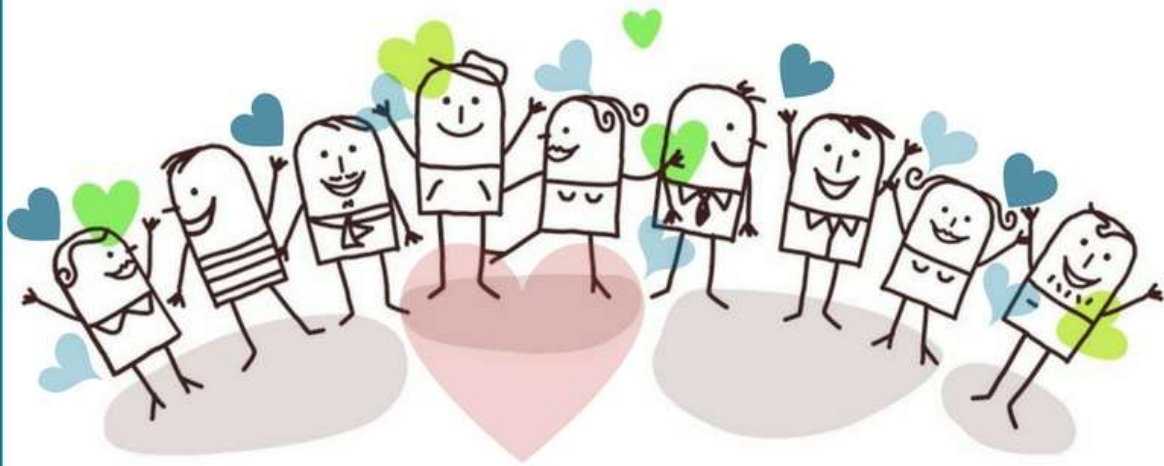


Enrich Your Marriage & Encourage Others



Love your spouse.
Do good together!

Husbands & Wives Leading Meaningful Lives - Encourage Your Spouse

Encourage Others - Enrich Your Marriage

Are you making the most out of your relationship? Or are you just coasting along, making life work for you?

Is your marriage "*Just fine.*"?



You're fine... but is this all there is in marriage?

You've been married for a while, right? Maybe a few years... maybe a few decades. And you like spending time with each other... dating your spouse is fine.

You've done the dinner at a restaurant more than once. (Probably more than 100 times if you've been married a few decades.) You've gone out to see a movie. You might even do fun things together like go to car shows, go antiquing or thrifting, play golf or tennis, tour on your motorcycles, or sail your boat, train for marathons or hike local trails.

You enjoy your time together - it's all fine.

So now what? What happens for the next few decades... more of the same?

You have a unique opportunity to use your relationship as a powerhouse for good.

A powerhouse for good.

What does that mean?

It means that you leverage your "*just fine*" marriage relationship... it means that you kick your "*just fine*" marriage relationship *up a notch*... it means that you invest in yourselves and others to lead a life that's filled with meaning!

But you still have kids at home - what about them?

Let them see you doing good while strengthening your relationship, and it'll inspire them.

You've heard the saying, "*The best gift you can give your children is loving your spouse.*" Right?

Go one further - ***continue to love your spouse, but do good together!***

Now wouldn't that be a valuable action? - for you and your spouse - for your kids, family, friends and your community?



12 Dates - Enrich Your Marriage - Encourage Others

Here's a list of 12 dates - ideas for you and your spouse to enrich your own marriage AND encourage others.

Choose one a month for the next year. Put them on your calendar. Make it real.

Some are easy – some take time. Some need very little money, and for others you can chose how much to invest. The last idea will take the longest time – but has the greatest impact.



Do you have any ideas not listed here? We'd love to add to this document!

Email us at Robert . Lori @ Leadership Couples . com (leave out the spaces)

Create a “Take It Easy” basket for a friend.

Enrich Your Marriage:

Discuss the idea of relaxation with your spouse. Make a list of all the things that she/he (you both) find relaxing. Be specific. You might discover something you didn't realize about your spouse. Over the time we're together we continue to change as people. What we found exciting in our 20's we might not find great today... couldn't that be true about relaxation also? **Think of the 5 senses as you make your list.**

She Finds Relaxing

He Finds Relaxing

Encourage Others:

Agree to a budget. Purchase some items from your list and put them into the basket. Drop it off at your friend's place. Sharing what you love is a sign of care. Though you can't know exactly what will bring joy to this person, your care will shine through.

Flowers for Caregivers

Enrich Your Marriage:

Talk about your experiences with those who are elderly.

Are your grandparents still alive? Parents? What are some of the upsides and downsides of growing older?

Do you have some fears? Do you share the same fears? Are they different? Why?

This might *not* be an easy conversation, but it's important. No matter how old you are now - you're growing older. You've vowed to live your life with your spouse. Understanding how she/he feels about time/bodies/lives changing is valuable.

Encourage Others:

Pick up 2 bunches of flowers and visit the closest nursing home. Give one bunch to the caregivers – theirs is often a thankless job. And give the other bunch to the first elder person who smiles at you.

(I know, if you could, you'd give every person a bunch of flowers, but you can't. Think of it differently - do for one, what you'd like to do for everyone.)

What's the name of the nursing home you'll be visiting?

Treats to Connect

Enrich Your Marriage:

What treats do you remember from when you were growing up?

Wagon Wheels (Maybe that's just in Canada?) Candy cigarettes? Shoe-string licorice?

Reminisce for a bit as husband and wife.

His Memories

Her Memories

Sometimes we lose track of the fun stuff from our childhood within the seriousness of life. That child - or parts of that child - is still alive in you and your spouse. The memories will make you smile. Smiling together is precious.

Encourage Others:

Buy a bulk bag of candy/chocolate bars – make up little packages and give them to the kids in your church's Sunday school.

Wisdom of Words

Enrich Your Marriage:

What books have you both read that you both enjoyed? Maybe it was a huge, thousand-page tome... Maybe it was a Reader's Digest magazine or a Peanuts Cartoon book? It doesn't matter the seriousness or fun of the material. Just explore a bit. Why did you like the reading material? Is it the same reason your spouse liked it? If you've never read the same stuff, why not? Yes. Why not try it! :-)

[List the books you've both read...](#)

Encourage Others:

Go to a bookstore – or look online – and buy an extra copy of your favorite book. (Or a book you believe would be your favorite once you've both read it.) Give it to another couple to enjoy.

Who will you buy for? _____

What book will you buy? _____

Laughter IS Medicine

Enrich Your Marriage:

Science tells us that laughing will make us healthier. ([This study](#). [And these too.](#))

Do you laugh with your spouse?

What makes you both laugh? Sitcoms? Jokes? Slapstick? Spend an evening on YouTube, just laughing at all the comedians. Decide what kind of humor suits you both. (If you don't already know.)

In addition, try new kinds of humor. Dry British comedy. Or comedic shenanigans that make 3-year olds laugh. I wish you an evening that makes your belly muscles hurt! :-)

What makes her laugh? What makes him laugh? What do you both laugh at?

Encourage Others:

Make list of knock-knock jokes – keep ‘em clean! – and then phone a friend. Tell them the jokes. Take turns. You’ll all end up laughing! And become healthier!

Here are a few to get you started:

Knock Knock
Who's there?
Little old lady
Little old lady who?
WOW! I didn't know you could yodel!

Knock, knock.
Who's there?
Noah.
Noah who?
Noah good place we can get something to eat?

Knock, knock.
Who's there?
Etch.
Etch who?
Bless you!

Knock Knock
Who's there?
Cows go
Cows go who?
Cows go moo not who!

Knock knock!
Who's there?
Dwayne.
Dwayne who?
Dwayne the bathtub, I'm drowning.

Will you remember me in an hour?
Yes.
Will you remember me in a day?
Yes.
Will you remember me in a week?
Yes.
Will you remember me in a month?
Yes.
Will you remember me in a year?
Yes.
I think you won't.
Yes, I will.
Knock, knock!
Who's there?
See? You've forgotten me already!

Comfort and Joy in Scripture

Enrich Your Marriage:

Do you know your spouse's favorite Bible verses? Do you know the stories behind those verses - why they are important to your spouse? Sit together and gather a list of your favorite Scripture verses. Maybe 8 or 10.

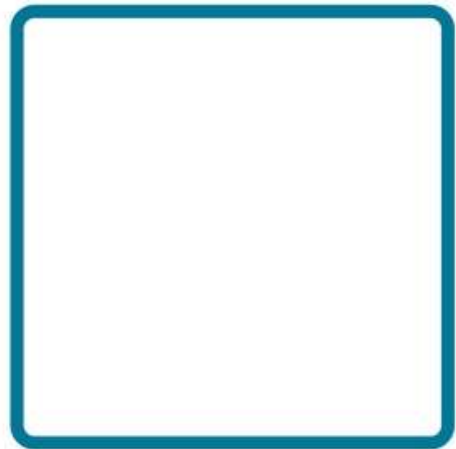
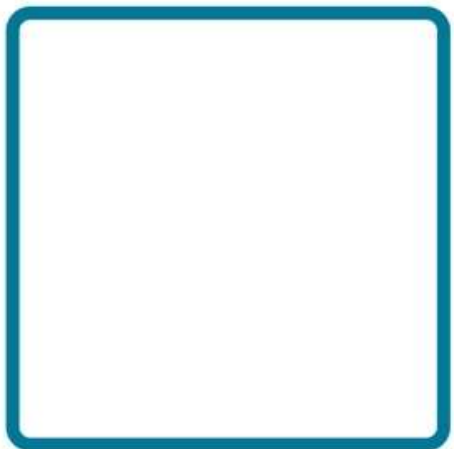
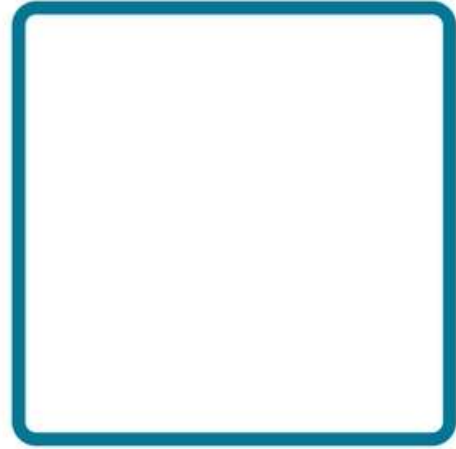
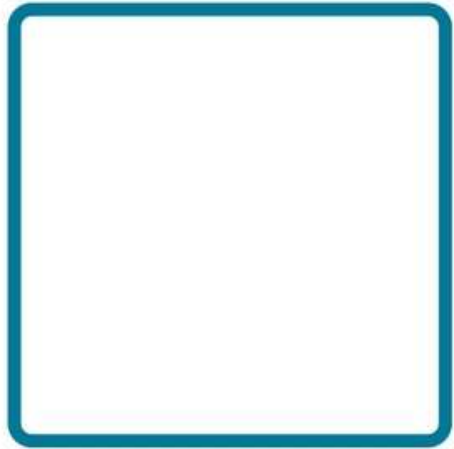
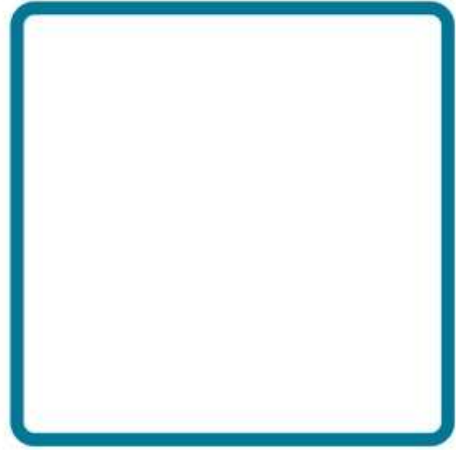
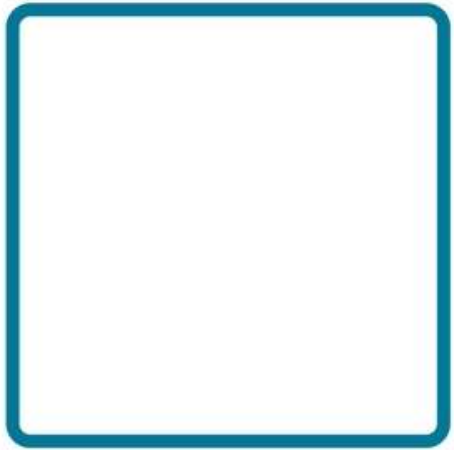
Your list of Bible verses:

Encourage Others:

You can either write each verse – individually - on card-stock squares, or use your computer skills to create an attractively spaced document to cut apart into squares. To help you, on the next 2 pages are 6 blank squares for you to write in, and 6 squares with our favorite Bible verses.

Put the finished product into an envelope and mail them – anonymously – to someone who is going through a hard time.

Add a note to tell them they're not alone.



**God
created
YOU
to do
amazing
things!**

read Ephesians 2:10

**So let's not get tired
of doing what is good.
At just the right time
we will reap
a harvest of blessing
if we don't give up.**

Galatians 6:9

**Give your burdens
to the Lord,
and
He will take care of you.
He will not permit
the godly to slip and fall.**

Psalms 55:22

**Trust
in the
Lord
with all
your heart...**

read Proverbs 3:5 & 6

**Don't be afraid,
for I am with you.
Don't be discouraged,
for I am your God.
I will strengthen you
and help you....**

Isaiah 41:10

**Don't worry
about anything;
instead,
pray about everything.
Tell God what you need,
and thank him
for all he has done.**

Phillipians 4:6

Shared Sweetness

Enrich Your Marriage:

I'm guessing that not many couples bake together. Are you one of the few? If so, great stuff! Try a new cookie recipe and indulge your gifts in the kitchen.

If you're not used to baking together, there's a unique togetherness that comes from co-operating to make an end product. I can't explain it - you'll just have to try it.

And if you really don't want to follow a recipe, then buy some refrigerated dough and co-operate in putting it onto the cookie sheets. Then decorate. Then eat a few cookies. ;-)

Encourage Others:

Take your batch of cookies and drop them off at your local fire station. The fire-fighters will work off the extra calories quickly. ;-)

Gumball Rally

Enrich Your Marriage:

This is an activity to bring out the kid in the two of you. You're not as old as you might feel...

Remember those gumball machines (or candy dispensers) in the grocery store? Map out a plan to drive past all the grocery stores/malls in your area. Then spend an evening/afternoon in the car together with a fun mission.

Encourage Others:

Tour around the local shopping plaza, grocery stores etc. where you'd find gumball machines...

And leave quarters in the slots to surprise the next kid (person).

Be stealthy. Don't give your mission away... ;-)

Gift of Music

Enrich Your Marriage:

Music is a universal language - it transcends the spoken word. [Dissonance](#) and [harmony](#) - they're themes in relationships too.

Pull out all your CDs - I'm guessing you might have a few CDs hidden away - not all of your music will be MP3s if you've been married a few years.

Walk through the CDs as a history of your likes and dislikes... do you like music your spouse doesn't? Why? Are there albums you loved at a certain time - why? Do you now hate certain songs that you loved once-upon-a-time?

Now sort the CDs into piles - must keep and give away. I'm imagining there are going to be some "ah-hah!" moments - some surprises at what your spouse values and why...

Encourage Others:

Once you've organized and the CDs into piles, gift those you no longer love to a nursing home. Or the Library. Or a hospital ward.

You're sharing something you once loved enough to spend money on... let someone else have the gift of that music to enhance their life.

Comfort and Affirmation

Enrich Your Marriage:

Not everyone's [love language is words of affirmation](#), yet a few words or phrases spoken for comfort and affirmation won't hurt anyone.

Imagine the concept of a huge tank (like a water tank) that's called a "love tank"... it can be filled up in many ways: words of affirmation, actions serving one another, physical demonstrations like hugs and loving touches, little gifts, and time spent doing something together. It's good to know what your spouse's primary love language is (one of the five), but filling the tank can include all of the love languages.

This enrichment activity will key you both into which words resonate with your spouse.

Go to a card shop. Pick out cards which appeal to you, and taking turns, read them to your spouse. First you read a card you've chosen as special. Read it. Watch your spouse's reaction. Does the words/sentiment you've chosen resonate with your spouse? Yes? Why? Is it what you expected? No? Why not? Then it's his/her turn. Keep going.

You'll learn a lot about your spouse in this activity to enrich your marriage.

Encourage Others:

Choose 3 friends who are facing some difficulties. Or friends you know could use some encouragement or affirmation.

Find cards at the card shop which you both feel would resonate with those friends.

Buy them. Send those cards.

A physical card is impactful. You have the choice of signing your names - or not...

Encourage-mint

Enrich Your Marriage:

Which leaders in your life - teachers, ministers, coaches, etc. - made a significant impact in your life?

Each of you make a list of these significant leaders. The next 2 pages are for your lists...

Once you're finished your lists, show each other the list.

Does your spouse know about all these people?

I'm guessing there are going to be a few surprises. And if your spouse can recognize the name, does she/he really understand the details of this leader's significance to you?

Spend some time telling stories about those people - share with your spouse how these people have made you the person you are today.

Encourage Others:

Some of those leaders on your lists won't be available today - so you're going to do this as silent tribute.

Buy a bag full of mints. Or maybe two kinds of mints.

Put them into a jar and label the jar with: *"Thank you for your involve-mint, commit-mint, and encourage-mint."*

Take the jar to your local school (or church, or volunteer organization, etc.) and leave it in the office for the teachers. They don't need to know you. You don't need to know them.

This action is about reaching out to affirm these leaders as they make a difference in other lives.

[A List of People who have made a difference in your life. \(Her list.\)](#)

[A List of People who have made a difference in your life. \(His list.\)](#)

Compassion in Action

Enrich Your Marriage – And REACH out...

Are you past the stage of little ones in your home? I'm guessing some of you are. Maybe your kids are teens. Maybe they're grown. Maybe you don't have kids.

This activity is to take action in a way that will positively impact another couple, while empathizing with the stage they're in.

Do you know of a couple with young children? (I'm talking under 5 years of age.) You could know them as neighbors. You could know them from your church. You could come in contact with them through a school, a sports connection, a hobby, or event. That young couple could be your grown kids. Or friends of your grown children. Narrow your thoughts to one particular couple.

Think of this couple. What do you know about them? How are they similar or different from the two of you? Can you relate with the stage they're in? At all? Chances are life is filled with new experiences - and not all of them are fun. Chances are they're not overflowing with extra cash - it could be that paying their bills every month is a challenge. Chances are they have a small circle of family support (parents/grandparents/aunts/uncles) who live close by. And even if they live close, they're not always physically or emotionally present in their lives.

Enriching a marriage when raising young children is difficult. (I think you might remember?) This is the point in time where many marriages go off the rail - and never recover. Two people who love each other lose their connection. It takes time and effort to continue to grow through the "young children" stage. Can you relate? What do you remember about this time in your life?

Reminisce a bit. Pull out the photos, if it's hard to envision - or it's been too long. You've already walked this path. You're veterans. You know the pitfalls and the joys. How are you leveraging what you've already learned? What would you do the same... what would you do differently? (We all can make a list on this topic.)

Reach out to encourage: This is not a quick action. Make a plan to get to know this younger couple. Be deliberate. Talk to them in passing. Ask about their children. Ask about their work, their life ambitions, or their hobbies. Let them get to know *you*.

Give it time for them to know and then like you. Time for them to trust you. Yes, it'll take time to build a healthy relationship.

It's not about giving advice - just being kind. It's not about giving instruction - but being a listening ear. It's about a friendly smile, an extra helping hand, or a word of affirmation, when life is tough. Wait for the time it's appropriate to offer to provide childcare for an evening, so the younger couple can go out on a date. (They'll need to really like and trust you first - this won't be appropriate immediately.) Maybe, if you have the funds, it might be possible to provide a gift card to a restaurant.

How can you bless another couple? How can you leverage your marriage to become more *and* add value to another couple?

A Year Endeavor to Enrich Your Marriage & Add Value

One action a month, enrich your marriage and encouraging others... Wouldn't that make a great year?



Do you have ideas for other actions to enrich your marriage – and encourage others?

Send us an email at: Robert.Lori@LeadershipCouples.com



Robert and Lori Ferguson are a husband & wife team who write about marriage, leadership and values at EncourageYourSpouse.com.

In 2016 Lori wrote a book about “[Moving Past Procrastination to a Great Marriage](#)”... so she knows all about putting stuff on a calendar and getting it done!