

Article: Are We Having Fun Yet? (Unificationists may have an aversion to fun)

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"Never ever underestimate the importance of having fun."

– Randy Pausch

Let's face it, some of us have the fun gene and some of us don't. And if we've been in the Unification Church for more than a decade, we may also have an aversion to fun. Somewhere in the guise of being righteous and sacrificial, many of us unconsciously decided that having fun was

bad and cause for embarrassment or guilt.

I remember someone telling me, with obvious embarrassment, that she and her husband were going on a cruise. She was careful to tell me that the cruise was with her extended family, so it had a spiritual purpose to it. I remember feeling sad that she couldn't look forward to the upcoming trip without shame and guilt.

Whatever mixed feelings we may have around having fun, the research is in: Having fun together as a couple (and as a family!) is absolutely necessary for marital health and happiness.

It turns out that fun is powerfully associated with relationship satisfaction, commitment, and a sense of friendship for couples. So, no matter how we feel about it, we need to have fun with our spouses to keep our emotional connection strong.

However, even when we are open to the importance of having fun, and have a good track record over the years, having fun is still one of the first things to slide when we get busy with the stuff of life. It can often be challenging to keep having fun in the mix! If you're in the middle of having and raising children, you're busy! If you're in the empty nest stage, you may be re-calibrating your relationship and your life. And sometimes, just finding things that we both enjoy can take time.

What we find fun during one stage of life may no longer be fun during another, as interests, passions and people naturally change. Sometimes we have hobbies in common and sometimes we don't. Not to mention the differences between genders. Sometimes, what a husband considers fun is not what a wife does!

For example, when we were a lot younger, my husband would often invite me to go to Home Depot with him, and I could never understand why. The only thing I was even vaguely interested in looking at in Home Depot was the plants, and that didn't take very long! It took a while for me to realize that my husband just wanted to spend time together. It felt like quality time for him; it was fun. I, on the other hand, wanted to go out for dinner and a movie. That sounded like fun to me!

These differences are natural and don't have to be stumbling blocks to having fun. When you're having a hard time having fun, I suggest that you take the time to talk about what might fun for each of you and then take turns supporting each other's passions. In other words, create a Fun List. Here's how:

Each partner makes a list of things that they would love to do that would be fun for them. Be creative, don't hold back -- maybe divide the list into two: "Things that would be fun for a special occasion", and "Things that would be fun and are inexpensive". They can include things that you have done before and things that you'd like to try doing.

Next, exchange your list with your partner and then each of you can choose three things on your partner's list that you would be willing to do with them.

Then, make a schedule and take turns doing something on each other's lists!

It might seem strange to make so much effort to have fun, but remember: Taking the time to connect, enjoying each other's company and having fun together are crucial ingredients for the health of our marriages and our families. So, go ahead, have a little fun!

This article is adapted from Debby's book, *Small Steps to Bigger Love*, which is available through HSA Publications and on Amazon. It includes a study guide for small group use. Debby is also available for couple coaching and workshops and can be contacted at coachgullery@gmail.com or at www.debbygullery.com.