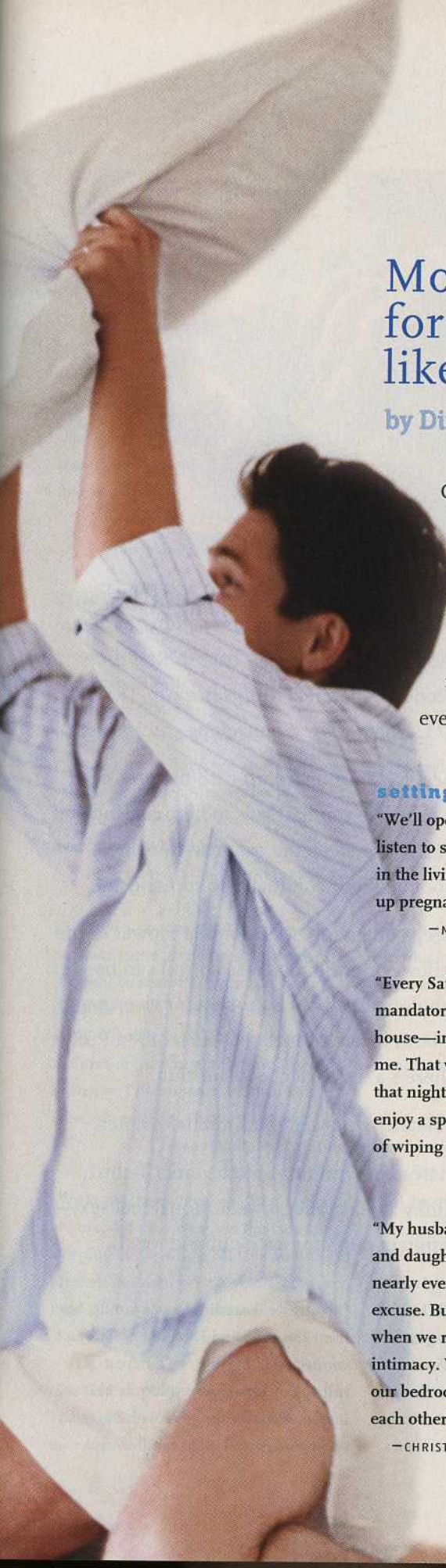


A woman with short blonde hair is captured in a joyful moment, jumping on a bed. She is wearing a white spaghetti-strap tank top and white shorts. Her body is in mid-air, and she has a wide, happy smile. The bed is covered with white linens and pillows. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The overall mood is bright and romantic.

**how  
we keep  
romance  
alive**



## Moms share their secrets for making every day seem like Valentine's Day (almost)

by Dina Roth Port

Quiet dinners, spur-of-the-moment getaways, talking for hours about everything and anything... Romance sure came easy when it was just the two of you. But just because you're on diaper duty now, or sometimes choose a good night's sleep over sex, doesn't mean that passion with your partner need be a thing of the past. In fact, it's more important than ever to make together time a priority. Some inspiration:

### setting the mood

"We'll open up a bottle of Pinot Grigio, listen to some R&B, and slow dance in the living room. That's how I ended up pregnant with my second child!"

—MARCIE CEITLIN, MAPLE GLEN, PA

"Every Saturday afternoon, we have mandatory naptime for everyone in the house—including my husband and me. That way, when the kids go to sleep that night, we actually have energy to enjoy a special evening together, instead of wiping out at eight P.M., as usual."

—VICKI SINGER, ST. LOUIS

"My husband and I used to let our son and daughter crawl into bed with us nearly every night—there was always an excuse. But we decided that had to end when we realized it was killing our intimacy. We also got rid of the TV in our bedroom. Now it's just us enjoying each other's company!"

—CHRISTINE DUNNING, FORT WORTH, TX

"When one of us is feeling romantic, we'll light candles on our bedside table and put on our wedding song, Marc Cohn's 'True Companion.' That's our signal that we're in the mood."

—RACHEL MAGGIO, GOSHEN, NY

### finding common ground

"My husband, Al, and I find fun projects around the house. We'll organize family and vacation photographs into albums, plant flowers in our beautiful garden, or remodel a room. These activities connect us because we're working as a team, sharing a common goal."

—TANYA RODRIGO, LOS ANGELES

"We've had this little ritual ever since we started dating: Once in a while, we'll curl up on the couch with a pint of Ben & Jerry's Chunky Monkey or Chubby Hubby and dig in. It might sound silly, but it's a special time for us because we're doing something we both love!"

—LORI BARNES, CENTREVILLE, VA >>

"We enjoy the same things we did before we had kids, just in short bursts that fit into our schedule. We used to love lounging around all morning reading the Sunday paper. Now we'll each skim our favorite sections in bed before we fall asleep at night. It's like having a truffle instead of the whole chocolate bar—time together is harder to come by, but it's that much sweeter."

—BESS DECK, ARLINGTON, MA

### courting the old-fashioned way

"My husband, Gary, will bring home flowers or a surprise gift for me 'just because'—not only on occasions like Valentine's Day, my birthday, and our anniversary. It's those little things when I least expect it that mean the most, because it shows that he's still trying to make me happy."

—AMY BARTOO, COEUR D'ALENE, ID

"Holding hands when we're watching TV or walking around town together reminds me of how special romance was when we first fell in love, and that it still is—even more so—today."

—ASHLEY BENSON, OPELIKA, AL

"Though we've been married for eight years, we still make an effort when it comes to our appearance, just like we did when we started dating. Even if we're eating at home with our three-year-old daughter, my husband will spray himself with cologne and I'll put on a pretty dress rather than sweats. We're essentially saying we don't take each other for granted."

—REGINA HICKERSON, SUMMERVILLE, SC



## great love boosters

♥ **Play around.** Order a set of Get-Lucky Dice and prepare for game time: The four pewter dice feature action words ("caress," "kiss") and body parts ("lips," "back"). Roll the dice, follow the directions, then feel things heat up. (\$35, RedEnvelope, 877-733-3683, [www.redenvelope.com](http://www.redenvelope.com))

♥ **Create a sexy space.** Fill your bedroom with pictures of you and your partner before you had kids to help remind you of how you fell in love. Also, keep the room clutter-free; having toys underfoot just isn't conducive to romance.

♥ **Give a gift that keeps on giving.** Mention the Flower of the Month Club ([www.flowermonthclub.com](http://www.flowermonthclub.com)) so you can be "surprised" with fabulous fresh-cut bouquets (or vice versa). It'll encourage you both to pay attention to each other. Prefer sensual edibles? There's a link to a chocolate club.

♥ **Watch it!** Rent a steamy but sweet flick and take notes.

♥ **Play dress-up.** Instead of climbing into bed in a T-shirt, wear something slinky at least once a week. You'll feel sexy—and you'll look inviting enough to reach out and touch.

"We try to have one real romantic kiss a day—with three young boys, life gets so busy that it's easy to go days without one. And I mean the kind of kiss that got us the kids in the first place."

—VIVIEN LEVY, NEW CASTLE, NY

"Mostly we'll eat dinner as a family, but if my husband and I feel like we haven't connected in a while, we'll have a romantic date at home after the kids are in bed. We'll set the table with the good china and crystal, light candles, and

# 6 signs you need to rev up the romance

make the meal a little more elaborate than the usual macaroni and cheese. Those evenings remind us of why we're together as a couple, not just as parents."

—CHRISTINE FREEMAN  
NORTH ANDOVER, MA

## spicing things up

"My husband is one of Victoria's Secret's better shoppers. Every few months, he'll flip through the catalog and order me something sexy, like a matching bra-and-underwear set. I have to keep him in check, though—my drawers are now overflowing with lingerie!"

—LORIE ZATOR, WAYNESBURG, PA

"We have a special night once a week and take turns planning a fun activity. It might be something simple, like a candlelit bath, or we get creative (enough said!). I'll also e-mail my husband nude pictures of me when he's traveling for business. Fifteen years and two kids later, our sex life is better than ever."

—CAROL WRIGHT, CHICAGO

"We know the days of one-hour foreplay are over for now, so when the kids are sleeping or playing, we'll take advantage of every moment we have alone together. Even if it's only ten minutes."

—AMY CRAWFORD, WEST CHESTER, PA

"On Saturday mornings, we'll put on *The Wiggles* for the kids and run upstairs to take a shower together. It saves time

**1** You've come to refer to a "quickestie" as the power nap you take when the baby's asleep.

**2** You have only one child because you just can't find the time to even consider attempting to make another one, much less actually, like, do it.

**3** The only time you or your mate bothers to pucker up is when you're bending down to kiss your kid's boo-boos.

**4** Your definition of really sexy bedroom attire that'll turn his head is anything that doesn't have spitup or oatmeal stains on it.

**5** When you roll over in bed to whisper something in his ear, it's usually to tell him, "Get up! It's your turn to give the baby a bottle."

**6** The two of you plan a weekend getaway from the kids—and use it to catch up on your sleep.

getting ready, and it definitely makes our weekends nice and steamy."

—AMY BAHM, PITTSBURGH

## mastering the art of flirting

"My husband, Paul, leaves for work at four A.M. and gets home just as I'm leaving for my part-time job. So to connect, I'll leave little notes in his pants pocket that say, 'I love your smile' or 'I can't wait to cuddle.' These sweet sentiments really help to brighten his day—especially when they're along the lines of 'Let's go to bed early tonight.'"

—TINA GADEN, RUCKERSVILLE, VA

"My husband, Tom, always makes me feel sexy by telling me that he's as attracted to me now as when we first started dating. Also, he'll come up behind me while I'm washing dishes and whisper, 'You look really cute today. I love your outfit.' That attention boosts my self-esteem, which then carries over into the bedroom."

—SHARYN COLLINSON, ANNAPOLIS, MD

"During the day, my husband will call just to say 'I love you.' We're both usually so busy during the day that sometimes that's all we have time to say to each other. But it takes less than a minute and puts a smile on my face because I know he's thinking of me."

—AMY BRODDUS, MANLIUS, NY

## maximizing time together

"We've arranged a babysitting co-op with other parents in our neighborhood. One week, a mom I know will watch my kids while my husband and I go out on a date. Then we'll repay the favor. The best part: You don't have the stress that comes with finding a babysitter you can trust, and it's totally free."

—ANDREA SCHWARTZ, CLEVELAND

"My husband gets up at five A.M. for work, and even though I could sleep for a few more hours until the kids and I wake up and get ready for breakfast, I get up with him to have extra quiet time together. Making that effort means so much to Alex—and it sets the tone for



how  
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alive

the day that our marriage is still very much a priority for both of us."

—AMY WINFORD, BIRMINGHAM, AL

"Morning sex. We set the alarm thirty minutes before our three-year-old daughter, Paige, wakes, to sneak it in."

—CHERYL DIXON, MORGANTOWN, WV

### remembering the big picture

"My husband and I remind ourselves that our kids are eventually going to grow up and leave us, but we'll be together for the rest of our lives, so we need to always nurture our relationship. That could mean making simple sacrifices to make each other happy: Even though I don't love baseball, I'll sit

and watch a game with him so we can be together, or he'll watch a chick flick like *The Hours* with me, which, needless to say, isn't his top choice."

—AMY FAUCHER, HOBOKEN, NJ

"My husband and I check in with each other on a regular basis and ask, 'Is there anything you need that I'm not giving you?' It's hard to be romantic if you don't even have a sense of what your partner is thinking or feeling."

—OLIVIA ACREE, RICHMOND, VA

"Self-preservation is an aphrodisiac. When I don't take time for myself, I feel so spent and crabby by the end of the day that romance is the furthest thing from my mind. So sometimes on the

weekends, my husband, David, will entertain the kids, clean the house, and make a great dinner so that I can go shopping, see friends, or get a manicure. And because he's there for me, I'm able to give him my undivided attention as soon as the kids are asleep."

—JULIE EASTLUND, ST. LOUIS

"Romance has been completely redefined since we've had children. It's not all fireworks like it was when we first started dating; it's that warm, fuzzy feeling we get when we see each other reading to the kids, making them their favorite breakfast, or getting down on the floor to play with them. That's what turns us on now."

—MARCI ARNOLD, HOUSTON