

# Heartland Counseling Center



## Relationship Newsletter



*A caring heart for adults at every stage in life.*

### Spring has Sprung!

Yes! It's finally spring! Finally time to get outside, clear out the dust in our homes and in our lives and start something new! Spring always has a sense of renewal, of promise, of hope for a better tomorrow.

But what if you don't know how to get started? Well, this edition of our Newsletter has great advice to start something new. Whether you're looking for a new way to improve your relationship or you're looking for something new to do just for yourself, you'll find practical and fun advice and tips in this edition.

Don't forget to check out our Spice Up Date Night page for some awesome and cheap date night ideas.

So here's to you and an awesome Spring of new beginnings!

### Spring 2014

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# Spice Up Date Night

The weather is finally starting to improve (think warm thoughts!), so now would be a great time to plan a fun, low-key date to break up some of those winter blues you may be having. However, if you're not in the mood to shave, get dressed up, or make a reservation, try one of these low-key spring-time date ideas.

- ♥ **Watch a Sunrise Together:** When was the last time the two of you caught a sunrise? Probably not since your early dating days, if ever. It may be a cliché, but it's always a romantic gesture (kinda like flowers). Check the time online at [SunriseSunset.com](http://SunriseSunset.com) and set your alarm. Then grab a blanket and a thermos of coffee, and enjoy the calmness of the morning hours together.
- ♥ **Watch the sun set...then go stargazing:** How long has it been since you've watched the sun set? Or laid back and peered up at the stars? Stargazing is a romantic activity for two, whether you have binoculars or not (but if you do have them, even better). Pick a clear evening to snuggle in the grass in your yard or a local park -- or to lie on your roof with blankets and pillows. Google and download a guide to the constellations, and -- once the sun sets -- make a game out of identifying them. Keep an eye out for shooting stars!
- ♥ **Bowling:** No need to dress up for this one. Just throw on some jeans and head to your nearest bowling alley for cheap food, drinks, and some laughs. A little competition can be another fun way to spice up date night, so make a "friendly" wager with your honey.
- ♥ **Thrift Shopping:** Head to a flea market or thrift store and have a contest to see who can find the wackiest item. The only catch? You can spend no more than \$10 each.
- ♥ **Picnic:** Spread a blanket on a flat spot in your yard or in a local park and dine on fresh fruit, chocolate, cheese, and wine (the menu is up to you two, of course).
- ♥ **Movie/Food Theme Night:** If you're in the mood for Italian, rent *The Godfather* and cook up some pasta. Watch *Wedding Crashers* with slices of cake from your favorite bakery.
- ♥ **Sow Some Seeds:** This could be the year you actually build that vegetable garden you've been talking about since you moved in. Spring is prime planting time, so hit up the nursery to pick up seeds for your favorites fruits, veggies and herbs. Digging can actually be a lot of fun when you have your partner in crime by your side. Come summer, you'll be enjoying fresh tomatoes and basil picked right from your backyard.



Share your creative Low-Key Date Ideas on our Facebook page so that others can Spice Up Date Night too!

## Heartland Counseling Center Happenings

### **WELCOME, CATHERINE DEVANEY!**

Heartland Counseling Center would like to welcome Catherine Devaney to our team of therapists. Catherine joined us in February of this year. Catherine has many years of experience working with individuals and couples on a variety of mental health topics.

Catherine is a great addition to our team and we're happy to have her join us!



### **CONGRATULATIONS VALERIE BOLLINGER!**

In April, we celebrate Valerie's one year anniversary with our team!

**Happy  
Easter**

A graphic illustration of a white lily flower with green leaves and a stem, positioned to the right of the 'Happy Easter' text.

# Couples Corner

## 5 Simple Tricks for a Better Relationship

Looking for an instant love boost? Sometimes, the obvious is all you need to make your relationship feel fresh again. Try one of these simple tricks to boost happiness in your relationship.

### **Trick #1: Making small, unexpected gestures**

Sometimes the best validation that you're loved and appreciated is when you experience a gesture that proves your partner is always thinking of you. Sometimes something simple like buying your partner a red velvet cupcake, just because you happened to walk by a bakery, see it in the window and know they would love it, will really make an impression. It's that for-no-real-reason feeling that makes the act mean so much.

### **Trick #2: Doing something your partner always does**

Sure, when you divided up the chores, you agreed that they would take out the trash and you would do the dishes. But every once in a while, when your partner is super-slammed at work, rather than nagging him or her for not noticing the overflowing trash can, take it out for them. When you love someone, you pitch in -- even when you're not asked (or it's technically not *your* turn). Small gestures to make each other's lives better remind you why you put up with his stinky feet, or her snoring, in the first place. Plus, giving your partner a break means he or she has one less item to worry about, and the more relaxed they are, the easier it will be for you to appreciate each other's company.

### **Trick #3: Letting your partner breathe**

Having someone to come home to is a definite plus to being in a relationship. But sometimes -- just *sometimes* -- it would be nice to walk into an empty house and, perhaps, slip into a lavender-scented bath or chill out in front of the TV without having to speak. Even couples that are joined at the hip sometimes require a little alone time -- not to brood or escape, but to refresh. Perhaps you don't understand the need for solo moments. But if your partner enjoys winding down from a long day with only himself or herself and maybe the dog for company, or likes to be alone with his or her thoughts on Sunday mornings, give him or her that space -- guilt free. Make plans to meet a friend for brunch or make plans to enjoy shopping or the outdoors, conveniently come home late from work one night, or run errands alone one afternoon. You don't need much distance to make the heart grow fonder, but a little goes a long way.

### **Trick #4: Writing it down**

Let's face it: Telling your partner how much he or she means to you can feel kind of sappy. But expressing your feelings, even when you assume they're known, is key in long-term relationships. Otherwise, you risk falling into "taking each other for granted" syndrome. An "I love you" written on the dry-erase board in the kitchen, or a "Have a great day!" Post-it left on the bathroom mirror, is all it takes to let your other half know you cared enough to take the time to write it down.

### **Trick #5: Saying "yes"**

Agreeing to try something you always veto, or joining your partner for something you normally try to get out of shows you are listening to what your significant other wants and are willing to put your partner's needs first. For example, let him flip to the game and keep watching -- and don't get off the couch. Or maybe go see that chick-flick she really wants to see that you don't. Seeing how happy these small gestures can make your partner should make you feel good and inspire you to do them more often. Plus, they'll probably inspire your partner to start doing the same, and soon enough, instead of arguing over who gets to man the remote, you'll notice you're starting to work much more like a team.



## **4 Things to Do While You Are Single**



### **Spend a weekend with a married couple your age**

On lonely nights, it's common for single folk to envision marriage as a cozy scene from a J. Crew catalog. But spend 48 hours with a real couple and you'll learn that in between the snuggling and pet names comes growling, bickering, silent treatments and maybe even a slammed door or two before they ultimately compromise. It will show you what married life is like, problems and all, so you won't over-idealize the two-becomes-one phenomenon again.

### **Stand up for a cause you care about**

Whether you volunteer to help register voters for the next election or convince your neighborhood or apartment complex to start recycling, get fired up over an issue while you have the time to devote to it. It will remind you that while, yes, finding your soul mate is pretty darn important, there are other issues at stake in the world that could use your help.

### **Develop a hobby**

Learn to woodwork, play acoustic guitar, speak French, DJ on turntables, or make digital short films for fun. Of course you can (and should) still have hobbies when you're dating someone, but your solo time is prime time to devote yourself to something that makes life more interesting for you—and makes you more interesting to others.

### **Blast some jams**

When you're single, you are the official DJ of your life. You control what you're listening to, how loud you're listening to it and whether or not you're going to sing at the top of your lungs! When you're around other people, you don't get such luxuries unless you're with someone with the exact same musical tastes.

~ Melissa Vogelsang, MA, PLPC, NCC