

Long-Term Relationships: 5 Ways to Keep the Spark Alive



By Christina Steinorth MA MFT

I wanted to get away from the more standard type of Valentine's Day articles that seem to surround gifts and intimacy, so I asked this question on my Facebook page: *What topic should I write about for Valentine's Day?*

While I received many great answers, one that seemed to pop up more than others was: *What about an article for those of us who are in long-term relationships or have been married for many years?* I gave it some thought, and my fans were right—there isn't a lot of advice relating to Valentine's Day and long-term relationships.

I loved the idea.

As many of you know, come April, I will have been married to my husband for 14 years (we've been together for almost 16). While we don't have the hot, crazy, spark of love we may have had at the start of our relationship, what we have now is something far sexier—a deep understanding and admiration for each other that makes our love life even *more* passionate than it was when we first got together. We didn't get to this point by accident though—it has taken a lot of work and as well as consistent effort on both of our parts.

Related: [4 Steps to a Stronger Long Term Relationship](#)

Here are my five best tips for those of you who are in longer term relationships to keep your spark alive:

1. Start doing things together. A lot times, especially in longer term relationships, we start to live our own lives so to speak and do less and less things with our partners. Start doing activities together three to five times a week—go for a walk, go for a bike ride or shop for and cook a meal together once a week. It will bring you closer and give you shared experiences to bond over.

2. Touch each other and do it often. Touch doesn't need to be sexual to draw us closer to our partner. Rub each other's shoulders from time-to-time. Hold hands when you walk. When we touch each other, it helps us feel more connected with one another.

Related: [What's Love Got to Do With It?](#)

3. Be someone your partner will *want* to spend time with. Put the nagging and criticism aside and be charming, fun and engaging again—our partners are more drawn to us when we're happy.

4. Reconnect with each other for at least ten minutes a day.

Do it either before you get out of bed in the morning, or before you go to sleep at night or any other time during the day that you can sneak off and have ten minutes of uninterrupted conversation. Power down all of your electronics, make eye contact and just talk. It doesn't need to be serious—just talk about your day and what your plans are for tomorrow. Have light hearted chit-chat—it will help stop you from drifting apart from one another and it will help bring the spark back.

5. Act loving even when you don't feel like it because people will always remember how you make them feel. If you don't have loving words to share, loving actions can go a long way too.

Christina Steinorth MA MFT is a psychotherapist and a popular relationship expert on radio and in print. Her advice has been featured in publications such as Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Woman's Day, Fox News Magazine, and The Chicago Tribune, among many others. Her critically acclaimed new book is 'Cue Cards for Life: Thoughtful Tips for Better Relationships' (Hunter House, 2013). Learn more at <http://www.christinasteinorth.com>.