

Creating Sweet Memories for a Lasting Love

What's the basis for a relationship that withstands the test of time? It might surprise you to know that couples in long-term relationships say special memories have sustained them through some very rough waters. How, though, do you go about creating a cache of memories when your life is moving at warp speed? It all starts by becoming more aware.

Let's look at two experiences which might seem mundane, but still created strength in these couples' relationships.

In the Still of the Night Our first couple, in their thirties, shares the load of a family farm. Long hours, uncertain finances and four small children were grinding them down and they longed for leisure time alone.

Early that summer, the woman's wise mother saw the toll the strain was taking and offered them an extraordinary gift—an entire night to themselves. The young pair accepted gratefully, but when the special evening came, the husband was caught up in a crisis and it seemed as though their plans were ruined.

Not one to waste a gift, the young farm wife threw together simple food and headed for the hills where her husband worked repairing fence. Arriving with food in hand, she inspired him to make quick work of the offending fence line and join her for a simple feast as the sunset gave way to stars.

Relaxing into the peace around them — the romantic getaway that they couldn't take - they talked about everything except what was happening on the farm. Places they planned to see before they grew old, the hopes they had for their children. Their awareness of each other was heightened as they let go of the need to accomplish one more task before bedtime.

Throughout the night, that new awareness made its way into memories. They'd end this night without sleep, but wonderfully refreshed. Their circumstances didn't change, but thoughts of that night in a moonlit pasture strengthened the bond that would keep them together, no matter what. Taken by Surprise Our second couple, in their fifties, had found success through focus on their careers. Both partners acknowledged, though, that business travel and general neglect had caused a fraying at the edges of their long-term relationship.

Hoping to reignite the spark, one of them chose to surprise the other with a weekend in the mountains. Each of them envisioned a very different trip, one eagerly imagining the boutiques and restaurants of Aspen, Banff or Telluride while the other, well, that's where our story gets interesting.

Turning their SUV toward a modest mountain town, the person holding all the cards couldn't wait to reveal their final destination. Stopping at last in front of a comfortable, but by no means upscale, hotel, the eager traveler turned to find a look of horror on the other occupant of the vehicle.

It took some fast talking to convince the shocked fellow traveler to actually leave the vehicle and check into a hotel nowhere near as chic as a resort chalet. It took something like a miracle to persuade the disappointed partner to put on boots and jeans to take part in a hunt for peridot on a nearby mountainside.

Silence reigned, at first, as the couple hiked up to where a local gem cutter assured them peridot rough could be found. Armed with a handbook on gems, and tools packed secretly among the luggage, they dug in silence in a rough crevice where water had revealed ordinary-looking stones within the soil.

The memories being formed on this trip seemed doomed to being disappointment on the one hand, and crushed hopes for a special weekend on the other. Things began to shift, however, as one of them found a rock exactly matching the handbook's description of peridot rough. Eagerly striking it with a rock hammer, they sat down hard on the rocky soil as they gazed at the pale green crystals within.

Mining fever took over, and they spent the next several hours digging and breaking stones, eager to find something special to show their friends back home. They were rewarded with two perfect peridot specimens that looked as though they'd be a carat each when faceted.

Filthy, tired and jubilant, they trudged down the mountainside to their vehicle and drove directly to the gem cutter's shop to reveal their prize. Smiling across the SUV, they acknowledged that a trip gone sour had evolved into fantastic memories because their awareness had shifted from individual needs to a shared experience. Each time they look at the peridot rings they wear daily, the bonds of love grow stronger.

A Simple Truth About Memories And so we come to a simple truth: without the touchstone of shared memories to put our hands to, the starkness of hard times can become our only reality. Whether a moonlit dance on the deck of a ship, the shared discovery of a rare book in a musty store, or a kiss on the back of the neck while dressing for dinner, sweet memories are, indeed, the basis of a lasting love.

