



# Are You Keeping Your Romantic Fires Burning?

*There's a lot you can do to keep the love lights on!*

## **Desire leads to fire**

It all starts with the want-to: people who strike a balance between a mature love and the urge to not lose their romance. On the one hand, sustained romance is not about acting like a pair of teenagers. We've all seen the lovely couple from the island nation of Get-A-Room. We don't want to be them. We want to snicker at them. But, we don't want to lose the desire that leads to keeping our romance alive either. That we want to keep. So, romance starts there. A sense of want-to that drives spontaneity, creativity and intentionality — among others. Keep reading.

## **You'll have to spend time together**

Two ships passing in the night...cliché? All too real for some of us though. In order to grow a mature love that is also romantic we'll have to find a way to spend time together. We can't e-mail or text in our love for each other. You say, "But we've got busy careers...we're involved in our community and schools...the kids take all our energy!" Hey, if the romance is slipping ask your spouse if they care? Ask them if the busy stuff has been worth the price. Don't let yourself get there, and come back toward each other if you still can. Make the hard decisions and protect your married love. This won't just happen; you'll have to make it happen. Spend time together. There's no substitute for presence. Think the old "quality versus quantity" thing holds water? Go ahead and take the gamble. Better yet, just ask your spouse.

## **Creativity says someone cares**

So let's talk about creativity. At a surprisingly early stage of adulthood, many of us find ourselves falling into patterns. They're comfortable, these patterns. *No need to try the new pizza parlor, we like the delivery service we always call. I don't like to go out for movies, we've got On Demand right here at home. No need to go and hear the concert in the park, our favorite group is playing the arena (again) next month. I don't want to go drive New England in the fall...what's wrong with the place we go to at the beach every year? Or, I've never been to a livestock auction,..why would that be fun to go watch?* Okay, that last one was a little weird. But sometimes you've got to go and try something different. Shake things up a little. Experience something new. Stimulate yourselves socially or intellectually. Romance that involves creativity communicates care and effort. Care and effort speak clearly of love.

## **Spontaneity just plain rocks your world!**

Everything doesn't have to be planned. Sometimes, you just need to do something impulsive. Even things that don't make sense can provide a memorable outing. Occasionally, spontaneity means you just get out and knock-around until something interesting presents itself. A form of creativity, spontaneous acts can lead to surprises that you'll tell about for years to come. Or then again, to secret laughs that you're scared even to tell the family about...like the time we cancelled our hotel room on vacation and eventually had to spend a night

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at the “Bay and Gulf” motel. A hazard of a firetrap, that one. So scared we couldn’t sleep. But boy have we laughed about the adventure. The next morning, we escaped early...into one of the most unbelievable sunrises we’ve ever beheld. Who knew?

### **Intentionality even in our creativity and spontaneity**

Yes, you can plan to have spontaneous or creative fun together. Sometimes, we do big things for anniversary. Some years, our celebration is more reserved. But often, one or the other of us volunteers to be “in charge of the planning.” Usually one of us works so that the other can be surprised. That means some homework or reservations at the least. Maybe reading a restaurant review. If not, then we could be calling the pizza delivery on our anniversary. Or, sitting at home wondering what’s going on down at the livestock auction. Okay, that was weird again. Some couples build in a “date night” for their week. They hire a babysitter or otherwise protect their time. That’s intentionality. Others set a goal of going out for fun at least two nights a month. Whatever works for you, plan to protect it. Be intentional about romance.

### **Taking care of yourself**

Granted, this one is a little politically incorrect. But, oh why not! On a recent overseas trip, my dad announced that he had figured out how to identify the Americans in a crowd. I couldn’t resist asking him just how he thought he could do this. “It’s easy. I’ve noticed that most times when I see an overweight person, I listen to them and sure enough they’re speaking English with an American accent.” I wanted to laugh, I wanted to debate. Instead, I found him to be annoyingly on target. Folks, just look around. A lot of us could stand a little toning up, maybe a bit of an adjustment in our weight. Are we supposed to love each other for something more substantive than our waistlines? Of course. But as one middle-aged couple said, “We deserve to find each other still visually attractive, too.” Romance...attraction...taking better care...you can connect the dots. Question is, are you committed to each other enough to do something about it?

### **Speaking multiple languages**

While we’re reflecting on overseas travel, have you heard the one about multiple languages? Q: What do you call someone who speaks three languages? A: Tri-lingual. Q: What do you call someone who speaks two languages? A: Bi-lingual. Q: What do you call someone who only speaks one language? A: American. The occasional “You know I love you” won’t cover it all. Your love cannot be communicated in only one language. Love is a glance. It’s a smile or a look. It’s a word or a touch. Sometimes your love is communicated in doing a household chore that your spouse knows you dislike—so they don’t have to do the chore themselves. Or letting her get the larger piece of pie. Love is spoken in a lot of ways. How many languages do you use?

### **Here’s a finisher for you! Non-sexual touch**

Sorry guys. But a lot of the sexual advances and touches might be more successful if we were smart enough to practice the art of non-sexual touch. And not for manipulative reasons either. Our spouses aren’t likely to fall for that. “But I’ve touched you non-sexually 14 times this week. Isn’t that enough to earn...?” No, we’re talking contact that is a genuine love-language. Touch that leads nowhere physically. Contact that says, “I’m here with you,” or “I love you.” A pat that says, “I’m happy right now because you’re mine.” A hug that says, “I would choose you all over again.” Touch for the sake of love, and nothing else at the moment. Connection and availability through the holding of a hand on a tour bus, or a squeeze while walking out of a restaurant. That’s powerful stuff!

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