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BUSINESS

Your anniversary is coming up and you're trying to find the perfect card to express how you feel about your significant other. This one's too funny, this one's too mushy. You think, "He/she already knows how I feel about him/her. I don't need a card." But you do need that card; it's just one of many tools to help your relationship stay or get back on the path of love.

Relationships are a balancing act of two people sharing their lives, providing each other with love and support while still maintaining their identities as separate individuals. As years pass, anything and everything – career, kids, finances, illness, general stresses of life – can get in the way of a couple's intimacy.

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So what can you do to keep that closeness and maintain the va – va – voom in your relationship?

MAINTAIN YOUR INTERESTS.

When you first began your relationship, you each had separate friends, interests and ideas. Your individuality is part of what drew you to each other.

Keep up your friendships and hobbies and encourage your partner to do the same.

ESTABLISH MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION. Engage in conversations of substance and not just superficial small talk. Make eye contact. Carve out time to sit and listen to each other without judgment and with the same respect you would offer anyone else.

GIVE IMPORTANCE. Give importance to your sexual relationship. Be flirtatious; it's intimate and fun! Make time to be romantic; plan a date night. Pay attention to the sexual chemistry you have with your partner; this expression of love goes beyond what words can say.

DON'T TAKE YOUR PARTNER FOR GRANTED. Express your appreciation for your partner – for who they are and for the love and kindness they extend to you. Never underestimate their ability to surprise or delight you.

Show You Care, Use Protection

Age does not protect you from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Older people who are sexually active may be at risk for diseases such as syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia infection, genital herpes, hepatitis B, genital warts and HIV. Using protection shields both partners – what a lovely way to say you care.

Set the Stage for Romance

There's an old myth that says as people get older they aren't interested in intimacy. It's time to set the record straight! Try a few of these tips to help increase the intimacy in your relationship.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR APPEARANCE. Remember all that time you spent in front of the mirror when you first starting dating or were first married? While there is more to a relationship than looks, not caring at all about your appearance sends a negative message.

GO TO BED AT THE SAME TIME. Bedtime needs to be "couple time." When you don't go to bed with your partner, it sends an "I'm not that excited anymore" message. If only one of you is a night owl, you may have to meet in the middle to create a bedtime that works for both of you.

NO T.V. IN THE BEDROOM. Your bedroom should be used for only two things: sleep and sex. Any other activities, including a T.V., a computer or a treadmill, are distractions that encourage distance.

A.M. AFFECTION. If you hardly interact or show affection for each other during the day, how can you expect the passion to magically appear at night? Flirt over your morning coffee. Send your partner off to work with a big hug or kiss. Small reminders such as an e-mail or text throughout the day say "you're on my mind."

In order to overcome fading intimacy in a committed relationship, you have to attract each other over and over again. To do this, you must understand how your partner's mind and body react. Women associate emotion and intellectual connection with their sex drive. They are often not as easily aroused. Men, on the other hand, display a more physical response, one that is not driven by thoughts and feelings.

Successful relationships are those where the couple is in sync in and outside of the bedroom. Daytime activities done together such as a cooking class, playing a sport or dance lessons often help increase a couple's connection before going into the bedroom.

Intimacy During Your Golden Years

Many older adults, ages 65 to 85, remain sexually active. As we age, sexuality can become challenging as our health conditions change. Conditions concerning our cardiovascular system such as diabetes or high blood pressure may inhibit arousal. Joint health, which can include various types of arthritis, may impair movement or cause pain. Older adults may suffer from a lower libido as well. Talk to your doctor about the different options that may be available so you and your partner can continue to enjoy each other free of worries.

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