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PLANNING FOR SPONTANEITY

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Yes, the title seems at war with itself. How can you “plan for spontaneity”? Doesn’t the one cancel out the other? Well, given the hectic pace of modern life, if you don’t plan to have fun, you’re likely not going to have any. For people in long-term relationships, the challenge is even greater—harmonizing schedules, “getting ahead”, quieting anxiety, managing stress, overcoming inertia. One or both of you may have observed: “I wish life could be more fun! We seem to live separate lives—we are both so busy”.

If you take the time to talk about this, a number of issues may emerge in the conversation. You may notice a lack of spontaneity or a feeling of sameness, there may be too many obligations and not enough time for laughter. Often, these observations stand in contrast to memories of dating or of the early (possibly childless) years in the relationship. Remember when you did things together for the sheer fun of being with each other?

Here’s something you can try that just might remind you how to have fun together again. Each of you takes some time to make a list of activities and experiences that interests you. They should be able to be done in half a day (the trek in Nepal is for later!). The most important part of this process is to not filter anything out. Be courageous and honest. After many years together, partners often eliminate creative options with thoughts like “Oh, he’d never do ...”. Or “I know she hates to ...”. For this to succeed, it’s important not to do that. Simply be honest with yourself about what you would like to do and put it on your list.

Record your ideas so that you can cut or tear them into individual strips, then fold them up and put them in a jar or a box. Your partner does the same. On the agreed upon date, set aside for this purpose alone, each person picks one from the other’s container and you go do them together. If the two activities are impractical to do on the same day, draw again. The understanding between you is that you will participate willingly within the limits of your comfort

zone. After trying this three or four times over the next two months, discuss whether you want to keep this as a relationship enhancing tool.

“Planning for spontaneity” in this way has a number of benefits. You will commit to actually doing something together. The element of “chance” is fun and you may be surprised and intrigued by what you didn’t know (and learn) about your partner. Hopefully, the result will be a renewed sense of pleasure in being together. Have fun and repeat as desired.