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Relationships – Keeping or re finding the spark!

I expect you are reading this because you are in a long-term relationship and you are unsure where it is going and if there is anything still there. I wonder if you have you passively put up with this situation or have you discussed it in detail with your husband/wife? I have observed that in the main when things aren't going so well we blame the other person. I'm going to make the assumption that up to now you haven't said anything. Well, if I may be so bold, you've undoubtedly contributed to the problem. You need to change things and start to relate to your partner just as you did in the old days.

This is such a common question so don't feel you're on your own. We all live very busy lives. I know family and jobs can be all-consuming but it never ceases to amaze me that we forget to really talk to our nearest and dearest, to maintain our own special relationship. Of course, in some ways, we don't ever really stop talking to them. We talk about the children, the teacher who's upsetting them, their exams, health, our jobs, finances, mortgages, household issues and extended family and friends.

What we fail to talk about is us, about who we are. It's as though we're suspended somewhere in outer space unable to be reached and then, when there's eventually some time to talk to each other about our feelings, we're stuck. Down the long years when we're preoccupied with raising a family and holding down a job, we dream of those days when it'll just be the two of us. We don't even notice that the spark has gone until we get some time with just ourselves and suddenly we find ourselves with someone we have nothing to say to and we aren't sure we fancy any more.

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Whatever the reason I expect you have got into a rather dull place where the relationship isn't doing much for either of you and it needs a bit of a boost.

Never fear, all is not lost. Cast your mind back to when you first met. What were the things that excited you in your relationship? I bet it was sex, food, having fun, seeing friends, going out, playing music and letting each other know how you feel. It certainly wasn't talking about your children, mortgages or work. I expect you have just stopped relating to each other physically and emotionally?

I expect you want to keep the spark and re kindle it. I also expect you like and love your partner which is a great start so let's concentrate on getting you back together as a couple as lovers and not as all the other roles you play. It seems an obvious question but I wonder if you've talked to your partner about this- it takes two to tango.

First thing is to sit down and tell them your concerns. It may be a bit of an uncomfortable conversation as you'll both have to confront your anxieties, hopes, desires and disappointments but it'll certainly lead you to a much better place. And there are ways to have these sorts of conversations.

Choose a moment when you have plenty of time.

Check that he/she doesn't have a pressing business engagement.

Wait for a day when neither of you are feeling stressed.

Sit down with a cup of tea or glass of wine and agree to take half-an-hour to plan the holiday.

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Don't start by telling him/her why you think the spark has gone. Begin by pointing out the things you love about him/her.

Tell him/her you want to enjoy him/her for who he/she is and for him/her to enjoy it, too. Explain that, as you've both been so fixated by for example your children, elderly parents, work, money concerns that you've probably individually and collectively forgotten what each of you likes doing.

What does he/she think would be good for you to do to improve intimacy?

I have suggested some of the possible things you can do. They won't all appeal to you and my list is certainly not exhaustive – it's there for you to add to it.

1. One of the patterns couples often adopt is keeping conversations bland so there are no disagreements. This can stifle our thinking and healthy debate. Agree with each other that it's all right to have different opinions that there doesn't have to be a 'winner'. The key is to be genuinely open with and interested in each other. If you're not competing, the conversation becomes stimulating and enriching.

2. Go out and do something together. Have a meal, go to the cinema out for a walk, whatever you both enjoy.

3. Take it in turns to take each other out as if you were dating. Think of an activity that they enjoy and plan it for them and let them do the same for you.

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4. Even if you have to stay in do something special like a candlelit dinner or get a film in that they enjoy or play their favourite music. Agree that you will each do something for the other ideally weekly.
5. Really important. Have some sex! This is one area of life that often gets neglected when we have children or we are very focused on our work we forget about sensual pleasure and sex. One thing you can do when you're alone together is spend some time enjoying each other's body. Many of us find we're too tired or stressed with our everyday lives to indulge in sex which either stops or gets rushed without any real enjoyment. Find time to re-kindle that part of your relationship. For most of us, when we're having good sex with our lover, we find that conversation flows if we want it to and, when it doesn't, that's just fine when we feel comfortable with our partner the spark just sparks.