

Making Every Night a Date Night!

My husband and I don't do date nights very often. Now before you gasp and say, "But she's supposed to be a marriage counselor!" let me explain what I mean.

When our children were really little, money was in short supply. We couldn't afford to get a baby-sitter and then go out for dinner, so we didn't try. We had to find other ways to connect.

As they grew older, our schedules grew busier with their activities, and my husband's work. To add one night a week where we wouldn't be home seemed burdensome, since my husband was at meetings several nights a week, and he didn't want to take another night away from the kids.

So what we've done, during our whole marriage, is to make every night into a date night! Here's how:

1. Talk Together Every day—and Not Just About Groceries or The Kids!

A couple cannot survive on karate and milk. The average couple talks only 5 minutes a day about non-logistical things. Most of their conversations, instead, have to do with who's going to drive Bobby to karate? Have you bought anything for your mom for her birthday yet? And by the way, we need milk for tomorrow morning.

We need to actually share what's on our hearts. That doesn't mean that it always has to be deep conversations. I like to talk about something God's been showing me today, or how much fun I had just talking to our girls, or dreams I

have for the youth group we volunteer in. We share our



interests. We let each other in on our lives. We keep each other up to date on what we're doing, what we're thinking about, what we're hoping for.

You don't need to go out to dinner to talk like this. In fact, if you think of "date nights" as the time when you do this, it's less likely you'll share on a daily basis.

2. Do Something Together

If you're not sharing just when you go out for dinner, when do you share? I learned early on in my marriage that while women like to communicate face-to-face (we enjoy sitting and chatting over coffee), men like to communicate side-by-side—when they're doing something!

If I want to talk to my husband every day, then, I have to make sure that we do something together.

When the children were small, we began taking walks together after dinner every night. Strollers helped keep the kids amused so that we could have some adult time, even if we were sharing the sidewalk with a crowd.

As they grew, we continued that tradition, taking walks to a park when the girls could run around while we talked, or even bundling up in winter and heading outdoors.

We've also taken up hobbies that help us spend time together. We go bird watching. We go hiking. We play squash together. The more that we get out and do something—even if we're bringing the kids along—the more we talk.

3. Have Technology Free Times

The biggest impediment to sharing your heart is a screen. Most of us spend, on average, 5 hours on a screen each day—and that doesn't include work. We're on our computers. We're watching movies. We're playing video games. Yet when we do these things we don't talk.

We've cut out computers over the dinner hours, from 6-8, so that we can connect as a family and do that family walk. Try it! When the screens are off, you won't gravitate to them. You'll gravitate to each other.

4. Go to Bed at the Same Time

Want every night to feel like a date night? Try just turning in together. So many couples go to bed at different times, and when you do that, you lose the natural opportunity to pray together, talk together, and make love.

Certainly jobs sometimes rob us of the chance to hit the pillow at the same time, but for most couples, it's not work schedules that wreak havoc with bedtimes. It's computers.

All of us need roughly 8 hours of sleep. If you need to be up at 6:30, that means you need to be going to sleep at 10:30. If you want any snuggle time, that means you should be heading to bed at 10.

That may sound awfully early for all of you nighthawks, and it was difficult for me, too. When my husband took a new job that had him getting up at 6, that means that we had to go to bed before 10, even though I am not a morning person. But I wanted us to get a good night's

sleep—together. It took about a month for me to comfortably feel tired at 9:30, but I've found that now that we've made the switch, I get a ton done between 7 and 9 a.m.! And best of all, we get to talk together every night in bed.

It's wonderful to plan special times to connect, and special date nights. But a date night cannot make up for not connecting on a daily basis. So find time to talk together, throughout the day, without a screen vying for your attention. You'll find then that every night can be a date night!

Creative Date Ideas

1. Write a song together.
2. Skip rocks—have a contest.
3. Write a short letter to a friend.
4. Read the newspaper, *Time* magazine or another informational magazine.
5. Write a letter to God.
6. Call someone to whom you haven't talked in a while and visit with them.
7. Take a walk with your dog.
8. Go to the golf driving range.
9. Watch a Little League baseball, soccer or football game.
10. Write goals.
11. Read a good book together.
12. Write a journal.
13. Celebrate anything.
14. Make up a fun diet.
15. Wear a funny hat.
16. Kidnap a friend for breakfast.
17. Take pictures.
18. Go to the park and draw (birds, sunset, etc.).
19. Visit the library and ask the librarian a bizarre question.
20. Develop a new laugh together.
21. Visit the zoo.
22. Visit a mission.
23. Visit an art museum.
24. Ride bikes.



25. Learn a hobby together.
26. Wash a car.
27. Wash your dog.
28. Roller blade.
29. Climb a mountain.
30. Climb a tree.
31. Eat creatively one whole day for \$1.18.
32. Picnic anywhere--be creative.
33. Survey the neighborhood with a self-made, bizarre questionnaire.
34. Shop for cars.
35. Go to the airport and watch people.
36. Run your own neighborhood day camp for one day.
37. Go square dancing.
38. Ride a bicycle built for two.
39. Visit a beach or lake.
40. Ice skate.
41. Shop.
42. Play backgammon.
43. Canoe.
44. Go horseback riding.
45. Play pinball or miniature golf.
46. Water ski.
47. Bowl.
48. Try writing a poem or short story.
49. Play ping-pong.
50. Play board games or card games.
51. Plant a garden together.
52. Take a walk.
53. Fly kites.
54. Try hiking.
55. Visit a batting cage.
56. Play tennis.
57. Learn racquetball.
58. Sail.
59. Fish.
60. Ride a ferry.
61. Attend a Bible study.
62. Go for a drive.
63. Snow ski.
64. Jog.
65. Get involved in handicrafts.
66. Take a fun class together.
67. Go on a scavenger hunt.
68. Do homework together.
69. Collect something.
70. Play croquet.
71. Go river rafting or tubing.
72. Play badminton.
73. Build a tree house.
74. Ride motorcycles.
75. Take an exercise class together.
76. Go out to dinner, casual or fancy.
77. Share a pizza and talk.
78. Have a barbecue.
79. Cook dinner for your parents.
80. Take an ice cream break and talk.
81. Cook dinner together.
82. Bake cookies.
83. Make homemade ice cream.
84. Attend a play.
85. Go to the movies.
86. Support school functions.
87. Party with friends.
88. Go to a sports event.
89. Visit a swap meet, an auction, or garage sale.
90. Watch TV at someone's house.
91. Go to a concert.
92. Watch hang gliders.
93. Go to a public lecture.
94. Hear a public speaker.
95. Feed the ducks.
96. Go to the circus.
97. Go to the park and swing.
98. Go out in the snow and build snow people.
99. Visit an observatory.
100. Go to the county fair.
101. Find a way to volunteer together.



