

1 The Issue

There's a popular belief that the birth of a child will do wonders for the parent's marital relationship. It's usually a myth, as research indicates that 75% of couples experience a significant decrease in marital satisfaction after the birth of a baby. This is especially so for mothers. After the birth of a child, many parents struggle to keep their intimacy alive. There are many factors that can contribute to this loss of intimacy. Not only does life get busier, but also now the family structure becomes more complex.

Interestingly, couples in happy relationships aren't smarter, richer, or more psychologically astute than others. The significant difference between people in happy relationships, and those who aren't, is that they keep their negative thoughts and feelings about each other (which all couples have), from overwhelming their positive ones. The real key to building a happy relationship with your partner is to strengthen the friendship you have with each other. Not only will it make you happier, but it will put a smile on your child's face as well.

2 Check it out

Reflect on how satisfied you are with your marital relationship. Since the birth of baby are you experiencing:

- ◆ Greater marital satisfaction
- ◆ About the same as usual
- ◆ I'm one of the 75 percent!

3 How to Respond

How do you put the passion back into a relationship that is just drifting along?

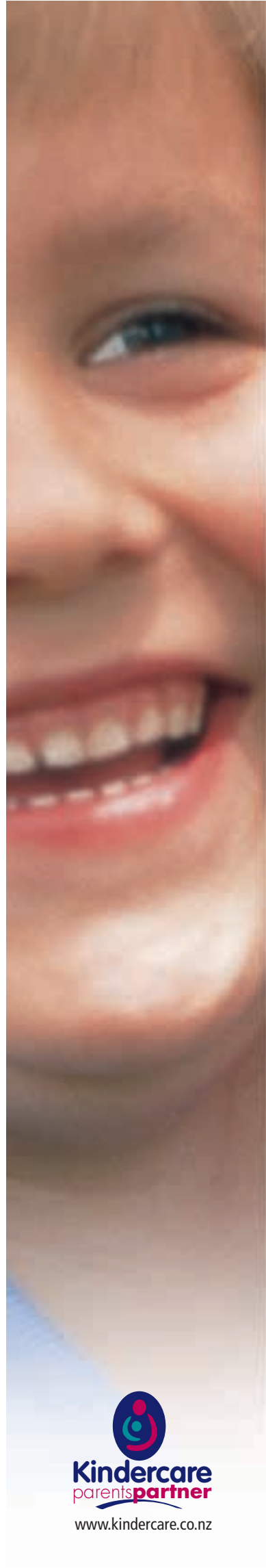
- ◆ **Spend time alone as a couple regularly**

Remember in your courtship days how you loved to be with each other, and to spend time in each others company? Courtship is an exciting time because couples are usually close to each other. When baby arrives it's important to reserve time together just as a couple. And it needs to be a regular time so that your child grows up knowing that Mum and Dad spend time together, and this time needs to be respected. Even brief moments together can make a huge difference.

With all the constant demands of a child, it's easy to get into a rut, and not make the effort to spend time together. If you take the time to create opportunities to be together, it will pay rich dividends in the love you have for each other.

- ◆ **Maintain friendships**

It is unrealistic to expect one person to meet all your needs. While baby may limit your opportunity to socialise, don't neglect your friendships. Talking and sharing with friends can be really beneficial for both Mum and Dad.



- ◆ **Share the routine tasks**
Work together as a couple to do the daily tasks that need doing around the home. While it lightens the load, it also creates opportunity for you to build connection with each other.
- ◆ **Keep the romance up**
The arrival of baby shouldn't mean romance now becomes extinct! Create moments, on a regular basis, to bring romance into the relationship. Don't become so baby focused that you neglect to focus on your partner, and the things you admire and appreciate about them.
- ◆ **Appreciate each other**
Give your partner compliments, and share with them how much you appreciate what they do as a Dad or a Mum. Affirmation is a form of encouragement, and we all work better when we are encouraged.
- ◆ **Keep the balance right**
While your child has needs, remember you and your partner also have needs. If you neglect one, you will ultimately hurt the other. Marital satisfaction increases when parents not only nurture their children, but also learn to nurture themselves. You cannot give what you do not have. So take the time on a regular basis to re-energise your personal life.
- ◆ **Understand your partner's love language**
Each of us has a primary love language. It's how we give and receive love. If you identify the primary love language of your partner, as well as your own, you have discovered a powerful way to enhance your marital relationship. The five love languages are:

Words of affirmation	Saying everyday, "I love you". These people need to be told often they are loved and valued
Quality time	These people like having their partner's undivided attention. Being together is important
Receiving gifts	These people like to hold something in their hand and say, "You were thinking of me". Gifts are a visual symbol of love
Acts of service	Doing things in the home you know your partner would like you to do – dishes, bathing baby, taking out the rubbish, etc.
Physical touch	If your partner loves hugging, holding hands and just touching, you probably have a partner with a physical touch love language