



EPISODE 66: HOW TO KEEP THE SPARK ALIVE IN YOUR MARRIAGE

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/66](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/66)

Hey, everyone. Welcome back. This is Maggie Reyes, you're listening to the Marriage Life Coach Podcast. I am so happy you're here. I'm so happy I'm here. If this is the first episode you've ever listened to, you have to go back and start listening from Episode One: How to Have a Better Marriage. Everything is gonna make so much more sense if you start listening from the beginning.

And if you've been around for a while, thank you for being with us. Thank you for being with me and part of my community. Today, we're gonna talk about keeping the spark alive in your marriage, and especially when you think about a long term relationship. So if you're in that situation where that flame feels a little bit burnt out, and you don't know how to harness that spark, this episode is for you.

Today, we're going to keep it super short and focused. I will have lots of news to share in upcoming episodes and on email. If you aren't already getting my emails, definitely head on over to my website. (it's maggiereyes.com) to sign up for my emails so that you never miss any of the fun stuff that's going on behind the scenes.

Okay. Today's episode was inspired by a question that I got. And if you want me to answer your question in a future episode, after you sign up for my emails, just hit reply on any email that I send you and include your question. Be as specific and as clear as possible and I might answer it in an upcoming episode. And if you do send me a question, let me know if I can use your name, the city that you're from. I would love to do that.

Okay. Here's the question that inspired today's episode. Someone asked me, "For women who have been married over 15 years, do you just become settled? Does the fiery passion just end? Is





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there more to it than just feeling content?”

And this person said, “You know, I’ve been married for 15 years and I just wonder if this is just how it becomes? Is this how it’s supposed to be? And I wonder if my head is trying to live out a fairy tale. I know, it may sound stupid, but I think you should still be able to get excited over your spouse.” I agree, I think you should still be able to get excited over your spouse no matter how long you’ve been together.

So she ended the question saying, “Is this the normal marriage?” And just from a personal side, I’ve been married now since 2007, so for a while, and I am one of those goofy people who is really in love with my hubby. As you all know, you’ve heard him on the podcast here, we have fun and you flirt with each other. And my friends always laugh and have a good time with us. You know, that kind of thing.

So from my personal experience, I just want to say it’s absolutely possible to feel excited and happy, and looking forward to seeing your partner every day. Like this is a thing that people can do on Earth, okay, whether you spent a lot of time together or whether you missed each other during the day, you can have that thought, “Oh my gosh, I can’t wait to hang out with you.” So on the personal side, it’s totally possible.

Now let’s talk a little bit on the science side, you know that I love to quote things and share things that are based on research and evidence and not just my personal experience. Although I think a mix for all of us of: what does the data say? What does the research say? And then what does my gut say? What does my intuition say? I think that mix of getting external information and data that we can analyze, and then taking that into our own discernment.





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And running that through our own intuition and reading that through our guts, if you want to call it that. Or our intuition, if you want to call it that I talk a lot with my clients about their highest wisest self. I always ask, "What does your highest, wisest self say about this?" So as you're listening to today's episode, take everything in, do your own discernment and ask your highest wisest self: what do I think about these ideas that I'm sharing today?

Okay, so the original question was, "Is this normal?" And I have to say, I do think it is normal. I think it's very average. I think that a lot of people have average relationships because they're not really focusing on living exceptional lives and having exceptional relationships. I think exceptional really is an exception, not the norm.

Now, you are here listening to podcasts and making your marriage stronger. So you're already on track to have a top 1% marriage -- to have a Five Star Marriage as I like to describe it -- because you are focused on making it better and enjoying it more and cultivating connection in your relationship. And most people are just not focused on that, right? They get average results because they put in average effort or no effort at all in so many cases, right?

So they're not reading articles, listening to podcasts, or just prioritizing what is healthy in the relationship. So a lot of people, if they don't put effort and focus and intention into their marriage, into their relationship -- if they don't invest in it -- invest their energy, their time, their focus, they're going to have average results, it's just life. That's what happens in life.

Now, if you want to have a healthy, thriving relationship -- as you know, you need to invest in it now. Not just money, or money for gifts or date nights and things like that, but your time, your





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attention, your focus, right? Your prioritization. All of those things are investments. And you're here, investing in educating yourself, learning new things, trying things, experimenting. And you invest in your own vulnerability, being scared, trying something new, feeling a little wobbly about it, trying it anyway, right? Bringing that to your relationship.

So it's so important to just notice, right? When we focus on something, and when we commit to creating a result, it's so exponentially much more likely that we're actually going to create that result. So to the original question, "Is it normal?" I do think it is. I think that's why, here, I focus on creating Five Star Marriages. I want abnormal results. I want all of you to have abnormal relationships.

I want to create a community of relationships that excel, that feel amazing. Where it feels like you just walked into your favorite five star resort when you walk in through the door at home, and you're just getting home and it feels like your sanctuary. It feels like your favorite place to be is with your honey. Right? That's what we're all about.

So how do you do that? How do you keep the passion going? How do you keep the spark alive? Today, we're gonna focus on some really, really simple, simple things. This is a question or a topic that I could talk about endlessly. And I do in different ways on the podcast. So I just want to say these are, I think there are three or four different things we're going to cover today. These are some simple things really easy to get you started.

Okay. So as I mentioned, I love to quote research and have some evidence based facts to share with you. And many of the things that I'm going to share with you in today's episode, I read in Psychology Today, which is one of my favorite magazines. So whether it's 1 year, 15 years, 30





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years, it doesn't matter how long you've been married, the themes are the same.

Okay, number one, and I wish I had the link to this article. I'd written up all these notes and now I don't know where the article is. Sorry about that. Usually, I always link to it in the show notes. I won't have it this time. Okay, so here are three top factors, according to Psychology Today, in feeling romantic love. And I talk about these things in different ways on the podcast and my Coaching programs all the time. So some of these are gonna sound familiar from different angles.

So the first one is thinking positively about your partner. How you're thinking about your partner has a direct impact on how you feel. Remember, one of my favorite quotes from one of my mentors for Brooke Castillo, "Your thoughts about your marriage are your marriage." And we can take that and extrapolate that and say your thoughts about your partner are your relationship with your partner. Its foundation is your thoughts that you have about your honey.

So how you think about yourself and your relationship and your honey is an actual thing that impacts how you experience the whole relationship. In the Relationship Mastery episodes, I talked about how your thoughts create your feelings, which generate your actions. And that's how you create the results in your marriage and in your life.

And the tool that I love using to explore that is called the Self Coaching model. I use it in all my programs when I'm Coaching my clients and my students in the Marriage MBA, and I give an overview to that tool in the Relationship Mastery episodes. We will link to those are two of those in the show notes so you can get the overview there.





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But the main idea for today is just that your thoughts are so important. Your thoughts about your partner contribute to keeping that spark alive. And if we want to re-harness a spark, sometimes we get that -- I call it the "Eat, Pray, Love fantasy." We think we need to go to Bali or do something really huge and amazing. It's actually so simple. It starts in our brain. It starts with our thoughts. What am I thinking about being married? What am I thinking about my partner today right now?

Okay. Number two is thinking about your partner when you're not with your partner. So thinking positive thoughts like, "Oh, my hubby went to work today, and I'm so glad I get to see him later. He's so awesome. I love him. I can't wait to see him tonight," right?

So in my house, I have a picture of our engagement picture. I don't know if you took one of those. but when we got married, we had this really pretty picture that we took at the beach. And we had it on display at our reception, when we got our wedding ceremony, and then party, and all of those things. And it's in our house.

And whenever I pass by that picture, I think thoughts about how much I love my husband. And it's kind of automatic. I see the picture and I will think something, whether he's in the house at that moment or not. I'll just think things like, "I'm so happy that I'm married to him. He's such a good person, I love him so much." Super simple, it takes less than 30 seconds. And it cultivates that feeling of connection in my brain, which is where that connection is born.

Many times when my clients come to me and they want to re-spark the spark, they want to create that passion and they want to create those feelings of warm affection towards their partner, I will give them for homework -- so I'm gonna give it to all of you today -- is to find one





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of your favorite pictures with your partner, you can either be together or it can just be a picture of your partner by themselves.

Put it somewhere where you'll see it on a regular basis. And connect with your partner, whether they're in the room or not. Just look at the picture and think anything that feels inspiring and nourishing and loving to you. Okay, that's your homework for today's episode. There's a couple of other homeworks in here that I put into today's episode.

Okay, so the third factor in feeling romantic love, again, according to Psychology Today, is no matter how long you've been married, cultivating physical affection -- not just sexual affection or sexual touch -- but hugging, kissing, holding hands. Everything that includes sex, but isn't only sex. Now, expressing physical affection is so important. Among other things, it creates that feeling of closeness that helps you cultivate that feeling of closeness and it releases really good chemicals in your body.

And one of the things I read years ago -- and I don't remember where I read this one -- was that when you hold your partner's hand, it has the same effect as an analgesic in your body. It's like taking a Tylenol. So holding hands, calms things like your blood pressure, it calms your nervous system. Physical touch really helps signal to your body that you are safe, that you can relax. And so it's so important to cultivate that.

And especially if there's been a rift or if there's a little bit of "roommate situation" going on, it can kind of feel awkward to start reconnecting into really start touching each other, even the most simple touch. So the smallest, simplest way that you can reconnect physically. I always think the smallest way is the best way to start. I highly, highly encourage you to find the





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opportunity to do that.

Okay, and thinking positively about your partner as we were talking about. How do you do that? I know, you're gonna ask me this. If we were here together and you were sitting in front of me, you'd say, "Okay Maggie, I can think positive about my partner, but how do I do that when they did something that hurt me," right?

It's super important to realize that it's really our reaction -- our thoughts about whatever our partners are doing -- that determine how we feel. Not the actual thing they're doing. They do a thing, and then we have a thought about it. And that is where all of our power lies. Knowing, seeing, that we can look at how we're thinking about the situation and then we can ask ourselves questions.

Do I need to forgive something? Do I need to set a boundary? What do I actually need to think and feel and do, to cultivate loving thoughts for my partner? If you just walk away today asking yourself that question, and then living into the answer, your relationship will be stronger. And so many of the things that I talked about on the podcast are designed to help you cultivate that positive regard for yourself and for your honey.

Now, as we know, there's a combination of things that can either make your relationship weaker or stronger. So some of the things I just mentioned: we practice forgiveness, we set boundaries, we practice acceptance, we think positively about our partners -- all of those things make our connection stronger.

And my favorite researcher, John Gottman from the Gottman Institute, coined a term called the





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Emotional Bank Account. And if you've listened to this podcast for a while, you'll hear me use this term quite a bit, it's one of my favorite terms. It's so easy to imagine, just like a monetary bank account that you would have in a regular bank -- where we need to make deposits before we make withdrawals.

So before it's empty, we have to put something in there so we can take something out. So not feeling that romantic connection. When things feel kind of "bleh." That's kind of a sign in your life. You're getting a notice from the bank, "Deposit needed. Make a deposit. You're about to be overdrawn."

So it's still important to just notice that and then notice, how can you make deposits in your Emotional Bank Account? What does a deposit look like today, and for each of you, it's gonna look different. But here are some ideas and things for you to think about. Can you do something nice for your partner? Can you be thoughtful in your interactions with them? How can you show support? Or how can you show loving care?

Some things are mental exercises that are just as powerful as material exercises. So you can actually do something kind for that person. Or you can think about, like we've been talking earlier in the episode, you can think about their virtues or qualities, the things that you love about them. And you're making a mental deposit in your Emotional Bank Account.

So you can write down a characteristic that makes you proud of a quality that they have that you enjoy. You can think about it, you can tell them, which is always a good idea, right? "This is my favorite thing about you. I love this about you," right? My husband is in a leadership role in his office, you've probably heard the episode we did called Marriage MBA, which then inspired





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the name of my program. We will link to that episode in the show notes.

He has some fun things to share around using some business principles and how we apply them in life situations, not just at work. But he's in a leadership role in his office. And he often shares stories and things about his team and things that he does at work. And I tell him, "You know, you're such a person of integrity. I really love that about you."

I really admire that about him. Because sometimes he has to make difficult choices. And he's always looking for what's best for the whole team. And every time I tell him that he gets so happy, he's so proud. That is what an emotional deposit in your Emotional Bank Account looks like. And by the way, the hubby listens to the podcast very often when he is cooking dinner. So I'm going to go ahead and do a shout out and say thank you my love for whatever you're making right now. And I really am so proud of you. I love your integrity so much.

Okay, I always joke with my Coaching clients and my students in the Marriage MBA that a Marriage Coach gotta marriage. So there you go, I just complimented my hubby in the middle of a podcast episode. I am giving myself all the gold stars today.

Okay, and I invite you to think right now what is one thing you love about your partner? One thing that always makes you smile that you're so proud of? And when was the last time you told them? Have you told them recently? What is the next moment when you could tell them whether it's sending a text, whether it's talking to them in person, really think about it and I really challenge you to do it.

I love doing this podcast in such a way that you can listen to it now and apply it immediately.





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And this is one of those things that is so simple, but so powerful and so profound. Okay, so I think that was like the second homework assignment for today. We're a little crazy with the homework today, but it's all simple stuff.

Okay, we're gonna do a fun exercise. Think about one benefit that you get from being with your partner. And one benefit that your partner gets from being with you. Did you think about it? One benefit that you get from being with your partner, one benefit your partner gets from being with you. Okay, once you have it, that's another thing you can share with your partner, another deposit that you can put in your Emotional Bank Account.

Okay. Now, one more thing I want to add about keeping the spark alive and about cultivating, really creating connection, is the importance of doing new things together. This is something that comes up with a lot of my Coaching clients. And we're often brainstorming around how to approach this. Doing new things together helps release dopamine, which is the chemical associated with novelty in your body.

When you first start dating, that novelty is natural, because you're going to new places, you're doing new things, you're planning your dates ahead of time, and you're planning where you're gonna go, what you're going to do, what you're going to explore, right? All kinds of new things are happening, that feel exciting and fresh, because they are exciting and fresh.

Now, what happens when you get together, after you've been together 5 years, 10 years, 11 years, 20 years -- however long you've been together -- you settle into a routine. And very often, not always, but very often, especially if that spark doesn't feel very flamey. Very often, it's because you've stopped doing new things. And you think, "Oh, I have to do something really complicated





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to feel better and more connected.”

Actually, you have to do something very simple. Make deposits in your Emotional Bank Account, look at the thoughts that you’re thinking about yourself and your partner, and do new things together. It doesn’t mean, necessarily, that you’re falling out of love if you’re not feeling that spark, that ember flaming. It can be that you’ve just gotten into a routine.

So when I tell my Coaching clients to do something new, I remind them -- so I’m gonna remind you all today, too -- that you don’t have to do anything big or fancy, all you have to do is something new. So as you look at your week coming up, what can you do that is different? Even if it’s going to the grocery store, even if it’s going across the street.

During the lockdown of the pandemic, one of the things that my hubby does is once a week, he will turn on our cars to make sure (because we’re not going places or, you know, as often or as much as we did before). So he has this routine where he turns on the cars. And we have literally gotten in the car together, and gone around the block and come back home, and cracked up the whole time. But it was new. It’s something that we never did before. And then when we did it, we just were so entertained by each other, by the situation.

So the novelty does not have to mean complexity. It does not have to mean anything wild and crazy, just something new. Now, when I talk about having a Five Star Marriage, versus a normal marriage, or an average marriage, I want to be very, very clear. What I’m inviting you to do is to set the intention to not be okay with normal, to commit to being excellent, to commit to being whatever your version of a Five Star Marriage would be like.





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And the first step in a Five Star Marriage is to decide the quality of the life and the marriage you want to have. To ask yourself questions like: what is the vision that you have for your relationship? Once you have that vision, then you invest your time, your focus, your attention, and your money, not just in squeaking by and having it be average, but in really being exceptional and being Five Star. And that is the way you approach the relationship. And that's the way that you cultivate connection on a very regular basis.

So there you go, think lovingly about your partner, think about your honey when they are not in the room, cultivate physical touch, and do new things together. These things will keep that spark going, no matter how long you've been married. Now, of course, as I mentioned earlier in the episode, these are some very simple, doable things that you can do.

I record a podcast every week. There's all kinds of other things that you can do, right? And so pick one thing that calls to you, that feels nourishing. Remember we said about putting everything I said today and always, through your own discernment and choosing which one will help you the most. Okay, very important.

And if you feel stuck, and you want my help, go to maggiereyes.com/group to get all the details about how to join me in the next round of the Marriage MBA. It's my signature six month program, where we just help you with all the things.

Thank you for listening today. I really believe that healthy marriages lead to healthy communities, that leads us to a healthy, thriving planet. And I am really, really passionate that what we do at home has such a massive ripple effect that most of us will never fully know the impact of what we do when we heal our relationships at home. So there's nothing more





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important you could be doing than that. I'm so glad you're here. Thank you for being part of my community, for listening today, and remember, one woman can change the world and one woman can change a marriage.

