



ROMANCE



BEST TIPS FOR KEEPING SEX IN MARRIAGE AFTER THE BABY CARRIAGE

When was the last time you flashed your spouse or washed the dishes in exchange for a little below-the-belt lovin'? If you're wondering what place such sassy, scintillating activities have in your married life, you probably aren't alone. It's also time for you to pick up a copy of **'Make Love Whenever Possible When Married with Children.'** the recently released book by local authors Leslie Kaplan (above left) and Peg Melnik (right).

Kaplan, who teaches college English, met Melnik, a columnist for the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, in their daughters' kindergarten class. They commiserated about how sleep deprivation was causing a sort of matrimonial amnesia, making them wonder: Why did I marry my husband? They started writing down their experiences and their witty, practical solutions for staying in love with their spouses, all of which can be summed up in two words: make love.

Seems simple, right? But why are there so many marriages languishing or festering with resentment? According to Kaplan and Melnik, it's due to a lack of preparation. "Everyone teaches you how to burp a baby, but no one teaches you how to be a parent and a lover at the same time," Melnik says. Many people believe that sweet-smelling babies follow wedded bliss, instead of the "ugly truth" that having children can ruin a relationship. Somewhere between the bachelor party and the baptism, many once-bubbly relationships fizzle like a neglected bottle of Champagne. The

good news is that it doesn't have to be this way. "People think the mate can wait," Melnik says. Contrary to popular thinking, parents should remember that they are lovers first.

Kaplan and Melnik advocate a practical eroticism that can be incorporated into daily life. Cell phones, for example, are good for more than just reminding your spouse to pick up more baby wipes; why not send a suggestive text message that gives your sweetie something to look forward to?

Of course, love-making isn't just about sex. The authors also share strategies for staying emotionally connected, like starting a book club for two, creating a spiritual corner for peaceful repose or establishing the 15-minute rule: after the kids are in bed, each person gets seven and a half minutes to talk and be listened to.

Make Love is about providing desperately needed wisdom in a culture sorely lacking it. As Kaplan explains, "We wrote this book so that nobody has to suffer like we did." — J.D.

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