

# MARRIAGE'S SPECIAL MOMENTS



# **MARRIAGE'S SPECIAL MOMENTS**

**Making the most of the  
holidays & anniversaries**

Brought to you by



**MARRIED  
PEOPLE**

A WIFE'S GUIDE TO HER HUSBAND  
A Marriage Owner's Manual

Published by Orange  
a division of The reThink Group, Inc.  
5870 Charlotte Lane, Suite 300  
Cumming, GA 30040 U.S.A.

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# INTRODUCTION

**M**arriage is not about the big day—it’s about the every day. A great marriage is formed in the daily moments.

However, every marriage should still have those special, extraordinary moments—anniversaries, vacations, holidays.

How you live the every day with your spouse is important. But it’s also important to take time to celebrate those special moments.

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# How to Have a Great Wedding Anniversary

By Robert Carnes



*Try doing something you both enjoy every year for your anniversary.*

**M**arriage is about the everyday, not just the big day. But a wedding is still a significant occasion for any married couple. So your wedding anniversary a great opportunity to connect every single year.

It can be a point of tension or anxiety for some couples. But here are a few things you can keep in mind to ensure that your anniversary is a day to look forward to, not dread.

## Don't Forget It

The first step to making your wedding anniversary memorable is actually remembering it. Men forgetting their anniversary may be a common movie trope, but it's not really that funny.

Thankfully, remembering isn't that difficult. Put a reminder notification on your calendar—whether that's a physical wall calendar or the app on your phone.

There are even free web services that will send you anniversary reminders every year. Either way, no excuses!

## Plan Ahead

If you're like me, you're a pre-crastinator—which is basically the opposite of a procrastinator. I hate putting stuff off, so I plan things out as early as possible. That includes plans for anniversaries.

If you're not like me, you may have a tendency to wait until the last minute. But try as much as possible to make the "last minute" mean a week before instead of the day of. It's much more difficult to plan a meaningful anniversary with your spouse with limited time and excess panic.

## Agree on Expectations

For some couples, a wedding anniversary means going on a week-long vacation together to a romantic city like Paris. For other couples, a wedding anniversary means ordering pizza and renting a movie together at home.

Either one of those things are great—just as long as you both agree on what a good anniversary looks like. It would be disappointing for one spouse to have Paris-sized expectations, only to experience a pizza-filled anniversary.

## Get Lucky

Even if you aren't having much sex as a married couple, this is probably the one time of year when you should. If the two of you can't find time to get intimate with one another for this once-a-year occasion, you might be having bigger issues.

That shouldn't mean it's an obligation or there aren't exceptions. But this is a great annual opportunity for the two of you to connect in the bedroom. It also highlights the importance of planning ahead and agreeing on expectations.

## Reminisce About Your Wedding

By definition, your anniversary is the date the two of you got married. It's the day that started it all—whether that was last year or half a century ago. Take time to think back on your wedding day and some other fond memories of the time in-between now and then.

Pull out your wedding album or rewatch your wedding video. Think back on how many of your bridesmaids and groomsmen you've kept in touch with. List the number of wedding gifts you guys still use. Discuss your favorite moment from the wedding.

## Start a Tradition

Part of what makes most other holidays memorable are the traditions—indoor trees on Christmas, egg hunts on Easter, fireworks on Independence Day, and wearing green on St. Patrick's Day.

Why not do the same thing for your wedding anniversary? Try doing something you both enjoy every year for your anniversary. Go to the same restaurant. Watch the same movie. Walk the same park path.

Some couples may prefer more variety and spontaneity in their anniversary. But traditions may make it easier to plan and easier to meet each other's expectations. The best part of traditions are that they only get more special with time. Just like your marriage.

# How to Celebrate Valentine's Day When One of You Hates It

By Les & Leslie Parrott



*The gap between expectation and reality can create uncomfortable friction between you as the big day approaches.*

**M**arriage is all about partnership. Often, that involves compromising on things you don't agree upon. One topic we often hear couples discuss is the dilemma they face when celebrating special occasions, especially Valentine's Day.

You might get excited about having a romantic experience together. Sharing special affection and gifts may speak to you in a way it doesn't to your spouse.



On the other hand, your spouse might dread the looming celebration. The gap between expectation and reality can create uncomfortable friction between you as the big day approaches.

Special occasions like Valentine's Day are loaded with specific expectations. Emotions can run high when a couple neglects to find a happy medium, year after year.

The good news is, even if one of you is absolutely not excited about an upcoming special occasion, you can still work together to create a memorable experience.

## If You Hate Valentine's Day

There are plenty of reasons why some people just don't get excited about Valentine's Day. Have you heard these points before?

"It's just a commercial holiday created by greeting card companies to make money."

"Why should I have to show you I love you on a specific day of the year? Can't we just celebrate all year?"

"I'm not giving you roses and chocolate, just because everyone else gets those."

"It makes single people feel miserable, so we shouldn't rub it in."

"Valentine's is just a competition to try to outdo everyone else on gifts."

"It's too crowded and hectic to go on a date on Valentine's Day because everyone is doing the same thing."

Even if these arguments feel 100% valid to you, and even if you can't work up an ounce of enthusiasm over celebrating, you need to consider your spouse's feelings.

You don't have to fake excitement; Valentine's Day can be just another day to you. But it's not "just another day" to your spouse.

How you feel about Valentine's Day isn't important; what is important is your spouse, and how you feel about him or her.

Whatever you think about the day, it matters a lot to your spouse. And in this case, that means it's time to put your spouse's feelings before your own and celebrate for them because you love and feel strongly toward them.

It's not about forcing yourself to fake excitement about the holiday itself. You're not celebrating because you love the day; you're celebrating your spouse because you know how deeply they will be impacted by your gesture of love.

Find joy in creating a moment or an experience that is a gift of love from you to your spouse—even if you don't need Valentine's Day as a special milestone for yourself.

We gift gifts and conjure up experiences for the ones we love to create another chapter in our story together as a couple. And you may find that the act brings up emotions and affection from deep inside you that may have been hidden from your spouse.

## **If Your Spouse Hates Valentine's Day**

It can be difficult to convince your spouse to get on board with your idea of celebrating Valentine's Day if he or she is just not interested. Maybe it means a lot to you, but you dread its approach every year because you know your spouse won't be willing to fulfill your hopes or expectations for the day.

Now, you're just in an annual cycle of hoping for something special, then being disappointed when it doesn't come.

Valentine's Day isn't exactly important to your spouse; because of this, he or she may genuinely not know what to do for you. If a Valentine's celebration isn't an emotional need for your spouse, it's going to be difficult for him or her to understand, then orchestrate, a celebration that will make you happy.

We all want to be appreciated in ways we don't have to ask for, but we also have different needs when it comes to receiving affection—and often, those needs are mismatched between spouses.

Sometimes, the solution to the Valentine's dilemma may be as simple as telling your spouse exactly what you want. If you open the conversation, your spouse may even say, "Tell me what to do; I want you to enjoy this day."

If you're able to tell your spouse how you'd like to celebrate Valentine's Day (or any other special occasion, for that matter), you can help him or her create something memorable.

When your spouse knows exactly what you want, they're more likely to show relief than resistance. Be willing to offer some coaching and direction so your spouse can help you celebrate a memorable holiday.

Do you and your spouse have different opinions about celebrating Valentine's Day?

# 25 Questions to Ignite Intimacy This Christmas

By Ted Cunningham



Here are 25 questions to spark some holiday conversations.

**Y**ears ago, our church discovered that many married couples are uncomfortable talking about sexual intimacy. Since the bedroom is a barometer of marital communication, we set out to help couples with conversation more than technique.

We gave each married couple in our church a two-hour burning candle and a list of questions. We asked them to go home, light the candle and ask one another as many of the questions as they felt comfortable answering.

One of our members returned the following Sunday and said, "Hey pastor, I found out that when you light that candle under a ceiling fan it only takes 45 minutes." That was humorous, but not our goal.

Here are 25 questions to spark some holiday conversations. Light a candle and enjoy.

- How often, if ever, did you and your parents talk about sex?
- What kind of picture did your parents paint for you about sex?
- When and where did you first learn about sex?
- Are there any questions about sex that you think are off-limits for us to discuss?
- What parts of your body are you insecure about?
- What can I do to ease those insecurities?
- Do you like what I wear leading up to sex?
- What would you change about our bedroom to spice it up?
- How satisfied are you with how often we have sex?
- I enjoy having sex \_\_\_ times per week or month.
- Have you ever been frustrated thinking tonight's the night only to be disappointed?
- What should our code phrases be around the kids on the night we are in the mood? (For example, "Let's work on the budget tonight," or, "Do we need anything at the supermarket?")
- Do we do well sharing the initiation?
- Do we offer grace to each other when "tonight's the night" doesn't work out?
- How satisfied are you with our performance?
- Can you give me two or three ideas for foreplay?
- What position is most comfortable for you?
- Is there anything I ever do that makes you uncomfortable?
- Should we use more candles? What about lotions, oils, scents?
- What music would you want on our lovemaking playlist?
- What are the distractions that keep us from getting together and what can we do to eliminate them?
- How satisfied are you with how long we spend making love?
- Do you ever feel like we rush it?
- Have you ever been frustrated at how long it takes me to get in the mood?

# 3 Ways to Plan a Cheap Vacation

By Jennifer Wilder



*You don't have to go far from home to have a fulfilling getaway with your spouse.*

*My husband and I aren't cheapskates—but we do love saving money. When we can combine saving money with traveling, it feels like we're getting away with something.*

*For our travels, there are three things my husband and I have taken into consideration: location, season and friends.*

## 1. Location

*You don't have to go far from home to have a fulfilling and inexpensive getaway with your spouse.*

*We're fortunate enough to live within two hours driving distance from mountains, an hour from two lakes, and five hours from the ocean. In each of those areas are state parks.*

*Most of these parks have rental cabins or small lodges on property with reasonable rates.*

*Sometimes, we choose to stay in a town next to the tourist town to save on lodging. That way, we save money, but are still only a short drive from the attractions.*

**Tip:** Getaway to a place within a couple hours drive. Stay in non-traditional lodging.

## **2. Season**

*For us, there is no off-season. My husband and I enjoy traveling to places no matter the time of year.*

*But sometimes a vacation has to take place during a specific season. In those cases, we book our travel as close to the edges of those season as possible—either at the very beginning or end, rather than in the middle. That means, we have to pay attention early.*

*For example, if we want to go to the mountains to see the fall color, but the seasonal rates are doubled, we get online nine months in advance to search hotel websites. We use Yelp.com, TripAdvisor.com and other sites to check ratings. Then, we go directly to the hotel sites to look for specials, and to see their seasonal calendar.*

*From that calendar, we pinpoint our desired dates of travel—usually the week before the tourist season starts. If possible, choose travel dates the week or month before the official tourist season starts. You'll save money, and your destination won't be as crowded.*

**Tip:** Travel during the off-season for the best rates.

### 3. Friends

*That Beatles song is right—we get by with a little help from our friends. My husband and I have friends and family all over the U.S. and the world. We're blessed that many of them invite us to visit.*

*Last year, we were able to getaway for a weekend to the mountains and stay in a friend's cabin. In an upcoming year, we're planning to visit cousins who live in Australia.*

*Staying with friends or family not only saves in lodging, but will also save on food, if you choose to cook your own meals. Not to mention, your friends and family will also have insight on the best things to do when you're on vacation.*

**Tip:** Ask your friends if you can house sit for them when they go on vacation.

*If your friends have a weekend or vacation home, offer to do any light repairs in exchange for lodging. You'll be able to go on vacation while they're on vacation.*

### The Best Getaways are Cheap

*Travel is affordable when you get creative and flexible.*

*Finding a close location can be just the change of scenery you need without the huge cost of air travel. Going during non-tourist season will save on lodging as well as attractions, plus there's the added benefit of smaller crowds.*

*Asking friends for a weekend away at their home could help you and them—so ask!*

*Wherever you go, be sure to fully go. Leave your cares behind and be with your spouse. Getaways make a difference in every marriage.*



# 2 Tips For Traveling With Your Spouse

By Crystal Chiang



*It took us a few years and several more trips to figure out what had really gone wrong.*

**D**o you remember your first fight as a married couple? I remember ours clear as day—because it was on our honeymoon.

It was the first time we had travelled alone together and, subsequently, the first time we figured out we weren't good at traveling together.

I remember sitting in a little coffee shop on one of my favorite streets in my favorite town on Earth when my new husband said with that tone, "Are you ready to go?" and I burst into tears.

Understandably, he was so confused. He just wanted to get the day started. It took us a few years and several more trips to figure out what had really gone wrong.

In short we learned, when it comes to travel:  
He is a do-er. And I am a be-er.

## **What Are Your Travel Styles?**

For my husband, Tom, the point of travel is to DO as many things as possible. That means early mornings, long days, walking at least 15 miles in a new city, and soaking in as much of that city as possible.

For me, the point of travel is to BE in a new place. Sitting in that coffee shop, listening to Spanish conversations, and sipping a latte was exactly what I had come to do. I was vacationing. For him, my latte was the very thing was keeping us from vacationing.

Neither of us was right, but it was the first time we realized our travel styles were very different. And I think we both were pretty disappointed. After all, travel is one of the things we said we wanted to do most when married.

For us, not traveling together was like not living together or not sleeping together—a non-option. So, this was the first of many spots in our marriage where we had to “figure it out”.

Here's what figuring it out looks like for us:

### **1. Ask Each Other a Lot of Questions**

After learning my way to travel wasn't the right way or the only way (Don't judge. We all think that about our own opinions!), I lost the luxury of just assuming he liked the same things as me.

So we began to ask each other lots of questions when it comes to travel, question like:

- Mountains, beach or city?
- Early mornings or sleeping in?
- Planned itinerary or seat of your pants travel?
- Maps or wandering?
- Nice hotel or inexpensive hotel?
- Same place every year or new place every year?
- Road trips or airfare?
- Museums or concerts?
- Amusement parks or city walking tours?
- Cruise ships at all?
- Camping at all?

## 2. Let The Other Person Be Themselves

The reality is Tom would never convince me to be an early riser. (Why vacation at all?) And, I would never convince him that just sitting in a pool is fun. He tried it once and said, "Ok. We're in the pool. No what do we do?"

Instead, he takes an early morning walk alone and scopes out the city while I sleep in. I leave the cute shoes at home so I can keep up on our fast-paced days. He checks the maps and his work email for a few hours while I soak up the world at a coffee shop.

Do we still argue about it? Totally. But we're figuring it out, and I think that's the point.

## Don't Let Differences Stop You From Traveling

Even though we're different, nothing we do is better for our marriage than travel.

Nothing takes us farther from our daily routine, gives us new perspective, helps us have fun or reminds us why we love each other like being in a new place together.

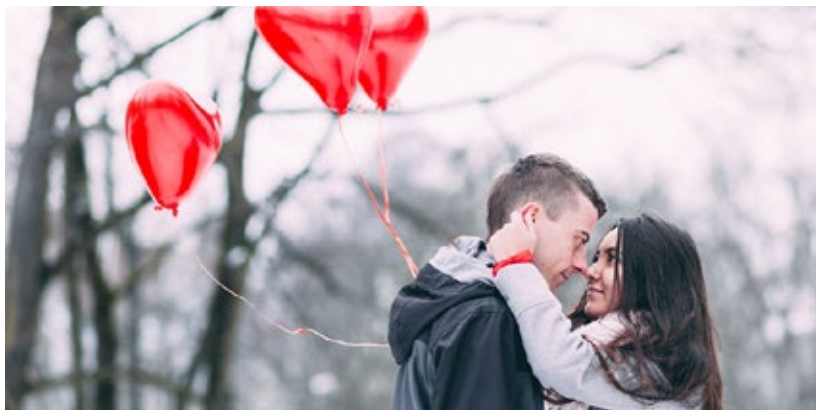
And part of the magic has become discovering new things about each other, new ideas, new opinions, new "favorites" and new "I didn't see that coming" moments.

So we're going to keep doing it, even if that means setting an alarm.

What different travel preferences do you have from your spouse?

# 6 Ways To Make Valentine's Day Last All Year Long

By Jennifer Murff



*Valentine's Day is about remembering why you love that special someone and what you can do to love them more.*

I've celebrated many Valentine's Days with my husband. It has been a crazy ride—four kids, 10 moves, four career changes. We have had lots of school, lots of travel, lots of hugs, and a lot of laughs in that time.

But I would not want to do this crazy life with anyone else. Life without him would surely be empty, and boring.

Along my journey with my Valentine, I've realized I may have taken some things for granted. I've made some mistakes, and let my pride get in the way sometimes of experiencing all that a thriving, fun-filled marriage can offer.

I want to share some lessons I have learned along the way so that you do not make the same mistakes.

### **1. Never Turn Down A Hug**

I have learned to never turn down the opportunity for a hug. I remember one day when I was frying bacon and Justin came up behind me to put his arms around my waist. Sweet, right?

Unfortunately, I decided to shrug him off and scoot him out of my kitchen. In my mind, I was acting in an abundance of caution. What if my bacon burned? Seriously, when I'm elbow deep in hot grease is hardly the time for romance, right?

Sadly, my girls were watching the scene unfold and they interpreted this caution as what it really was: a moment that mom dismissed and turned away dad.

My husband interpreted it as a moment where he was rejected. I felt horrible afterwards. And it was all over bacon. So, next time I'm frying bacon and my man wants a hug, I'll remember that burnt bacon is better than a broken heart.

### **2. Kiss Everyday**

Kiss your special someone every day. You know what is crazy; Justin even wants to kiss me first thing in the morning. I'll never understand this.

I have the worst morning breath. But he honestly does not care. I am more of the "let me have my coffee, shower, and brush my teeth first" kind of girl.

Over time, I've decided that I need to just lay one on him, bad breath and all, when he first wakes up. It makes him feel loved, and it's not a bad way to start the day either.

### **3. Chores Will Always Be There**

I'm busy. I'm a mom, wife, student, business owner, and more.

There's a pile of clean clothes on the couch as tall as me, just waiting to be folded. At the end of the day, I can either feel accomplished because I have a clean house or I can feel accomplished because my man feels loved. I think I will go for the latter!

Become interested in your spouse. I'm learning to become more interested in his interests. The longing of a person's heart is to know another and to be known.

In our case, I've learned to be interested in politics, guns, history, and art. I have learned to sit through British comedy and German news. It is not because I understand it, but because I want to understand my man.

I want to not just listen but hear and engage with him. He has so much to offer and I want to learn and grow by engaging in great conversations, and gain insight from a different perspective.

### **4. Touch Each Other, A Lot**

My husband's love language is touch. As a mom of four kids, I am constantly bombarded with touch all the time. However, this does not negate the needs of my husband.

So, I promised to give him more sweet touches—a foot rub or back rub, holding his hand, something every day just to let him know that I am incredibly in love with him.

## 5. Embrace Each Other Fully

Have you heard the saying that “the things that you thought were cute while dating, will eventually get annoying?” Well, that’s absolutely true.

Try as you might, you cannot change your spouse. I decided years ago to let my husband be who he is. That includes his loud, fun, and often goofy moments.

If there’s anything that people know about my husband, it is that he is funny. I have to continue to fully embrace all of him—the good, the bad, and the silly.

You see, even after more than a decade together, he still needs to know that I adore him, and that I’m looking for ways to love him more.

Valentine’s Day is not only about the hot sex (though it is awesome), but also remembering why you love that special someone and what you can do to love them more.



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