

Coming Up

Celebrate Love Seminars

A two day seminar for married couples exploring spirituality and sexuality in the Catholic context.

2007	
Masaka, Uganda	Nov 24 & 25
2008	
Sydney, NSW	Mar 8 & 9
London, GB	Mar 8 & 9
Brisbane, QLD	Mar 8 & 9
Christchurch, NZ	Mar TBD
Perth, WA	Mar TBD
Wodonga, NSW	Mar TBD
Warnervale, NSW	Apr 5 & 6
Melbourne, VIC	Apr/May TBD
Kent, GB	Jun 7 & 8
Sydney, NSW	Aug TBD
Brisbane, QLD	Sep TBD
Birmingham, GB	1 & 2 Nov
Sydney, NSW	Nov TBD

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Smart Loving

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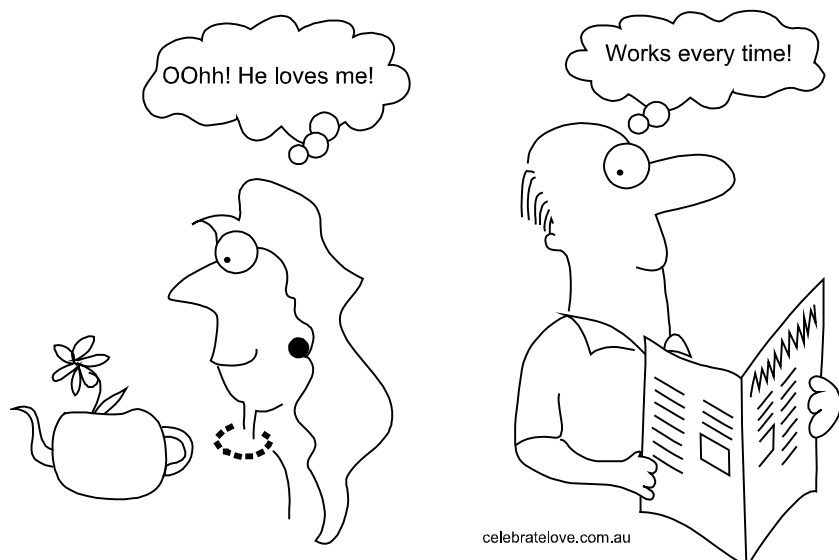
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The Power of Ritual

Routines can be very useful in keeping our lives purposeful and organized. Rituals are like routines with one important difference - they have positive emotional meaning. Rituals connect us with others by providing a focus or activity that enables us to interact together in an enjoyable and meaningful way. Almost anything can become a ritual when we make the focus the relationship. For example, some couples check in with each other by phone during the day. It only becomes a ritual, though, if it is used as a connection time rather than just an exercise in exchanging information.

Essential Couple Rituals. Just like our essential daily vitamins, a number of simple rituals can keep our marriages healthy and vibrant:

- All couples need a **Daily Connect Ritual** – a time and space when we can reconnect with each other. A married couple with children is unlikely to have time for uninterrupted personal talk, unless it is ritualized. It helps to have a regular gesture calibrated to some event or a set time (e.g. as soon as kids are in bed) that signals the ritual has begun. To maintain meaning, conversation should be personal and intimate. Avoid logistics and problem solving: the goal is to connect at a personal level. Also resist conflict items - this makes the ritual hard work and one or both of you are likely to start avoiding it. Finally, agree on an exit point (e.g. after fifteen minutes), as open-ended rituals are hard to sustain.
- **Rituals that say “I love you”** are also important. Some couples write regular, even daily, love letters to each other. One husband will randomly buy a rose and put it somewhere in the house for his wife to unexpectedly discover. Another leaves post-it notes in surprise places like the teapot or in her handbag.
- The **Annual Review Ritual** is another valuable practice. Some couples ritualize New Year's Eve or their Wedding Anniversary to connect with each other by reminiscing on the past year. If they also use the occasion to make plans for their relationship over the coming year, they will ensure that they stay connected.



Like most things in life, our couple rituals decline with time unless we actively choose to make them part of our life. Apathy and indifference are the enemies of rituals, eroding them as a river wears at the shoreline. On the other hand Commitment to our rituals provides the glue we need to stick together during the times of stress and the seasons of despair.

Reflect: What are some of the couple rituals you have? What aspects make them meaningful and significant to you? How can you modify your ritual to make it more effective?