



Creating a Star-Studded Love Life

There are many facets to marriage
By David and Claudia Arp

"And they shall become one flesh." Genesis 2:24

Think back to the beginning of your relationship. Do you remember those magical moments when you first began to discover your love for each other? The tingle the first time you held hands? Your first kiss? The intense desire to be with each other?

We do. Dave was in college at Georgia Tech and Claudia was at the University of Georgia. Our major dilemma was how to get together on the weekends. Romance was alive and well. For us, all we needed was to just be together. We looked forward to marriage and to a lifetime of celebrating our love. Can you identify with us? We want to help you keep romance alive over the years, but it won't happen automatically.

Newlyweds Ally and Ron are concerned. They have married friends who have turned into boring couch potatoes and never seem to be affectionate when they are around them. Ally and Ron fear that marriage will be the death of romance as they know it. Their fears are not ungrounded.

When we got married, things changed. The intense desire for romance and to be together before marriage was replaced by a more complicated set of needs and desires. We discovered that a healthy love life is like a diamond with many facets. Consider the following facets of a star-studded love life.

Trust—feeling safe with each other

Trust is a basic component of any friendship and is essential in a romantic relationship. You must trust that you are safe with your partner and that your partner will not harm you or betray you and that you can share your most prized possession—yourself—with your partner.

Easily taken for granted when present, and devastating when absent, the bond of trust is fundamental to intimacy. Realistically, from time to time you will probably let each other down. When trust is broken, rebuild it quickly. Let us encourage you to seek constantly to build and affirm the trust that exists between you. When you say you're going to do it—like calling when you're going to be late—actually do it.

Mutuality—Freely choosing to love each other

Mutuality involves choosing each other above all others and making your relationship a priority—being willing to grow together and to adapt to each other's changing needs over the years. Think about how good it feels when your partner makes you feel loved and desired through a twinkle in the eye, a gentle caress of the hand, or a loving comment. This quiet understanding naturally breeds security, confidence, and romance.

Honesty—Openly communicating your true feelings

Honesty is as necessary to a vibrant love life as sunlight is to flowers and

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trees. If you can't express your needs and desires truthfully and without manipulation to each other, your love life will falter along the way. While applying frankness to conversational topics like intimacy and sex takes vulnerability, commitment and practice, the rewards of being open and honest are well worth it. King Solomon in Proverbs 24:26 summed it up well: "An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips."

Intimacy—Being soul mates and feeling close

Based on trust, freely entered into by both partners, and fueled by honesty, intimacy is the intangible quality of unity, understanding, and synergy that can move a relationship to the deeper level as soul mates and lovers. When intimacy is low in a relationship, partners are not motivated to communicate on anything more than a superficial level, physical contact is perfunctory if not completely missing, and marital satisfaction and joy are lacking. Developing intimacy in your relationship will help to encourage the sharing of dreams, needs, fears, and desires.

Affection—giving joy and comfort to each other

Being affectionate with each other should be the most natural thing in the world but unfortunately, it isn't. Many times the tedium of everyday life creeps in and fills the space that should be saved for laughter, fun and pleasure. Affection takes many forms—a much needed one-minute back rub, spontaneous cuddles, hugs, and kisses all are great ways to express your affection.

Sex—Joining together physically and loving each other

The culmination of a great love life is sex. In the beginning God created sexuality and declared that "two shall become one." It is his plan that you experience a star-studded love life throughout the seasons of your marriage. Intended for more than procreation, an intimate, pleasurable sexual experience is the most intense and intimate experience a couple can share. Let us encourage you to plan time in your schedule for lovemaking, read a book together on having a creative love life, be adventuresome, and be a learner. Concentrate on trying to please your partner.

Understanding the facets of love—trust, mutuality, honesty, intimacy, affection and sex—will help you create your own diamond-studded love life. Remember to polish each facet of your love life and you can experience true intimacy, love and romance, now and forever.