

FROM THE CREATORS OF FACING THE GIANTS

FIREPROOF



TIPS TO WARM UP YOUR MARRIAGE

by Marie Amenia

"Honey, it's cold outside!" Yep, we're in the icebox of winter, and this frigid time of year can drain the heat out of your heart as well as your home. Don't hibernate your relationship and wait for warmer days. Warm up your marriage during the winter freeze with simple changes.

Everyday Matters

In his book *Today Matters*, John Maxwell says, "You will never change your life until you change something you do daily."

Today Matters: 12 Daily Practices to Guarantee Tomorrow's Success

He's right. Keeping the flame alive means paying daily attention to the little things — like when you were first in love. Newlywed Carolyn Walsh, of Birmingham, Ala., reminds us of those first-love days.

"In the cold, winter months, sharing everything for the evening gets my vote," she says. "My husband and I snuggle under a blanket on the sofa and share a snack while we watch a movie. For us, giggles often lead to kisses which lead to ..."

If you want to re-capture the newlywed aura, snuggle up with your spouse and enjoy some Hot Mama Cocoa Coffee. (Blend 1/3 cup coffee, 1/3 cup cocoa, and 1/4 teaspoon chili powder. Top with cinnamon, whipped cream, and chocolate shavings.) While you're sharing this beverage, haul out your wedding pictures and saunter down memory lane together. Those fond memories may help you recall little, everyday things you two did for each other when you first married. Re-introduce those loving, everyday warm-ups into your relationship.

Help for Longer-Weds

In all fairness to longer-weds, sometimes it isn't a frozen heart that's the problem but a frozen brain. The hectic pace of life can give you brain-freeze. Your heart is warm, but your overwhelmed brain is frozen stuck. Thaw it!

- Say something funny. Susan Duffield, a longer-wed of 31 years, says, "The health of a marriage is determined by a daily dose of humor. In social settings, I've been known to whisper any number of healthy, married-love words into my husband's ear. I've just had to be careful that he doesn't have a mouth full of food or drink!"

If you're not naturally funny, find a wholesome Web site that lists a joke of the day, and repeat the joke over dinner. (Maybe you can both laugh at what a poor joke-teller you are.)

- Tell your spouse something he doesn't know about you. Does he know that when you were 8 years old you wanted to be a racecar driver? Or that you were on the championship volleyball team in high school? Love can grow cold when your story isn't told. Ask your husband to tell you something you don't know about him, too.



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- Give your spouse a fresh compliment. Find a new way to tell your husband, "I think you're great!" Do you just love his muscular legs? Tell him! Does he enter new phone numbers on your cell phone for you because it boggles your mind to even think about it? Give him a big, appreciative kiss!
- Let your inner child come out and play. It's not against the law for grown-ups to make snow angels or to use finger paints. Do it! You'll laugh and feel younger at the same time. Don't stop there, however. Fix your hair in a ridiculous style, act like you like the way it looks, and giggle as you see how he handles it. Send balloons to his office. Or send him on a scavenger hunt in your house using clues that tap his memory of special times you've had. His prize? A gift that will warm his heart — or perhaps some unexpected romance.
- Look at winter from a fresh perspective. Make a bonfire in the snow — clear an area for logs, light the fire, and make s'mores together; have a picnic in the living room; build a snowman in the middle of the night. Use your imagination to take your relationship to new places.

This month, find everyday ways to re-ignite romance. Before you know it, winter will pass, and once again you will find yourself basking in the springtime of your love.

Marie Armenia writes and teaches. She has been a pastor's wife for 36 years and has one son, a daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren.

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