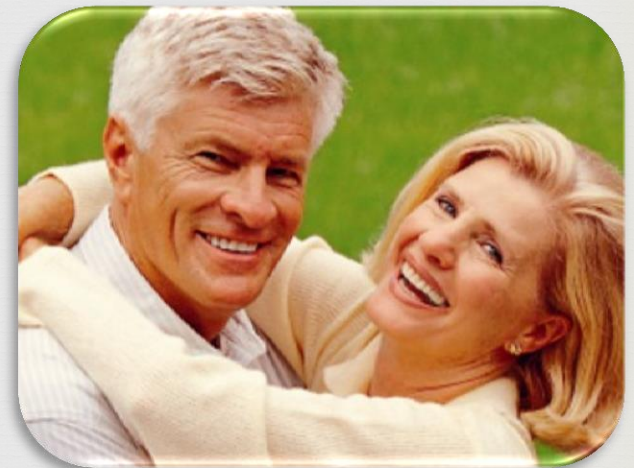


The Lord Loves Couples Who Love Each Other



“I think [the Lord] smiles when he sees young husbands and wives, and older ones, with deep affection for each other, who continue their courtship as our prophet has said, who continue to love each other with all their souls until the day they die and then accentuate it through eternity”

(Spencer W. Kimball, *I Know That My Redeemer Lives* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990], 186).



Intervention #6: The Magic 5 Hours

- ❧ Renown marriage scholar, John Gottman, discovered that couples who **devoted five extra hours a week to their marriage gleaned tremendous benefits – especially when compared to couples who did not spend extra time to strengthen their marriage.**
- ❧ During these “Magic Five Hours,” as Gottman labeled them, couples concentrated on four things: **1) before leaving for the day, learning one thing that will happen in your spouse’s life that day, 2) engage in a stress-reducing conversation at the close of the day, 3) do something daily to communicate genuine affection and appreciation to each other, 4) demonstrate physical affection during the day, and 5) have a weekly date together.**
- ❧ Although these activities require a minimum time investment, the dividends will make a significant difference in each spouse’s life” (J.M. Gottman, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, [New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999], 260-261).

The Secret to a Happy Marriage

“On March 25, 1988, my friend and I attended a session at the Jordan River Temple. This was how we started my last day of bachelorhood. The temple session started slightly late due to the arrival of President Ezra Taft Benson and his wife, Flora.

“I can still see the tender care of love he showered on his beloved as they were going through this session. I received an undeniable confirmation of true celestial marriage. As the session was ending, I thought, "I would like to ask what their secret is."

“As I entered the celestial room, I shook hands with Sister Benson and then President Benson. President Benson asked me if I was getting married in the near future.

“I answered, "Yes, sir, tomorrow."

“President Benson then told me: "Always treat your wife as if you were in the presence of the Lord. And remember if you ever feel like having an argument, stop and ask yourself if it is worth destroying your marriage over. My wife and I have never had an argument in all of our years."

“No marriage will last if you do not discuss your different points of view, but if you will follow President Benson's counsel, you will find your marriage will grow stronger every day.” - Bob Steinike, Salt Lake City, Utah, Church News, **Saturday, Feb. 11, 1995).**

