

Now is Time to Give Your Relationship a Tune-Up

My husband and I have been married seven years, and we think we have a pretty good marriage. But it might be time for a "tune-up." Any suggestions?

It might be comforting to know that most couples could probably say the same thing. Research shows that marital satisfaction tends to decline as the years pass, especially after having children. It could be that the growing demands related to work, school, extra-curricular activities, and simply running the household prevent a couple from doing the things all good relationships need.

So, it sounds like it's time for you and your spouse to reassess. Where are you as a couple now? Where would you like to be in the future? It's a good idea to have that kind of talk periodically, even if you don't feel like you're having problems. Think of it as routine preventive maintenance. If your car deserves such care, certainly your marriage does, too.

Some couples like to do this at the start of every new year. Some use their anniversary month as a time for examination. This year, the week of Feb. 12 is National Marriage Week — that could be what spurs you to conduct your "relationship review."

Take some time to share what your expectations are for each other and the relationship. Can you count on each other in times of need? Do you have similar expectations for the amount of time you spend together, both alone and with other family members? Do you share spiritual beliefs and values with each other? Do



you discuss ideas in depth with each other, valuing each other's opinions?

Articulating your expectations for these aspects of your relationship prevents misinterpretations. Often, one member of a couple can feel hurt or bitter when these expectations aren't met, yet the other partner never understood the expectation was there to begin with. Don't let your expectations "go without saying." Those often become harsh disappointments.

One of the most important things to do is to take a look at how much time you're spending together alone. Even 10 or 15 minutes alone together on a regular basis can make a world of difference if you both treat it as "your time" together.

For other relationship ideas, check online for Ohio State University Extension's "Marriage Matters" newsletter. The free periodical provides research-based information, suggestions and activities to help couples enhance the quality of their relationship. Each Marriage Matters article addresses topics for couples at various stages in their relationship. It's available at <http://hec.osu.edu/famlife/marriagematters/>.

Family Fundamentals is a monthly column on family issues especially regarding finances and relationships. It is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Family Fundamentals, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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Dear Subscriber: Family Fundamentals is a monthly column on family issues. This column, the sixth in the series, was reviewed by Ted Futris, Ohio State University Extension family life state specialist and assistant professor of human development and family science in Ohio State's College of Human Ecology.

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