

## 10 Ways to "Spring Clean" Your Marriage by Marlene Neufeld, MSW

My mother went through our home every spring and did "spring cleaning". It was an opportunity to look into drawers and into corners that hadn't been touched in a while.

Many people who have been married several years begin to take their marriage and their spouse for granted. Bad habits and lazy attitudes that would have never been acted out in their courtship days take over. People treat their partners with defensiveness and contempt. How fresh and vital is your marriage?

Maybe it is time to "spring clean" your marriage. To bring a fresh new energy to your marriage, try doing all or some of the following:

1. Increase the level of appreciations you offer your partner. Research shows that it takes five appreciations to compensate for the effects of one negative comment.
2. Reveal something to your partner that you haven't revealed before, reveal facts (I did...) or thoughts (I've been thinking...) or feelings (I've been feeling sad, angry, scared, sexual...).
3. Drop the content of an argument and go non-verbal. Growl, speak in gibberish, make sounds and enjoy letting go of the "story" - all the things you say to explain, justify and validate our feelings.
4. Make a commitment to spend time alone together on a regular basis.
5. Listen with genuine curiosity to what your partner is really saying.
6. Spend time thinking about what you believe your ideal companion would be like. Then set the intention to be that person yourself.
7. Stop thinking about what's not working or what you don't want. Start focusing on what's working and what you want more of.
8. Choose to say only positive things to others about your spouse.
9. Generate wonder, a sense of curiosity about whatever is happening or not happening between you and your partner.
10. Play together often. Do non-goal-directed activities. Use your imagination and creativity together. Create opportunities to laugh together.

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