

Bringing out the Best In Each Other – Aug. 2023

LWCC Marriage Ministries Email for August 2023

Well, greetings to you all from a very sunny day in New Plymouth. I had hoped to get this out before we headed up here, but the past week has been more than a little hectic. Ronnie is recovering well from her Hip Replacement operation 3 weeks ago, and a trip to New Plymouth certainly wasn't on the cards, however, her mother passed away up here last Thursday. So we flew up yesterday, and have a Memorial Service on Saturday afternoon. The travel was a bit rough on her and she didn't have a great night last night, but hopefully as she rests today, things will improve.

As always with these emails, we trust you find what follows generates some helpful discussion, and further soul-searching, in another aspect of this amazing thing called marriage.

Have you ever heard the comment, *"They bring out the best in each other"*. Maybe you've said it about another couple, or people have said it about you and your spouse. It's a great compliment, but what does it really mean? Is it something that only comes naturally or can you work on it? Does it fade over time? How do you know if you're still doing it? While there's no scientific formula for what it looks like, here are eight sure-fire signs that you and your spouse bring out the best in each other.

1. You have a healthy level of self-confidence:

Maybe you've grown more confident since meeting your partner. Or perhaps you've maintained a healthy confidence over your time together. Either way, this is a good sign that you consistently build each other up. When you're constantly critical, even in seemingly minor ways, those little comments can eat away at your spouse's confidence. If you both feel good about yourselves, it's a testament to how you treat each other.

2. You can fully be yourselves:

If you can both let down your guards and be your complete selves – flaws, quirks, and all – it means you feel at ease, accepted, and comfortable with each other. Having to hide parts of yourself or put on a facade in your marriage is exhausting and unsustainable. When you feel loved for who you really are you're in the most optimal position to be your best.

3. You help each other grow:

Growth comes in many forms. It could be giving each other new perspectives or teaching each other actual skills or information. It might be respectfully challenging each other's opinions or pushing each other out of your comfort zones. Fostering growth – individually and as a couple – is a great sign you're doing something right.

4. You laugh and have fun together:

It's pretty straightforward, but if you're constantly laughing and just generally having fun together, it's a good reflection of the overall vibe of your relationship. If you're feeling unhappy or criticized, that authentic sense of joy is going to be difficult to fake. This doesn't mean you're happy 100% of the time, but the low spots are more the exception than the norm.

5. You can help each other work through personal issues:

While you can't do the work for your spouse when they are going through a bit of a rough patch, you do the next best thing: provide them with the support, encouragement, and understanding they need to process, work through, and heal from personal issues and traumas of life. You're also able to give them helpful perspective and advice if they ask for it.

6. You're both comfortable bringing up issues:

With self-confidence (mentioned in #1) comes the ability to be assertive. This skill is a game-changer when it comes to addressing issues and working through conflicts in a productive way. You're not afraid to bring things up for fear of a big blowout fight. Instead, you've created a dynamic that welcomes discussion and allows you to ask for what you want and need in the relationship.

7. You're thriving in many areas of life:

When you feel confident and secure in your couple relationship, you're better equipped to put energy into other areas of your life as well – your job, relationships with family and friends, hobbies and interests, etc. Your life feels well-rounded and you help each other maintain a good work-life balance.

8. Your personalities strike the right balance:

Whether you have similar or strikingly different personalities, all personality traits have positive and negative aspects. When you're feeling mentally and emotionally balanced, you're more likely to exhibit the positive sides of your personality traits. When you're stressed or struggling, it's common to see the less desirable sides. If you're both in the sweet spot most of the time, or can help each other get back to it when one of you is feeling out of balance, this is a great sign.

Bringing out the best in each other might feel like it comes naturally. Or maybe it did at one time, but now it doesn't always feel that way. That's normal. Hopefully these signs can serve as reminders of what you're doing right – or starting points for things to work on if you want to get back to where you once were, or, here's another opportunity to use what is outlined above, to have one of those deep and meaningful conversation we keep mentioning, to go through each of the 8 points, and see where you both feel you are at.

Blessings from The Team: Stan & Ronnie, John & Karen

(Adapted from an article from Prepare/Enrich)