

The North Fulton Marriage Newsletter

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Maintaining Friendships

Once a year my wife and her best friend in the world, Tracie, make a pilgrimage to see country music star, Kenny Chesney, live in concert. They are both quite taken with Mr. Chesney. They have his CD's, DVD's, cups, t-shirts and all the other promotional materials you would expect. Major events around our house include the day Mr. Chesney's new CD comes out, the day Mr. Chesney's concert tickets go on sale, and the day Mr. Chesney's new video debuts on CMT. In fact, on our wedding day, my wife and I danced to the Kenny Chesney song "Me and You" for our first dance. Thankfully, my wife's friend Tracie, did not try to cut in. My wife and Tracie are also moderately obsessed with country star Keith Urban or as I like to call him, Mr. Nicole Kidman. They also make an annual trip to Mr. Urban's concerts, buy his CD's and t-shirts, and watch his videos. The bottom line is that Mr. Chesney, Mr. Urban, and country music in general is a fabulous way for my wife and her friend to bond, connect, unwind, and most importantly maintain their friendship.

Which brings us to the title of the article: Maintaining Friendships. In my opinion, whether you have been married 4 years or 40 years, maintaining at least one close friendship outside of your marriage will improve the overall health of your marriage. As my wife has stated, friendships "bring balance to marriage and help you stay refreshed." Marriage is a partnership, but we all need a break from each other sometimes and close friendships can vitally improve our overall emotional and physical health. I think this becomes doubly important for couples with young children, who at times are struggling to just stay connected to each other. You need time away from your children with just your spouse but you also need time away from your spouse and your children to hang out with friends. If you are someone who travels for work, then this might be quite difficult as your time at home may be solely dedicated to your spouse and your family. But, there are other ways to stay connected with friends that does not take away time from your spouse and your family. For example, myself and three of my best friends from high school participate in a college football picks contest (no money involved, just pure pride). Each week we make our picks and converse via email about one game or the other. This year we even decided to set up a listserv and a private webpage for the competition. We love it and it generates a lot of communication, connection, and good ole male bonding. All four of us are professionals (two lawyers, one financial analyst, and of course one counselor), and we all four have families. Time is limited but this friendly competition helps us unwind, stay connected, and maintain our now 20-year-old friendships.

The reason I wrote this article is that I believe that some couples are not aware of how important it is to maintain friendships outside of their marriage. So, if you feel that your marriage could use more balance then make an effort to do the following:

- Plan at least one activity per month with a friend which last more than 4 hours.
- Plan the activity way ahead of time so you can look forward to it.
- Encourage your spouse to do the same.

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