

## 5 Simple Ways to Stoke the Fires of Love in Marriage

by Dr. David B. Hawkins

*What's love got to do with it?*

Everything!

At least the kind of love you read about in [1 Corinthians 13](#).

In today's world there are many that seem to believe they can be involved in a relationship, even [marriage](#), and allow true love to be a peripheral aspect of the union. The sacrificial, committed giving talked about by the Apostle Paul seems to be absent in many relationships.

I'm working with a fifty year old man, Garth, who is much like many other forty-somethings who have awakened to find they have been spiritually, physically and emotionally lazy. They have realized, too late, that love means giving more than taking. He now finds himself alone and fearing his wife and twenty-five years may not give him another chance.

Interestingly, Garth is similar to many men who call me when their marriage is falling apart but not before. They wait until their marriage is falling apart around them before they pick up the phone. They live in near abject denial, lying to themselves about the severity of their situation, before deciding they must do something to save something that really is precious to them.

Garth, like most men, may have been lazy in marriage, but have not been vocationally lazy. No, in this one arena of their life they've pushed the envelope. They pulled out the stops to ensure that they rose the corporate ladder or become the best tradesman possible. They work hard and at times even play hard. But they don't pick up self-help books or seek counseling.

Today Garth sits alone, his [family](#) life shattered by his laziness. He has focused much of his life on himself. Most important, his shallow abilities to connect emotionally has meant he is not an integral aspect of his family. He is finding that out too late as well. You may think I'm being too hard on men. Perhaps. However, study after study show that most men lack the ability to create close friendships, falter when it comes to intimacy in marriage, leave much of the emotional responsibilities of the family to their mate and are spiritually absent. Ouch!

Now that I've given the bad news, let's talk about what men can do to be an integral part of their marriage and family and ways they can restore their love life. Let's explore necessary steps to keep the home fires strong and vibrant.

One, *step back and honestly evaluate your marriage*. While the truth may initially hurt, it will also set you free. The truth will allow you to make course corrections, much as feedback on the job helps us stop drifting and move intentionally toward a healthier relationship.

Two, *take responsibility for your marriage*. While I certainly am not implying that men are solely responsible for the direction of the marriage, they play an instrumental role. As men take responsibility for loving their wives as Christ loved the church, sacrificially giving to her, she will most often respond lovingly.

Third, *ask your mate how you can be a better partner*. When asked, she will give you important information. Be gently curious, showing that you really do care about her and how she feels about the marriage. Prepare yourself for criticism and show that you value the feedback.

Fourth, *set incremental goals*. You will not turn your marriage around in one fell swoop. Determine one or two areas of your life and make necessary changes. Even a five or ten percent change can feel monumental to both you and your mate. For example, determine to become a better conversationalist, sharing personally with your mate for fifteen minutes a night. Go out on a date once a week. Read a self-help book together.

Finally, *celebrate your marriage and your mate*. Consider what would happen if you lost your mate. Divorce doesn't happen in an instant, but rather after years of neglect. You can choose to appreciate your mate and your marriage and reap wonderful benefits in the process.

In summary, love has everything to do with happiness in life. When our marriage is not doing well, we will feel the immense emotional drain from it. Invest in your marriage, and your relationship skills, as you have in your career. You'll be glad you did.

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