

Marriage is a Four-Letter Word

by Dr. Brian Hargis

From CHAPTER 9: Reasonable Rules for Raising Rug Rats

SHOW OPEN AFFECTION

With Children –

Openly confirm and reaffirm your love for your children. If they are young, shower them with hugs and kisses. They'll appreciate it when they get older. If they are teens and the kisses and hugs are no longer "cool," look them in the eye-balls and confirm your love for them. If it's genuine, they'll know it.

"Actions speak louder than words"

Show your affection by random acts of kindness. For example, surprise your children individually with something special. Spend time with them alone, together, and involved with something they enjoy. Watch a cartoon with them. Read them a book. Play with their toys. Chase each other with squirt guns. Ride bikes. Play hide-and-go-seek. Live life and enjoy them while they are young because time flies by and soon they'll be grown and out of the house. Build those strong bonds while they are young and you'll have a connection with them when they are a teenager.



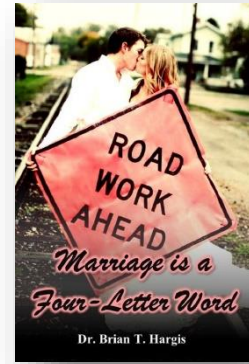
It's especially important to take an interest in the hobbies that they enjoy. For instance, if your son is into snowboarding, ask him questions about it. Learn some terms such as *chicken salad*, *cross pop*, and *tailfish*.

Although snowboarding may not appeal to you in the least bit, by taking an active interest in something he/she enjoys, you are demonstrating your love for them and they'll KNOW it!

Fathers—if your daughter enjoys shopping (as most teen girls do), take her out to the mall and “shop until you drop.” She may think you've lost your mind but you will gain a relationship, and someday when she needs serious advice, she'll turn to mom and dad instead of her boyfriend or school friends.

If you have a good relationship with your teens, they will have no problem saying, “I love you.” It will come natural because your relationship is natural. You love and are loved in return.

Perhaps some of you were raised with an absence of love. Maybe your father didn't show affection to you or your mother. Perhaps you never heard the words, “I love you” or “good job son.” If



that's the case, break the mold and be the father or mother you need to be. Don't let your past negatively influence their present. Force yourself to show affection in the way that you didn't receive it growing up. Allow yourself to have feelings and show your emotions for their sake and the sake of your grandchildren. Laugh with them, cry with them, love them.

Tips to Parents

Let your children see open affection and playfulness between you and your spouse. Share kisses and hugs in front of the children and let them see you cuddle on the couch. Let them witness your kind acts of affection towards one another because they learn from you what a relationship is like. If you've lost the love, rekindle by taking small steps in the right direction. If you have the love, retain it and pass it along.

Fathers—train your sons to honor, respect and love your wife and their mother. How they treat their mother is exactly how they will treat their future wife. Show them what's acceptable on Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, and your wife's birthday. Show them how to keep the love alive throughout the years with flowers, cards, love notes, and open affection. Be the respectable, loveable, honorable father to model their lives after.

Mothers—train your daughters to love, cherish and respect your husband. Show them how to take care of their future husband by setting the example. You are an open book of what to do, what not to do and how to react emotionally.

When I was a teenager, I remember my father would get home from work at 6 pm. Mom would begin preparing for supper at 5:30 pm so that we could eat an hour later. She developed a relaxed atmosphere for dad to come home to. The house was clean, the beds were made, the living room was organized, the distractions were minimal and the smell was that of food cooking in the oven was fabulous.

I remember how refreshing it must have been for dad to come home from a 12-hour day, receive a kiss and a hug from mom, and to be greeted with, "How was your day?" That's my example of a husband and wife relationship. Years later I get the same treatment from my wife, just as I was show and you know what? It's still fabulous.

Both parents play such a dynamic role in the influence of the children. The life you are leading is the life you are teaching, so make it the best life you can.

For more of Chapter 9: **Reasonable Rules for Raising Rug Rats**

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