

Marital Bliss: Can You Still Find It?

By Karla W. Sartin

Remember junior high school, when you obsessed over that cute boy in class? High school, when your jeans had to be a certain brand to show off your wares to the guy you were ogling? Those firsts – love notes, kisses, fluttery feelings, candy, roses and ... um, stolen moments wherever was convenient?

All those crushes. Then you got married.

Someone promised bliss. Was it the bridal consultants and fluttering bridesmaids? Was it my mother?

My advice, girls: Get it in writing.

I still remember signing up for bliss. Sigh. I'm still looking for it. It's been eight years. Seems like 23 some days.

What really happens after a while: Our men annoy us.

They don't listen; they procrastinate; they forget how to date; they don't notice how a new dress looks except to grab the price tag and add it – with tax – to Quicken under Wife Extravagances. They complain about how much we're spending on gro-

ceries. They tell us they have to work early and late; we'll have to be in charge of kid patrol, both coming and going. They explain their needs, highlighting sex at every turn.

We pile up irritations: Why is it we can remember 459 things to do and they struggle with one – even when we neatly pen a note, which we've pinned to his lapel?

Somehow, however, married males can also manage to do something so extraordinarily sweet that we think back to the days when we first met. We remember having the crush – being encrushed.

I recall that crush and many others. When I try to forget about them in the ordinary messiness of life, my husband reminds me. It's not the memory of our first date, when he flashed me a shy grin and actually asked if he could kiss me goodnight. It's more the everyday crushes, when I remember to let them in.

It's every morning, on the way to get his second cup of coffee, when he ignores my never-failing grouchiness and the neon Do Not Disturb sign around my neck. He kisses the top of my head, no matter how frizzed out and ratty my hair happens to be. "I love you," he invariably says.

Somehow the complaints, fights, needling and exasperations disappear. I get that giddy feeling of butterflies in my stomach and the tingle in my

entire body that signals he's crushed me again.

It's the times he picks up our howling, red-kneed son and kisses his booboo and right below his hairline, telling him it's OK for big boys to cry sometimes.

It's when he looks through the photo albums and relates the story of our son's birth with such emotion and detailed recollections that I reel. "I never could have imagined how beautiful and joyful your momma could be until you were born," he tells our 6-year-old.

Then there are the times when I have a midnight migraine and he rubs my feet, even though I've been running in and out of the house all day barefoot and have forgotten to wash them before bed.

And then there are the times we miss each other for a lunch date because I'm rushing from one meeting to another. "I really was looking forward to lunch today and was so lonely that we couldn't be together," he says and follows it with a sorrowful sigh.

How is it that we can ever fight and harass each other? Well, we're just normal people, working 60-hour weeks and trying to carve out time to spend with our son. We're just trying to get by on the 10 minutes a day that we have together – all alone – before we succumb to six hours of sleep.

When I try hard enough to remember the vignettes of sweetness that leave me so encrushed, it makes other things seem a little less important.

I walk up behind him and surprise him with a hug. "I'm so encrushed with you," I say.

He flashes his boyish grin, encrushing me more.

And maybe that's the bliss. ★



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