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[What Is The Miracle Cure For Your Relationships?](#)

In the drought and heat of Berkeley, California, in the summer of 1991, slow-moving fires ravaged the hillsides. Berkeley is a college town filled with lots of interesting characters with charming homes. As flames swept through the area, thousands of residents were given about three hours to pack up and evacuate.

Those who were fleeing had to make up their minds quickly; what should they get from their home to pack in their cars on their way out of town. What do you think they took? (What would you take?) Well, after making sure that their key heirlooms--grandma's wedding ring, dad's baseball glove, etc., were secure--they filled their cars to the brim with photos and videos. These were their most cherished belongings.

Our Most Valued Treasures

There's a lesson here for all of us. At the end of the day, it's not the things we've bought or the stuff we've accumulated, it's the experiences we have with the people we love that are our most valued treasures. And, during these particularly trying times, rather than turning to bars, bloviators or our brokers for relief, maybe we should turn to our loved ones and friends to find the cure for whatever ails us. This isn't just a "nice" idea. Scientific studies worldwide have consistently shown that people who engage in loving and caring relationships are healthier, recover from illnesses more quickly and actually live longer than those who don't.

Unfortunately, in our modern lives, it's normal for our relationships, even our closest ones, to slide onto automatic pilot. I'm convinced that just as a garden regularly needs replanting, all of our key relationships--and particularly our marriages--also need to be rebooted on a regular basis. There are lots of easy activities that can help to refresh your romance: simple acts of kindness during a stressful period, an unexpected gift, a playful dinner for two, and so on. However, during these tough times, maybe a heavier dose of connecting is needed!

Why Not Remarry Your Spouse?

My wife Maddy and I have found that to keep our marriage vital and alive, we have to continually remind ourselves what we're doing together in the first place. One of the key ways we do this is by getting remarried every year on our anniversary. Okay, before you decide that we're a couple of kooks, let me explain.

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When we originally married, on Thanksgiving in 1983, we had such a great time that I asked Maddy if she'd consider remarrying me every year. And, to add a bit of spice (and I suppose, guerilla theater) to this ritual, we decided that we would do so in a different religion and in a different location each year. So far, we've been remarried by a tribal chief in a Navajo ceremony in Tucson, Arizona, by the skiing judge on the slopes of Vail Mountain, and in a Tai Chi ceremony in Big Sur, California. We've recited our vows in Grace Church in Greenwich Village, in a Buddhist ceremony in our home in California, in a Mayan wedding at the top of the Chichan Itza pyramid in the Yucatan, and, of course, at the Chapel of Love in Las Vegas (and I'm embarrassed to admit that I was dressed in a ridiculous white Elvis jumpsuit with red trim, gold medallion and all). We've even been married twice by our children. Most recently, we celebrated our twenty-fifth anniversary by having Maddy's mom and stepdad and my parents perform our ceremony.

For Maddy and me, getting remarried each year has definitely been a lot of fun. But, we also take the time out to have practical discussions of what our relationship needs more of or less of. Some years, we've concluded that everything is going just fine, while others require a knockdown argument or two, before we can align our needs and commitments again. As our lives have unfolded, these "pauses" have focused on everything from our anxieties over the impending birth of each of our two children, a few business failures and some successes, the death of Maddy's dad and most recently, how we're coping with having just lost a ton of money--and stability--during this brutal economic downturn. However, when the moment comes when we face each other and say, "I do," it never fails to help us remember the things that made us fall in love in the first place while allowing us to take notice of all the reasons we love each other still.

You should try remarrying your spouse! You'd be surprised at how easy it is to set up a wedding--or technically a "renewal of vows." Most justices of the peace are ready to go 24/7, the Yellow Pages and Internet boast every kind of ceremony that you can imagine--and a few you probably couldn't imagine, and every hotel concierge can put a remarriage service together, often on short notice.

From time to time, when people learn about our remarriage history, they ask us, "Why do you get married every year?" And I usually say, "Well...how come you don't?"

Putting Purpose Into Your Relationships

If you're not married, how about putting more "purpose" into other important relationships? How often do you tell your parents or children that you love them? Have you been too busy to go fishing or hiking with your sister or brother? What about nieces and nephews or cousins who'd be uplifted by a call from you? Have you thought about surprising a college roommate or your Best Friend Forever from high school with a visit? Make the call. Send the email. Extend the invite. Get together and raise a toast!

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I realize that this might all sound a bit hokey and that turbo-charging these kinds of experiences might not lift the "Dow." But, they might just energize your "Tao" and miraculously help cure whatever ails you!

How do you keep your relationships energized and nourishing? Please send me your ideas and comments.

[Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D.](#) is a psychologist, gerontologist and author of sixteen books on aging, life transitions, and retirement-related issues including [Age Wave](#), [The Power Years](#), and his new book, [With Purpose: Going from Success to Significance in Work and Life](#) (with Daniel J. Kadlec, Collins Life; 3/09). The founding CEO of [Age Wave](#), he lives with his wife and children in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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