



by Lori Palatnik

**When was the last time  
you and your spouse went  
out together on a date?**

When was the last time you and your spouse went out together -- just the two of you, no kids, no friends, just you and your partner? If you have to pause even for a second to think, that's not good.

Your marriage is the most important relationship you will have in this world -- *more* important than your relationship with your kids. Raising great kids is half prayer, and half a good marriage. If you want your kids to come out great, make sure your marriage is great.

Marriage requires consistent investment. Marriage is like a bank account -- life will throw a lot of things your way, challenges, adversity, problems. These create a stress in marriage and cause one to withdraw from the account, emotionally and physically. So your bank account better be pretty full. How do you make deposits to insure that the funds are there? Investing in your marriage means spending time together, quality time. Dating after marriage is an important tool.

Practicals:

1. Try and make your date once a week, the same time every week. If Wednesday is "date night," book your babysitter every Wednesday. If you get an invitation to something, or a meeting is scheduled, tell them "no", it's my date night with my spouse. Date night is sacred.
2. Take turns planning the date. One week you decide where to go and what to do, the next week your spouse. It could be dinner and a show, it could be as simple as a shopping excursion to Walmart, a coffee at Starbucks -- the idea is to spend time together, just the two of you.
3. You are allowed to talk about the kids, but only for the first 15 minutes. What else is there to talk about? Well before you had those kids, there must have been something to talk about! So get back to sharing your hopes, thoughts, feelings and dreams, just like dating...in the old days.
4. Every 3-4 months plan a get-away. At least for one night, ideally two. You don't have to go far, it could be checking into a hotel right here in town, or driving to a bed and breakfast in the mountains. You are close enough that if your kids needed you, you could be home, but you are far enough away to feel like you are really gone.

Romance and enhance your marriage. You give to your kids so that they will leave; you give to your spouse so that they will stay. Invest now.