

“Romantic Man” is Not an Oxymoron

I am a hopeless romantic.

Being called a hopeless romantic may not have a macho sound to it around the locker room, but women like that brand of machismo. It's worth it when you're standing with your friend and he gets the nudge and The Look from his wife, the look that says, “Why can't you be like him?”

So, men, my task is to teach you how to be a hopeless romantic. And retain your manhood in the process.

Little things count.

I don't think it's romantic simply to take the trash out without being asked, but if you're not taking the trash out without being asked, this would be a good place to start! When was the last time you made the bed? Two minutes out of your life and you made your wife smile. The routine of marriage has a way of turning the early days of moonlight and roses to daylight and dishes. You can brighten her routine in little ways that may not seem romantic, but nothing says “I love you” like finding the bathroom cleaned.

Start dating again.

Remember the early days of your relationship: dating, courting, and wooing her? There was the element of the chase ... trying to impress her ... getting her to like you ... or maybe just notice you! We men tend to settle in after we're married because we've “won her over.”

Win her over again. Take her on a date. Someplace without clowns and someplace where you don't throw away the plates when you leave.

Surprise her.

I took my wife on a date one night. Seemingly just a simple dinner out. But we were met at the restaurant by a good friend and her husband. Surprise #1. Surprise #2—for both women—was when we walked down the street to see a play. Your wife still wants to feel like she's worth courting. And the effort you put in to surprise her tells her you've been thinking about her. (Extra points, men, if you're keeping score.)

I took my wife to a casual lunch one week before our anniversary and handed her a gift. It was an outfit with the instructions to wear it on the plane trip the next day. Without her knowledge, I worked with her employer to keep her calendar free, and I booked travel to New England to spend our anniversary in a Maine bed and breakfast.

Trips.

Speaking of trips, take one. You don't have to fly across the country, but plan something to break up her routine with kids, work, and picking up after you. My wife finds simple pleasure in a half-day Saturday road trip. It more than breaks the routine of the week; it gives us time to talk.

Speak Her Language

You don't have to be a romantic just like me, but you do need to be one based on how your wife is wired. Check out Gary Chapman's book *The Five Love Languages*. (You'll score points with the missus just by having the book on your nightstand.) Dr. Chapman says we all have ways that communicate love to us. It might be words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, or physical touch. Acts of service speak volumes to my wife. She says her favorite birthday present when I announced I would be taking over the laundry and ironing duties. That may not sound romantic, but it did to my wife. (By the way, if you iron in front of the TV, you can still watch football.)

Spontaneous or well planned?

Be both in romancing and dating your wife. The spontaneity comes in buying flowers while you're running an errand to buy milk. Or cruise the card aisle and buy her one of those “just because” cards.

Romance should not be limited to the spur-of-the-moment gift or gesture. Some things take planning. For each of the 30 days leading up to Valentine's Day, I gave my wife a Valentine's Day card. I would put it someplace unique every day with a simple message like: “Love, Lynn. 20 days to go.” I'd put one by her morning coffee, on the steering wheel, inside her Bible, and even inside the toilet paper roll. I wanted to build the anticipation that something was coming. I don't even remember what we did for Valentine's Day, but she certainly remembers the cards of anticipation. The point? It takes planning. (And it doesn't have to be expensive. No \$5.00 cards from me. I used those cheesy valentines third graders give each other!)

It's worth the planning. It's worth giving up your macho image to be romantic. The return on your investment is incredible.

Now go love on your wife and thank her for telling you to read this blog.