

Marriages Need Adventure, Excitement

BY VAL FARMER

How exciting are the things you and your partner do together? Good question. It may be a better question than you think.

Life with "Stick in the Mud." I've counseled with couples where one partner is described as a regular "stick in the mud." Their children are adults and live far away. In this case, "Stick in the Mud", the husband, is content. Way too content.

The routine is simple. Go to work. Come home. Eat. Watch TV. Fall asleep.

There is too much TV. Weekends are filled with too many football, baseball or basketball games. Too much staying at home. Not enough conversation. His wife can't pry him out of the house for a movie, a vacation or even a drive. No trips to see the grandchildren. Suggestions for change fall upon deaf ears.

Stick-in-the-Mud's spouse, "Wants to Go," is lonely. She wants attention and interest. She wants to feel loved. She wants companionship. She needs something more than what she is getting. She is becoming unhappy.

Wants-to-Go tries going out with friends, talking on the phone, shopping, joining a group but feels empty and bored. Her conversations at her work are OK but do not satisfy her needs. The empty nest is emptier than she realized. She was too busy with the children and other responsibilities to notice how sterile her marriage had become. Now she is getting a glimpse of the future and doesn't like it.

Worse yet, Stick-in-the-Mud becomes critical and resentful of Wants-to-Go being gone so much. He wants her home but for reasons she fails to understand. He tries to put her on the defensive and make her feel guilty for things that she is doing to preserve her sanity.

Have I made this scenario desperate enough? How about adding a dose of irrational jealousy in the equation? There - now the situation is desperate enough. How do you think



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Stick-in-the-Mud is going to react to a request to go for counseling? After all, he comes by his name naturally.

Excitement and relationship satisfaction. Psychologists Arthur and Elaine Aron from State University at Stony Brook, NY have studied the factors that keep couples in long term relationships close.

They believe the courtship and honeymoon phase of a relationship is exhilarating and expansive.

Couples are getting acquainted. They spend long hours in conversation, explore each other's lives and worlds and engage in intensive risk-taking. Each grows personally because of the association. As his or her partner becomes familiar and predictable, the honeymoon period wears off. The breath-taking period of rapid expansion is over and they settle into a period of gradual decline in relationship satisfaction.

The Arons have an antidote. They've found in their research that when couples in long term marriages spend more time together doing self-expanding activities, they increase their satisfaction in the relationship. Their theory is that doing things together strengthens bonds and brings closeness to couples if the activity is exciting.

In the early phases of a relationship, the relationship itself provides enough excitement and satisfaction. Exciting activities don't contribute that much. However, with long term marriages, exciting activities contribute significantly in predicting marital satisfaction.

What kind of activity is exciting and self-expanding? The Arons identify two key aspects: novelty and arousal. A novel activity provides new information and experiences.

Novel activities are generally arousing. Examples of new or exotic activities might be attending a musical concert or play, studying nature, bird watching, going on a cruise, etc.

On the other hand, arousing experiences are not always novel. High physical exertion and sensory stimulation help create a sense of alert expansion and competence. Bicycling, dancing, riding horses, roller skating or hiking - high-level activities which cause excitement - are some examples cited by the Arons.

Research findings. In an experiment, married couples were assigned to one of three groups. The first group received an assignment to spend one and one half hours a week over a period of ten weeks doing activities from a list of activities each partner had independently rated as "exciting." The second group was assigned to choose activities from activities rated as "pleasant." A third group was composed of couples on a waiting list who received no instructions to spend extra time together.

At the end of ten weeks, the Exciting-Activity Group experienced a significant increase in relationship satisfaction compared with both the Pleasant-Activity and the control group. Just spending extra time together didn't increase relationship satisfaction, but participation in exciting activities did. A follow-up laboratory study confirmed this result and showed that the effect was much greater for those couples who had been together for longer periods.

Well dear, how about it? For the sake our marriage, shall we go hang gliding or mountain climbing this weekend? Seriously, those activities aren't on our list, but others are. Nevertheless, Stick-in-the-Mud and Wants-to-Go, may I make the following recommendation? Plan one evening out a week for ten weeks, do exciting activities, and see if you don't feel better about each other.

THIS COLUMN IS SPONSORED BY LEWIS & CLARK BEHAVIORAL HEALTH.

VISITING HOURS:

Patient Care And Safety: The Use Of Medication

BY BARBARA LARSON, RN

Vice President Patient Care Services
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Larson

counter medications you take, including vitamins and any herbs. Those may interact or interfere with medications and it is important for the caregiver to know what you take.

I cannot stress how important it is for you to know about your medications. You can be a partner in your care when you can provide this valuable information.

If you are in the hospital it is appreciated if you look at any medication that is brought to you and ask what it is for. This helps to educate you and to keep you safe.

As the patient's role as part of the health care team continues to expand and grow, patient and family involvement is more important than ever to achieve safe and error-free patient care. With you as a partner, health care workers can create a culture of safety with open lines of communication between them and their patients/caregivers families.

No one wants to make an error and with you, the patient, as a care partner, we can work together to keep you safe.

This weekly column is produced by the public relations office at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital to promote healthy lifestyles and provide useful medical information to our community.

Medications are perhaps the most commonly used intervention in health, providing palliative, symptomatic and curative treatment of diseases and conditions. The opportunity for error in the use and administration process is significant. The management of the six processes of medication (selection and procurement; storage; ordering and transcribing; preparing and dispensing; administration; and monitoring) becomes a vital aspect of patient care and safety and ideally this responsibility is shared by physicians, nurses and pharmacists. A key partner in ensuring the correct medication is ordered and given is you - the patient.

It is very important that you know what medications you take, and the correct dose. It is important that you keep a written list and keep that list up to date. If you are given new medications, add those to the list with all the data, the amount and when you take it. If the doctor changes or stops one of your medications, make a mark through that drug on your list and write the date it was discontinued or changed. You should bring this list with you when you visit a doctor, or if you are going to the hospital. The caregivers can use this information to ensure you are on the correct medications.

Include on the list any over-the-

similar situation, as it is located on a beach that's below sea-level, making it more susceptible to tsunamis.

For now, both women are just thankful their families survived.

It's a relief to say everyone was OK, but it's not the same for other people who lost relatives," Elder said.

Although many communication lines are still down, they

were able to get that information sooner thanks to the Internet.

"That is the good thing, because we have friends who have the Internet, and you can get them and they can get the other people," Skorey said.

For Elder, the ordeal is not quite at an end.

"Just to be at peace, I need to speak to (my family) directly - (it's) closure," she said.

CHILE

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"(On Saturday) my stomach hurt and I was shaking and I just wanted to talk to them," Elder said. "I just wanted to know... It was about 12, 13 hours before I talked to anybody."

Elder said much of her family now lives in Santiago, "and it was very strong there. There were no casualties (in my family), so we were glad to hear that."

One of Elder's nieces was vacationing in an area that was harder hit, but she made it through OK.

"My niece, when she called me, said, 'I tried to walk, but I stuck to the wall, and I fell twice.' She said she has a few bruises," Elder said.

Skorey said her family also made it through the earthquake, except they are now displaced from their homes.

"Now they are living on the street because they can't go back to their houses and their apartments," she said.

Earthquakes were a fact of life for the pair when they were growing up in Chile, but that didn't make them any easier to deal with.

"The scary part is you don't know where to go," Elder said. "You can't walk because it's like gravity is taken away from you, and you go sideways..."

"I remember my mother screaming and praying, because sometimes (the quakes) last a minute, sometimes two minutes, and you don't know what's going to happen," she said. "It feels like the end of the world."

In 1960, Skorey's home city of Valdivia was the site of the strongest earthquake ever recorded, a 9.5 event on the Moment Magnitude Scale, a more precise form of measurement than the Richter Scale.

Even though she was just a little girl, Skorey said she still

remembers seeing her neighbors running frantically for shelter when the earthquake hit.

"In the back yard, we had a tree, and we held the tree and stayed there, and we saw the houses going back and forth like a swing set," Skorey said.

"It was very, very scary. You could hear people screaming, crying out, and when you are little, you don't know why. Everything was moving."

Skorey's family was displaced from their home for nearly a month after the earthquake, having to move to single-level homes that were still under construction.

"Each house had three families," she said. "We stayed there until everything settled down, and we came back to our houses."

Perhaps the strongest memory of the incident occurred shortly afterwards when Skorey was going somewhere with her mother. She said she saw a covered

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WELLNESS EVENTS March 2010

National Nutrition Month®
Friday, March 5th - 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon & 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. (HealthMarket)
Join Brenda in the HealthMarket as she celebrates National Nutrition Month® and provides tips for eating right at any age. Stop by and "Ask the Dietitian" any questions you may have regarding nutrition and health.

Antioxidants and Eye Health
Wednesday, March 10th - 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon & 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. (HealthMarket)
There's no substitute for the quality of life good vision offers. Adding certain nutrients to your diet every day - either through foods or supplements - can help save your vision. Researchers have linked eye-friendly nutrients such as lutein/zeaxanthin, vitamin C, vitamin E, and zinc to reducing the risk of certain eye diseases, including macular degeneration and cataract formation. Join Brenda along with the American Optometric Association in celebrating Save Your Vision Month!

Happy St. Patrick's Day!
Wednesday, March 17th - 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Deli Department)
Join Brenda in the Deli Department and sample a traditional favorite - the Reuben Sandwich! Grilled without added fat, this sandwich is a delicious option for lunch any day of the year!

Frozen Fruits and Vegetables
Friday, March 19 5:00 p.m. (second floor conference room)
Join Sharon Guthmiller for a presentation on the health benefits and safe steps to freeze fresh fruits and vegetables.

Dietitian Produce Pick of the Month
Saturday, March 20th - 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. (Produce Department)
Join Brenda in the Produce Department and sample the produce pick of the month! Celebrate National Nutrition Month by trying a new fruit or vegetable!

Gluten-free Product Sampling
Wednesday, March 24th - 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon & 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. (HealthMarket)
Do you have celiac disease or know of someone that does? Do you have a hard time finding great tasting gluten-free foods? Then don't miss out on this Gluten-Free product sampling in the HealthMarket! Your Hy-Vee Dietitian Brenda will showcase great-tasting gluten-free foods for you to sample and will be available to answer your nutrition questions.

Smart & Delicious™ LaTortilla Factory 100 Calorie Tortillas Demofest
Wednesday, March 31st - 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. (HealthMarket)
Are you looking for a tortilla that is delicious and low in calories? Stop by the HealthMarket and try a Smart & Delicious™ LaTortilla Factory 100 Calorie Tortilla wrap! LaTortilla Factory's 100 Calorie Tortillas contain 8 grams of fiber, only 1.5 grams of fat, Omega 3-rich flax seeds, added calcium and no Trans fats! They are available in Traditional and 100% Whole Wheat varieties and are a delicious addition to a healthy diet.

Look for these specials in the HealthMarket in the month of March:

- Friday, March 12th - HealthMarket Stock-up Sale (10% off)
- March 22nd-28th - Riverbank Bathing Co. Soaps 2/\$7.00
- March 29th-April 4th - Wunder's Golden Flax Seed 2 lb. Bag 2/\$7.00

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Building Bonds Between Mom and Baby

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- WiFi Internet service
- Meals for the mother's partner
- Updated family lounge
- Flat screen TV, in-room refrigerator

Please join us

Open House
March 10 ~ 5-7 p.m.
Meet in the hospital lobby for a tour.

Avera Sacred Heart Hospital

Look no further.
www.AveraSacredHeart.com