



BUILT TO LAST – PART III

Marriage Through Early Parenthood

By: Gretchen Reid, Motherhood Transitions

Continued from April article, www.motherhoodtransitions.com, additional resources, articles

As promised last month, I am going to answer the questions of what has changed since having children, and how do you keep the love alive. Ok – don't skip to the second half of the article so fast!

Of course many things change in any marriage once having children – both positive and challenging. On the positive side, many people experience more joy, permission to be more child-like as individuals and as a couple, expanded curiosity, and a great deal of shared pride and love never felt quite so deep before. Many people see new things in their partners that they never saw before, leading to a deeper appreciation and commitment to their partner and their relationship.

On the flip side, there are new challenges that are introduced when you start a family. Financial stresses are way up on top along with issues around time...not enough that is. There is the sleep issue that for some lasts a few months and others last for the rest of their lives. Oops, where went our spontaneity? The ability to just jump in the car and go away for the weekend, or even just go out to dinner no less? Sex? Where did that go? I guess that went out the window with the lack of sleep and the increased energy expended during the day. Me? What me? Who me? You talkin' to me? Resulting in the arguments about me time and you time and us time. Yep, we've all been there.

One of the traps that many couples land in is that the primary care taker and the kids tend to squeeze out the other parent. In traditional families, the husband suddenly becomes second fiddle while Mom is having a love affair with the kids. It's important to realize the various relationships that exist in a family. First there is you. Your relationship with yourself. Check in to see what attention you are providing yourself. Your spouse also needs a relationship with themselves. Then of course there is the couple relationship. What kind of time is that getting? Throw a kid in there and you have an exponentially greater number of relationship. Child with self, child with mother, child with father, full family relationship. Are each of those relationships being nurtured? Ok, now add another child...see how complicated it gets? How many combinations can you make out of that? Those of you with three and four or more children, watch out. Add any kind of post-

Motherhood Transitions

687 Crescent Lake Road • Golden, CO 80403 • gretchen@motherhoodtransitions.com • (303) 642-3105

partum depression or anxiety or even just common hormonal changes, or health issues with your child like colic or diabetes, and you are in for a ride.

So given all this and how children change the picture of your lazy Saturday morning over coffee and the newspaper, late night conversations, casual walks through the park hand in hand...calgon take me away... children took it away...what do we do to keep the love alive? The part you have all been waiting for!

When my husband and I got married the minister said something that neither of us will ever forget. “The best gift you can give to your children is a happy marriage.” We keep this as our guiding light. When we start to drift from each other and feel more like co-parents than lovers, it’s time to get out on our own. Going out together for a romantic dinner or an adventurous hike can do wonders to re-connect us and rekindle the sparks. Also, celebrating special days like anniversaries in simple but intimate and appreciative ways can help keep you in touch with the reasons you got married in the first place. Dates can get pretty pricy though and they only come around every now and then. So relying on that is not enough.

Every couple has their own way of keeping the love alive on a daily basis. Setting aside time to spend together is one health way to do this. Some couples enjoy playing board games, just talking with each other, or snuggling on the couch watching a movie after the kids go to bed. That of course requires you to get bed time under control and have the kids to bed before you’re too pooped yourself.

And yes, having sex regularly. I said it! Along those lines, one of the worst things you can do is use sex as a bargaining chip and withhold it when things aren’t going well. Instead, see it as just the thing that will bring you together and help reconnect you on all levels. It really is an important part of the marriage and should be left independent of any other issues you may have between you. If this seems to be a sticking point in your marriage, you may want to consider exploring your own personal relationship with sex in order to free you up to experience it in a healthy manner.

Saying “I love you” regularly and exchanging hugs and kisses for no real reason can do wonders. Gentle touches, connected gazes, knowing smiles, words of appreciation. Also leaving little love notes around for your partner to find randomly can significantly alter the energy between the two of you, and the whole family for that matter. *(for a great way to do this see a previous article of mine entitled ‘Transitions of the Heart’ – www.motherhoodtransitions.com, additional resources page, articles, nurturing your relationship).*

Some people like to use quizzes to learn more about each other. There are lots of little books with questions to ask your partner. You can do this face to face or even by emailing or text messaging each other on occasion. Continue to explore each other in fun ways. You can never know too much about each other and the excitement of learning something new about yourself and your partner adds to the mystery and anticipation that is so fun in the beginning of any romance. It may be time to look a little deeper and see your partner in a new light. Suggest something fun and exciting! Break out of the old routine.

Motherhood Transitions

687 Crescent Lake Road • Golden, CO 80403 • gretchen@motherhoodtransitions.com • (303) 642-3105

For those of you who have not been away from the kids, it may be time. The kids will be fine. Arrange for good care and go away for a weekend or even a week. My husband and I spent a weekend up in Winter Park just the two of us this winter and vowed that we would plan a weekend alone at least every 3 months. We've got another one coming up this month! We're also planning a week long river trip this summer. One couple values spontaneity. The energy to not only say "let's do that" but also to pack their bags, grab their keys and go. I know for some it takes a lot of inner dialogue to be able to 'get there', but it really is important for the whole family. Explore that inner dialogue and test it for truth and accuracy. Shall I say it again? The kids will be fine!!! And you deserve it!

When ever you begin to stray, bring to mind what you loved about your partner in the beginning of the relationship. Tap into that and revive a little bit as you can. Particularly when you have been with someone for a long time it is easy to forget those things until they are completely out of touch. Keep them at arms reach, even if your current situation wont allow for the full blown experience. And if that doesn't work, go ahead and fake it til' ya make it – act with love even if you're not feeling the love. Sooner or later you'll begin to feel it once again.

**For a more in-depth exploration of Nurturing Your Relationship
ATTEND a workshop with Gretchen Reid.**

Nurturing Your Relationship

With your spouse, your kids, and yourself!

It's not easy being parents raising a young family – lots of things change in your relationship with your spouse and even with yourself. Who am I and where do I fit? How do I stay present with my kids? Who's this person sleeping next to me in my bed?

In this workshop you will:

- **Take a snap shot into your life as it is in this moment**
- **Explore the complexity of your roles and relationships**
- **Redefine yourself and your world**
- **Prioritize and nurture the most important relationships in your life – “Me, You, and Them”**

Motherhood Transitions

687 Crescent Lake Road • Golden, CO 80403 • gretchen@motherhoodtransitions.com • (303) 642-3105



Dates: **Three Evening Series: Tuesdays, May 6, 13, 20**

Time: **5:00 – 6:30 pm**

Location: Wee Creekers Child Care Center, Coal Creek Canyon

Price: \$55/person or \$85/couple

Registration: Gretchen Reid, Motherhood Transitions, (303) 642-3105

SPECIAL OFFER FOR WEE CREEKER FAMILIES:

Sign up by Tuesday, April 29th and receive **\$20 off one drop in day** (full time families see Linda)

Motherhood Transitions

687 Crescent Lake Road • Golden, CO 80403 • gretchen@motherhoodtransitions.com • (303) 642-3105