

LOVE NOTES: *Restoring the harmony in your relationship when you're both working and trying to parent young children.*

Do you find yourself thinking, “What happened to the fun we used to have as a couple?” or “It sure feels like we’re playing an individual sport rather than making a team effort here.” If you are parents of young children, you are not alone in feeling this way. What you’re short on is “time for me” and “time for us.” By the end of a busy work day, followed by busy family time, there’s little left for individual pursuits, let alone time for fun together. This stage in married life is one of the most critical times for couples.

First, let’s look at the time spent on individual pursuits. This can be a hot topic between couples and one that causes frequent arguments. (You know, the ones that sound like this: Must be nice to get to spend so much time doing your own thing.) Two attitudes will help you in this area:

- Keep in mind that this period in your life will not last forever. Kids grow up and the physical demands on you will lessen.
- Be realistic. Long periods away from the family are hard on your spouse. This doesn’t mean you have to give everything up. But you may have to consider pursuing your own interests less often or for shorter increments of time. Also, be generous in offering your spouse equal opportunity to follow his or her passions.

Second, here are two actions you can take to keep your love alive while juggling your busy schedule. They don’t take a lot of time, just a conscious effort.

- Be observant of your spouse’s contributions and express appreciation for one another. Both of you are making tremendous sacrifices. Kindness and consideration toward one another will reap huge benefits for your relationship. Call if you’ll be late, consider what impact your plans might have on your spouse or family, go out of your way to make life easier for your spouse.
- Set aside couple time. Don’t limit this to “date night.” Couple time can also be sitting down on the couch together, going to bed at the same time, doing a task together. Get off the computer and turn off the TV - they take too much of your valuable time.

Marriage can be fun. Remember to be creative with your time and to be thoughtful of one another.