

Marriage for Keeps

A Project of Catholic Charities, Inc.
— Diocese of Wichita

Strengthening
Families for Life

Volume 3, Issue 3

March 2010



In Their Own Words

by Christine Siefers

Our couples are the best voice for sharing the benefits of the Marriage for Keeps program. Each month we'll give some couples an opportunity to highlight the effects that Marriage for Keeps has had on their relationships and their families. This month we hear from Monica and Andy and Erica and Dishon.

Monica and Andy feel that their accountability to one another has increased because of their involvement in Marriage for Keeps. They've found that "decide—don't slide," the Speaker Listener Technique and

Time Out have all been very beneficial for their relationship.

"The Speaker Listener Technique really taught me that I need to listen to what she says completely before I talk," said Andy. He also said that during a particularly heated argument, they utilized a 23-hour Time Out (24 hours is the suggested limit). It allowed them both to come back calmer and resolve their issue the next day, Andy said.

Monica feels that she and Andy now have a new appreciation for each other.

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Remember: Safety First

by Lori Farha, LMSW

Do you remember your first day of the Marriage for Keeps workshop? One of the key concepts you learned was how to "make it safe" to connect. What are some of the ways you can make it safe?

Physical Safety: When you get angry and frustrated do you lose control and have difficulty handling the emotions? By using the Within Our Reach timeout when you find yourself escalating, you allow yourself time to calm down and come back to the situation with a different attitude. This can help keep physical safety in your relationship. Using the stress and relaxation exercises during your timeout will help reduce blood pressure which reduces the likelihood of a physical expression of anger.

Emotional Safety: Feeling loved, accepted and cared for is very important. Feeling emotionally connected to your spouse may be what we want more than anything else. By making sure our communications are respectful and learning how to handle conflict, we provide each other emotional safety. Using Speaker Listener and XYZ statements helps build emotional safety. Learning the love style of our partner and deciding to work at meeting those needs for our mate also helps build emotional safety.

Commitment Safety: Knowing that your partner will be there provides safety and

security. Being available to each other through the good and the bad, the thick and the thin gives us the safety net we desire. This is one of the reasons people get married. It is about trust and knowing that you are both committed on working towards a future together. Being willing to make sacrifices for your relationship lets your partner know you are committed. Commitment is about protecting who you are as a couple and what you are building together for the future. Commitment is making a choice to give up other choices. To show your partner how important he or she is to you – or to make your relationship a higher priority – you have to make choices that are in favor of your relationship. It might be appealing to linger with co-workers after work but what is your real priority? You get to make the choice. Your partner will feel more secure when you choose home and family.

Community Safety: One of the most important things we can do as adults is to create safe and healthy communities for our children. Having safe surroundings, safe neighborhoods, and connecting with safe friends and family all provide healthy communities. We can look for others around us who support our values and help us feel safe. Finding community organizations or creating supportive friendships helps build strength in our marriage and family.

"The real act of marriage takes place in the heart, not in the ballroom or church or synagogue. It's a choice you make — not just on your wedding day, but over and over again — and that choice is reflected in the way you treat your husband or wife." ~ Barbara De Angelis

Holidays are fun times to celebrate with family and friends. Did you know in the month of March there are also some really funny holidays?

March 1 is National Pig Day, Peanut Butter Lovers Day and Share a Smile Day. Did that make you smile?

The second week of March is Bubble Week! See the recipe to make your own bubbles on page 3.

On March 11 celebrate Johnny Appleseed. Maybe you could eat an apple that day or bake an apple dessert.

Do something fantastic for your family and friends on March 15 to commemorate Incredible Kid Day.

St. Patrick's Day is March 17, so make sure you wear something green.

The first day of spring is March 20. Maybe you could plant some seeds and then sit back to watch them grow.

If you like to write poetry, then you should celebrate Children's Poetry Day on March 21.

None of these holidays sound like fun to you? Then make one up. March 26 is Make Up Your Own Holiday Day. The sky's the limit.

Take a Walk in the Park Day is March 30. Hopefully the weather will cooperate that day.

Whatever you decide to do, have fun! See how many people you can get to join in the festivities.

To find more fun holidays to celebrate in March or any other month, go to www.holidayinsights.com

How to Keep the Spark Alive

excerpted from www.TwoOfUs.org

Q: We've been married for years. How do you keep the spark alive when you've tried everything?

A: Keeping the spark in our relationship after years of marriage is a goal that many people have, but very few are able to achieve. The daily routine, everyday challenges, and constant stressors take time and energy away from our main relationship. It is easy to get stuck there and one day realize that we have grown so far apart from each other that it's hard to recognize my partner.

Marriage is not an event, it is a process, and we need to nurture it on a daily basis. As human beings, all of us are constantly changing, and part of keeping "the spark alive" is to communicate who we are to each other. The skill of "speaking up" about who I am and what are my needs is actually a gift that we give to our spouse.

At the same time, we need to have the skill of "listening" to our spouse and to encourage him/her to tell us about their needs. To the extent that we are able to open up, to accept and embrace our spouse for who he/she is, we will be able to build closeness and intimacy. These are key elements of keeping the spark in our relationship. Doing this may also require us to keep an attitude of cooperation, knowing that when our needs don't match, the best deal is the one that works for both of us.

When we are able to cooperate with each other in balancing our needs, we convey love, acceptance and affirmation of each other as individuals and both of us as a couple.

The more each of you shows up for yourself and for each other, the more you can keep that fire alive!

In Their Own Words

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"We're aware of what we're doing in our relationship," she said. "We have learned new things about each other." And they didn't think that was possible after 14 years of marriage!

The couple has also begun to utilize some of the tools with their kids and see them being habit in their household for many years to come.

Erica and Dishon have been married for five years and the foundation of their marriage has been strengthened and reinforced through their participation in Marriage for Keeps. "It's helped us go from assuming things to knowing things in our relationship," said Dishon. "It also helped us to see our marriage as the most important investment we have," he continued, "and just like with financial investing you must keep investing your resources and doing the research to make

sure you get the best return on your investment."

Since their 12-week workshop ended, Erica and Dishon have continued to use each Wednesday as their date night, a concept which was reinforced through the program. They've also been reading the 10 Great Dates book together.

"I really enjoy the different tools the program gave us to use in our marriage," said Erica. She added that they use the Speaker Listener Technique and XYZ statements frequently. They're teaching their two oldest children (ages 9 and 8) to use the tools as well. Erica said they find that during the most critical times the tools do get used and they alleviate so many of the negative interpretations that occurred before they were armed with the skills learned in the program.

"We spend more time reflecting on where our marriage is now and where we're going to be in 10, 15 or 20 years," Dishon said.

Calendar of Classes

Event Details

March 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 MFK	3	4	5 MfK retreat	6 MFK MfK retreat
7 MfK Retreat	8	9 MFK	10	11	12	13 MFK
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 MFK
21	22	23 MFK	24	25	26	27 MFK
28	29	30 MFK	31			

March

Marriage for Keeps-Retreat

March 5, 6, 7 at St. Anthony of Padua, Liberal. This class will be in English.

Marriage for Keeps

March 6, 13, 20, 27 at the White Tiger Martial Arts Bldg. 1905 W Wyatt Earp, Dodge City Ks. 3-6:00pm. This class will be in Spanish.

Marriage for Keeps

March 2, 9, 23, 30 at the Dodge City Community College 6-8:00 pm. This class will be in English.

April 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 MFK
4	5	6 MFK	7	8	9	10 MFK
11	12	13 MFK	14	15	16	17 MFK
18	19	20 MFK	21	22	23	24 MFK
25	26	27	28	29	30	

April

Marriage for Keeps

April 3, 10 at the White Tiger Martial Arts Bldg. 1905 W Wyatt Earp, Dodge City Ks. 3-6:00pm. This class will be in Spanish.

Marriage for Keeps

April 6, 13, 20 at the Dodge City Community College 6-8:00 pm. This class will be in English

Marriage for Keeps

April 10, 17, 24 at the Garden City Community College, endowment room 3-5pm. This class will be in Spanish.



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Marriage for Keeps Announcements

Catholic Social Service can **prepare your taxes free of charge**, if you make under \$58,000. Call Susan at 272-0010 for more details or to set up an appointment.

Myths & Facts about Food Stamp Benefits and Working People

MYTH: Only unemployed people can get food stamps.

FACT: Most people who work at low wage jobs can get food stamp benefits. Many working people use food stamp benefits to help make ends meet.

MYTH: You can't get food stamps if you get unemployment

FACT: People who get unemployment may still qualify for food stamp benefits.

MYTH: If you have too many assets, you can't get food stamps.

FACT: Your house hold may have up to \$2000 in assets. But some assets like your home and car do not count. Getting food stamp benefits also depends on your house hold size, income and some expenses, like child support and housing and childcare cost.

Staff at Catholic Social Service can assist in filling out the paperwork online at their office at 603 N. 8th, Garden City.

Marriage for Keeps, classes in Spanish, will start Sat. April 10 at the Endowment Room at GCCC 3:00-5:00
Call CSS at 272-0010 to sign up
\$50 in Gift Cards Classes are FREE

marriageforkeeps-ks.org

catholicsocialservice.org



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