

# Time for the Two of You: Simple Ways to Make Time for Your Marriage in the Middle of Your Hectic Life



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Your life is busy. Most of the time, it's *really* busy. And maybe, like a lot of women, **you wonder how all of that busyness is affecting your marriage.** Between school and jobs and children's activities and the house and the yard, it seems like your marriage often falls to the bottom of your to-do list. Even though you really want to give it higher priority.

That's what this brief ebook is about – **making time for your marriage and enjoying the time you spend with your husband.** It offers a few simple suggestions for changing your priorities and schedules in ways that benefit you, your husband, and your marriage. And let me say right up front that by “simple” I mean “not complicated,” rather than “easy to do.” Making these changes probably *won't be easy to do*, because they involve changing habits, patterns, and schedules that probably developed over many years. So *give yourself some grace* and approach these changes with the knowledge that making them may require two steps forward and one step back for a while.

### • The Value of a Regular “Parents’ Night”

What if you and your husband had **an evening to relax a little, to talk without interruption, and to enjoy just spending time together?** And what if such an evening occurred on a regular basis? Like once a week or once every other week? Does it sound like a dream? Or a fantasy? It doesn't have to be either. Not if you establish a regular “Parents' Night” and include it in your family's schedule.



A Parents' Night is simply **a night that's devoted to you and your husband.** Rather than focusing on the needs of your children, which is probably what happens every other night of the week, you focus on your needs as a couple. Needs like time to talk, to unwind, to enjoy each other's company, to make love. It's a night when you don't schedule any outside activities (for yourselves or your children), when young children go to bed early, older children play quietly in their rooms until bedtime, and school-age children work on homework or other tasks on their own.

It's also a night when you don't solve minor problems (missing soccer uniforms, forgotten school projects) or deal with minor conflicts. A night when, to the greatest extent possible, **you and your husband separate yourselves from the routines of family life and focus on each other for a few hours.** (By the way, you don't have to be parents, or have children living at home, to plan and enjoy these kinds of evenings.)



Do you need to be convinced that a regular “Parents’ Night” is worth the effort? (And, let’s be honest, it will require effort to make it happen.) If so, **consider these 4 needs it can fill:**

- **You and your husband need a regular break from the daily grind.** The pressures, problems and hassles of daily life tend to wear on a marriage. They can tire both of you out, leaving you feeling weary and disconnected. And they tend to suck the joy out of life. A regular, scheduled break from the daily grind, however, gives you something to look forward to and provides an opportunity to relax and have a little fun.
- **The two of you need time to connect.** A busy family schedule leaves little time or energy for your marriage. But **your marriage needs some of your time and your energy if it's going to thrive.** (And, conveniently, a marriage that's thriving helps both of you tackle the stresses of daily life more easily!) And it's not just expending time and energy - it's that couples often find themselves going in different directions, taking a "divide and conquer" approach in order to get everything done. Believe me, I know that too well – my husband and I have done our fair share of “divide and conquer” over the years! Sometimes it’s necessary in order to get things done. But what often happens is that you get to the end of a week and realize you haven't spent any time together or talked about anything besides soccer schedules, piano lessons, homework and church activities. If that pattern occurs over a long period of time, it’s easy to lose your connection.
- **Your children need to live in a marriage-centered family.** Children need to see and to know that their parents' marriage is loving, strong and enduring. And **they need for that marriage, not their own interests and activities, to form the foundation of their family's life.** Of course, most children would be happy to focus all of their family's time and energy on themselves, but that isn't really what they want. And it definitely isn't what they need.
- **Your children need to know that the world doesn't revolve around them.** Obviously, you want to provide everything your children need and many of the things they want. But you don't have to be at their beck and call every waking hour, which seems to be the pattern in many families. Your children need to learn that other people's needs are important too – including yours and your husband's. And scheduling regular time to focus on your marriage helps your children learn that lesson.

I'm guessing that you may be thinking, "That sounds nice in theory, but we can't make it work. We just don't have enough time." If that's your reaction, I don't blame you. I know that many families are incredibly busy, and making time for one more thing seems impossible. **But just give it some thought.** Roll it around in the back of your mind for a while. Consider the kinds of [changes you would need to make](#) or



the [situations in which you might need to say “no” or “not now”](#) in order to make it happen.

Or maybe you're thinking, "You don't know my kids. I could never get them to cooperate with this." I know it would be a big change for a lot of families, and the kids would likely resist. But consider giving it a try. **(If you have young children, start this tradition now, so they'll grow up with it!)**

### • Tips for Creating a Regular “Parents’ Night”

You're probably saying, “Girl, you've lost your mind. Apparently you haven't seen my schedule!” I know, I know – you're juggling a packed schedule and can't imagine adding one more thing to your to-do list. **But what if, in the long run, the thing you add actually makes life easier?** What if it *makes things run more smoothly*, because you and your husband are more in sync? What if it *gives you something to look forward to*, and *makes some of the mundane tasks on your schedule seem a little more tolerable*? That's what I think a regular “Parents’ Night” can do for many couples. If you want to give it a try, here are four steps you can take to get started:

- **Talk with your husband and agree on what's realistic.** Can you set aside one evening a week or one every other week? What about two evenings a month? If the best you can manage is one evening a month, start with that – with the idea of increasing the frequency over time. Look at your commitments and calendars and pick dates that will work for both of you. If possible, keep it consistent (e.g., every Monday, every other Tuesday). Once you've decided, write those dates on your personal and family calendars for the next four months. Agree that, barring an emergency, you won't schedule any other activities or let your children schedule any activities on those evenings.

- **Start making a list of things you'd like to do.** You don't have to plan out each night, but it's helpful to begin thinking about and anticipating things you'd enjoy doing together. For example, you might set aside time to talk about your hopes and plans for the future. Or read a book together. Or play a game. Or watch a movie. Or share a massage. If your children are old enough to stay home alone, you might go out for coffee or a walk. And hopefully, after relaxing and spending time together, you'll wrap up the evening by making love.



• **Determine what it will take to make it happen.** Clearly, you'll need to make changes to your normal routine on Parents' Nights, but the type and extent of the changes will vary, depending on the ages of your children and your current commitments. And implementing those changes will take some time and "training" – of yourselves and your kids! If you have very young children, simply put them to bed as early as possible and set aside your normal evening activities to concentrate on each other. School-age children will need to learn that they're "on their own" on Parents' Nights, in terms of homework, chores and entertainment. They'll need to practice studying independently, playing quietly and putting themselves to bed - all valuable life skills! And they'll have to learn to plan ahead, because Mom and Dad won't be available to help with last-minute school projects or to bake cookies for the class bake sale on those nights. You and your husband will have to learn some new skills too, like saying "no" to meetings and commitments on the evenings you've set aside. And letting go of the idea that you must be on call to assist your children every waking hour.

• **Give it a try, address problems that arise, and try again.** You won't get it right the first time, or the second or the third. **Old habits die hard, and it will take a while for everyone to get on board.** Add an element that makes it fun for the kids, like pizza for dinner on "Parents' Night." Or reading by flashlight in a "tent" until bedtime. Take a "small steps" view of the process and celebrate small successes along the way.

### • 3 Questions for the Beginning of the School Year (or any time you want to take control of your life and schedule!)

If you like the idea of a regular Parents' Night but it seems completely out of the question for you and your husband, it might be time to reconsider your family's priorities, schedule and activities.

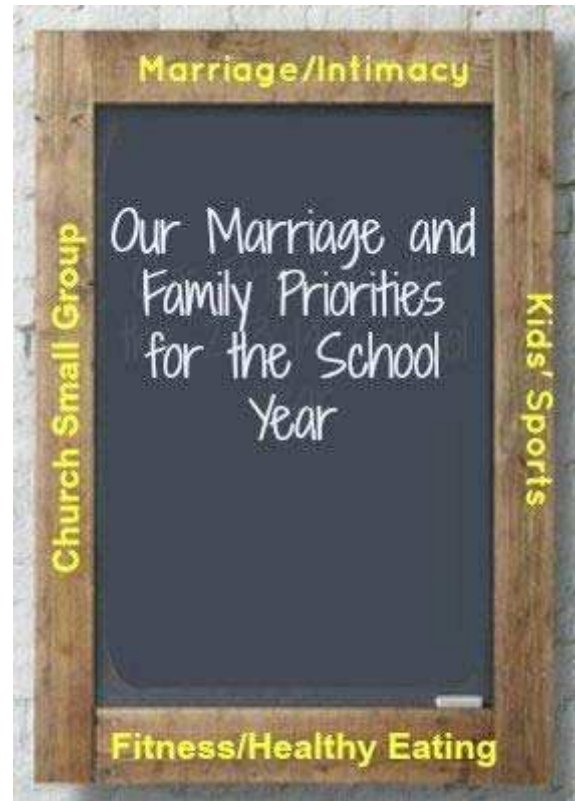
The beginning of a new school year always seems full of promise. It's a great time to get things in order, get everyone on a schedule, and get going on some projects (organization, exercise, healthy eating!). I think most moms begin the school year on that kind of optimistic note. Almost no one heads into September thinking, "I'm going to end up running myself ragged and nearly collapsing with fatigue!" But by the time February or March (or even November!) rolls around, that's often exactly what happens.

This year, make a plan *before* school begins that will help you avoid the "I'm stressed, tired and losing my mind" scenario. (**You can make the same kind of plan any time you need to regroup and get your family's schedule under control.**) Here are three questions to consider:



• **Who's in charge?** Who's going to control your family's schedule this year? You and your husband? Your children? People at church who want your help with various projects? Your children's coaches or activity leaders? If you want to live a reasonably calm, healthy and sexy life this year, then **you and your husband must take charge of and control your family's schedule**. It's very easy to allow others to take on that power (often before you even realize it!) simply because the two of you aren't managing your family's activities. If you allow anyone else to control your schedule, you're almost guaranteed to be stressed and tired before Thanksgiving rolls around.

• **What are our priorities?** This year, set priorities for yourself and your family for the coming school year. Talk with your husband, choose the things you want to define your family's life over the next 9 months, and **set those things up as a "frame" for the year**. This proactive approach keeps you from reacting all the time to new requests or demands on your time. For example, let's say all of your children are playing soccer this year, you've started exercising and are working to lose 20 pounds, you and your husband are leading a small group at church, and the two of you want more time to relax and spend time together. **That's it - those are your priorities for the year!** When you add in work, homework, meals, laundry, housework and sleep - you're out of time and energy, and **if you commit to something else, your priorities will suffer**. (Some things, like illnesses and job changes, can become priorities without your permission! But those things are the exception, not the rule.)



• **Do we need to let go or say no?** Finally, take a mental tour of your life and identify places where you or other family members need to let go or say no. Have you been doing something for a long time just because no one else has shown up to do it? **Maybe it doesn't fit into your "frame" for the year, and you need to let go of it**. Have you allowed your children to get involved in so many activities that you and your husband are running on empty trying to get them to every practice, game, meeting and event? **It may be time to help them let go of a few things**. If someone has asked you to take on a new task and it doesn't fit with your priorities for the year, **just say no**. I know that's hard for a lot of



women, but it gets easier with practice!

By the way, **these 3 questions can help every couple and family make a plan for the coming year, not just those with school-age children.** Our youngest son is in college now, so my husband and I aren't tied to the school year calendar the way we were for many years, but we still need to make plans and set our priorities for the coming year.

I hope these ideas help you and your husband make more time for the two of you this year. And if you'd like to share some things that have helped you prioritize your marriage in the midst of your busy life, I'd love to hear from you – you can leave a comment at [Calm.Healthy.Sexy](http://Calm.Healthy.Sexy) or email me at [gc@calmhealthysexy.com](mailto:gc@calmhealthysexy.com).



## Information and Resources that Can Help You Save Time and Prioritize Your Marriage

- [25 Quick and Healthy Family Meals](#) – save time in the kitchen with this free ebook
- [Juggling Real Food and Real Life](#) – practical tips and recipes for saving time while feeding your family healthy meals, from a super-busy mom of 4
- [Meal Plans from Little Family Adventure](#) – healthy eating meal plans plus recipes for busy families
- [5 Words You Need to Learn to Say](#) – encouragement for saying “no” or “not now”
- [3 Simple Ways to Increase Organization and Reduce Stress](#) – practical tips that don't take much time
- [5 Ways to Think \(and Act!\) Like Your Husband's Lover](#) – encouragement for increasing the fun and intimacy in your marriage

