



Marriage minute

A marriage ministry of St. Andrew Lutheran Church

Creating Shared Meaning

Most of us know that marriage is not some amazing happily ever after experience like the in movies or in romance novels. Real marriage is hard work. Think back to your dating years. Most of you remember having fun together and being excited to see one another yet fun and excitement can only last so long. Zach Brittle, a certified Gottman Therapist writes: Personally, I think compatibility (or lack thereof) is overrated. Couples of all shapes, sizes, nationalities and creeds have the ability to make it work. Research shows that the happiest and healthiest couples have a unique ability to create shared meaning. Ultimately, marriages that take time to develop deep connection and meaning which likely cultivate intimacy, create a mature and lasting love.

So how do you keep that love for one another lasting forever? You must make time to nurture and grow it. A successful marriage is more than raising kids, paying bills, and accomplishing tasks. It requires a meaningful relationship that includes a faith component and a sense of culture which may include family roles, goals, and rituals.

Ritual connections are those day to day things that you do as a couple that makes your relationship grow. This could be as simple as creating a daily goodbye routine or a return home routine. It could include going to bed together at the same time every day. It could also include a weekly respite for one spouse by the other spouse taking an active role in a daily task.

In addition, marriages must include activities the couple likes to do together. This tends to be easy while dating because a couple just enjoys being with one another. A few years into marriage though many couples complain they enjoy doing different things. You may need to be creative here and let me use my own experiences as an example. I'm an avid runner and was a college athlete. My husband does not run unless a bear is chasing him. We compromised by playing ultimate frisbee together. Also, we both enjoy biking, but I always wanted to bike hard and that was frustrating to my husband. We compromised by getting him an electric bicycle and now we bike more together than we did in the earlier years of our marriage.

Great marriages happen when you create a sense of shared meaning in your marriage. These can help you through the challenging times and remind you that your common commitment and shared faith in Jesus Christ is the foundation of your marriage.

What activities do you do together in your marriage that create shared meaning or build deep connection? If you enjoy doing different activities, brainstorm ways you can find a common ground to do an activity together.

Considering writing a family/couple mission statement. What are your beliefs, goals, values? (i.e. The mission statement of St. Andrew is Love God, Love Each Other, and Serve the World. What would your family mission look like?).

Bethany Stern, St. Andrew member
Marriage and Family Therapist