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life advice

Is The Honeymoon Over?

How appreciating your partner is the best way to rekindle the magic of your early years.

BY DR. NOELLE NELSON
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The honeymoon phase offers great memories. Tap those memories to duplicate your actions.

You had your toenails painted a bright luminous blue with op-art squiggles—a radical departure from your usually squiggle-less pale pink—and wiggle your bare toes happily when you're getting ready for bed that night. Does your husband notice? No, he just stays glued to the 11:00 o'clock news, even though nothing particularly earth-shattering is going on. You try harder. You put a foot between him and the TV, wiggle it around and say, "Notice anything different?" and he says, "Huh? Could you put your foot down, honey, I can't see the TV." So you do, and get in your side of the bed, angrily punching a place for your head in the pillow, feeling deprived and pouty.

You wonder what's changed since those wonderful early days when he

worshipped the ground you walked on. You wonder why your friends, co-workers and even the cashier at the supermarket will give you compliments, but your husband never does. You remember how your husband used to compliment you all the time, on all sorts of things—your perfume, or a new hairstyle or just how special you were to him. Now, you feel like you're an old shoe—comfortable, dependable but not worth special attention.

You sigh. You know your husband loves you, you know it's not about that. You figure, oh well, it must just be the way things are once the honeymoon is over. Nothing much you can do about it. And you go to sleep, depressed.

What an unfortunate conclusion, and how unnecessary! There's a lot you can do about it. There is no reason for the sparkle in your relationship to die just because you aren't still in that "Oh honey, what a moon" state. On the contrary, the bliss of a long-term relationship is that it can grow more loving and more rewarding over time, and that the partners can become increasingly special to each other as the years go by, not less so.

So how do you do it? How do you see to it that your relationship increases in delight through the years? Starting with the question, "How do I get the compliments and attention I'm so hungry for?"

By giving them. Remember when you first met? When you loved everything about your spouse? When you hung on his every word and appreciated everything about him from the way he walked and talked and looked to his views on current affairs? Re-create the feelings of those wonderful times by doing what you did then. Appreciate your husband.

Praise him! Give him compliments, adoring looks, tell him how much you value him and everything about him.

Don't concern yourself with what you are getting in return, don't give any thought to what you are getting or not getting, just go about the business of openly, verbally, vigorously appreciating your mate in every way you can think of. Shower him with words of praise, give him kisses and hugs throughout the time you spend together, thank him for the smallest thing he does to help you, listen to what is important to him, and respect his opinions even when you don't agree with him. Write him love notes and little Post-Its, send him cards if that's what he would enjoy. Go about the business of really loving your mate with enthusiasm and passion.

Little by little, as you appreciate your partner he'll remember how to appreciate you. It may take some time, so be patient, but as you create a warm, loving, appreciative environment for your husband, he will naturally find himself doing the same for you. Then you can begin the most wonderful phase of your relationship—the true "happily-ever-after."

Noelle C. Nelson, Ph.D. is a respected psychologist, consultant, speaker and author. Her new book is "Your Man is Wonderful: How to Appreciate Your Partner, Romance Your Differences, and Love the One You've Got". For more than a decade, she has helped people live happier, healthier lives through appreciation—at work, at home and in relationships. E-mail: nnelson@dr.noellenelson.com, website: www.noellenelson.com.