

Ned: This is Episode number 151 for Stay Happily Married, How to Win Your Wife's Heart Forever.

Announcer: Welcome to Stay Happily Married,, your source for weekly updates on the latest tips and advice to build a happy and healthy marriage.

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I'm Ned Daze, and I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. Do you ever have trouble reaching out to your wife and making her feel special, understanding exactly what she needs? Well, we're here with Steevie Jane Parks from Carrboro, North Carolina.

Steevie has a PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Maine and she's been helping couples with relationship issues for more than 20 years. She's got a private practice in Carrboro where she helps couples on a daily basis figure out what they can do to improve their relationship. Welcome back to the show, Steevie. I'm so glad you could join us.

Steevie: Thanks for having me.

Ned: I'm very excited to talk about this and a little hesitant. I guess we're going to kind of get into what guys are doing wrong, and that's always a tough topic to talk about, for guys especially. I'm wondering when you see couples in your office, when couples are coming to you for help, how often is it...is it usually the wives that are bringing up the issues that they're having trouble with or the men or does it depend on the couple?

Steevie: I think in the past it was mostly the women, and now I'm getting more and more calls from men who would like to bring their wives in. So I think things are changing maybe a little bit but once they get in I think both are equally invested in doing something to help the marriage.

Ned: Okay. Does it kind of depend on the issues they're having trouble with or is it just kind of split?

Steevie: I think it may be kind of split but it's interesting that I think men are more and more wanting to work on their relationships.

Ned: Okay. All right, excellent. I'm wondering, so we're talking about what we can do to win our wives hearts forever, and what are some of the kind of right off the bat, some of the top things you see where couples come into your office and the things that guys are doing that are just completely annoying the wives? Probably everything but are there things in particular that we're doing that are specifically kind of setting people off and pushing our wives buttons?

Steevie: Well, first of all, I don't think all men are the same so I don't think that everyone is doing any of these things or all of these things, but I can tell you some of the things that I've seen that wives have gotten annoyed at. One of them is working too much, never being home, which a lot of guys would think that was counter-intuitive because they think the more they work the happier their wives will be, and it's not always true especially if they don't have to work that hard to keep their standard of living. So that's one thing.

Another thing that I've seen is, of course, people coming home late or coming home drunk. That's not a big, happy thing for the wife. Another thing might be playing too many video games or just staying out too late and getting involved in things and forgetting to call and say, "Hey, I'm going to be a couple of hours late."

Ned: It seems like it all boils down to not spending enough time or not communicating that enough.

Steevie: Yeah, not putting enough energy into just being with their wives and enjoying them.

Ned: Right, right. Well, I'm wondering, you mentioned the drinking and the video games. Are there parts of what we're doing as guys where we're not willing to let go of our bachelor lifestyle where we could stay up until two in the morning and play video games and shout and scream at the television or leave our dirty clothes on the floor? I think that's my worst offense. But is there something about that we're just not letting go of or something that we have to hold on to from that?

Steevie: Yeah, I guess it depends a lot on the age of the guy and how close they are to being a bachelor. I think as guys get older they sort of don't have the energy for all that stuff, so I've seen that mainly with younger guys and I think it just takes time and the recognition that these things really do bother their partners because I think maybe some guys might think well, they liked me fine when we weren't married and I did that then. I threw my clothes on the floor and stayed out late and it didn't bother them then, but it's a whole different thing when you're living with another person and a lot of times the wife might feel responsible to kind of pick up the house and make everything clean and get really frustrated.

So I think once you're living together, yeah, you do have to give up a lot of things but then you can always make time for yourself but not every night.

Ned: So I guess there sounds like there's going to be a change in expectation. Is that something that a lot of people are dealing with right into the marriage or in the first couple of years? They're not really used to having responsibilities that they didn't have before when they weren't married or maybe just dating.

Steevie: Yeah, I think maybe some people don't realize that they really do have to change to have a good marriage, and they really can't do the same things and expect to get the same reaction.

Ned: Right.

Steevie: The stakes are a lot higher when you have to live with someone 24/7.

Ned: Right. So in terms of emotional support, we were talking a little bit earlier about how a lot of this came down to being at home, or not necessarily being at home but spending enough time with your spouse, and I'm wondering in terms of the emotional support, is it more that women sometimes are looking for emotional support in a partner and husbands sometimes aren't willing to give that or aren't aware that they need to do that? I know that's kind of a stereotypical thing to say that guys are unemotional people, but is that something that you see where women are expecting more of an emotional support and guys aren't willing to do that?

Steevie: I don't know if they're not willing or maybe they just don't know how. You know, haven't been trained to do that sort of thing; maybe been trained not to do it.

Ned: Right.

Steevie: To encourage people to just pick yourself up and do what you're supposed to do but I think emotional support really is important for both sexes. I think men need it as much as women need it. They just don't think of it that way. Most men view their wives as their main source of emotional support so it's a need that both people have, and I think it's just a matter of the wife has to let their husband know this is how I feel supported. When you do this, it makes me feel supported because a lot of men really have no clue. They just don't know. They just expect that's a woman's job.

Ned: I'm wondering, what does it look like when a couple comes to you and the guy is out drinking with his buddies late at night or he's working all night long and coming home at 10:00 at night saying goodnight, see you tomorrow or playing video games instead of spending time with the kids or the family.

What's the first thing where you see problems in the relationship with that? Is it problems with communication or problems with the sex life, or where does that first manifest itself when the guy isn't quite doing enough and keeping up his end of the bargain?

Steevie: I think some of that rests on the women. Some of the responsibility rests on the women because if they don't say anything,

their husband will never know that that's bothering women may have a tendency to just feel like, can do about this.

them. And a lot of oh well, there's nothing I

But I think the woman needs to speak up and the problem comes in when the woman speak up and the guy doesn't take her seriously. I think one thing the guys can do is really listen when their wife tells them that they're frustrated and unhappy because they're not home enough to really listen and see what you can do to change that. Maybe make some compromises.

Ned: Is this something where we should be asking on a regular basis? Like are there things I'm doing that are annoying you or things I could be doing better? Or do you suggest that people go out and ask around for that kind of information? I'm guessing there should be an open communication at all times.

Steevie: Yeah. That sounds good, open communication at all times. I don't know that most people have that, but you should always be able to say, "Hey, something's on my mind. Do you mind if we take some time tonight when the kids go to bed and talk about this?" I think it's important to be able to make yourself available when the other person wants to talk.

Ned: You mentioned we need to bring up things that our spouses are doing that we don't like or that are upsetting to us. Do you think some people are avoiding that because they want to avoid conflict entirely in their marriage and do you think that's a good idea?

Steevie: To avoid conflict? No, I don't think that's a very good idea. I think that working through conflict is what makes a marriage strong and lasting. If you feel like you can resolve almost anything, you're going to want to stay together for life. No, I think conflict is often a good thing because it means both people are alive and awake and feeling things because you're never going to agree with one person for the rest of your life.

Ned: Right. So we've gone over the basics of some things we're doing wrong and how we can improve those. I'm wondering, I see you've got five ways we can win our wives affections forever. What are these magical tips that I can put into effect right now?

Steevie: Yeah, I'm not sure it's a matter of winning. I think it's a daily struggle to keep fires burning. I don't think it's an all or nothing thing, but I think maybe there could be ways that you can ensure that your relationship will continue to grow and to be strengthened.

I think the first step is to let your wife know that she's the most important person in your life. Make her feel that's she's important. Don't be afraid to show your affection and show how much you love her and to be willing to do anything it takes to make her feel that.

The next point might be to let her know and to make sure that the relationship, the marriage, is the most important relationship in your life so that you don't put your work above the marriage, you don't put your kids above the marriage, although you have to fit them in. You can't sacrifice them for the marriage.

Another point might be to take good care of yourself physically, emotionally, so that you have the energy to be this great husband because it takes a lot of energy to be in a marriage and to keep doing all the many things that you have to do to keep it strong. Let's see, what else.

I guess the most important thing might be to be your best self. That sounds kind of flippant but be the person that your wife fell in love with in the first place, your highest self and if you strive to be your best self, chances are good that your wife will always love you. Maybe, a little picky point might be to remember dates. That's a big thing with a lot of women.

It's like you forget your anniversary, you forget her birthday, and all of a sudden she's miserable and upset, and it seems to be very helpful for men to remember dates and also to make room in their schedule so that you can go away on your anniversary or that you get time off work, to plan ahead to celebrate important times.

Ned: Yeah, it sounds like that's one of those things that falls in line with things you've got to start working on once you get married. It's one of those things that sounds obvious I guess, but we always hear about people forgetting the wedding anniversary or the birthdays. You need to remember to do that along with not playing video games late and leaving your clothes on the floor and remember her birthday.

Steevie: Right, thank goodness for cell phones and things that beep when you have a special occasion.

Ned: Right. If it wasn't for that, I know a lot of us would be in big trouble - in very big trouble. Is there anything else we need to know about making our wives happy and making them love us forever?

Ned: I think just really listening. Really observing, looking for the signs that your wife is happy or that something might be wrong and being willing to listen when your wife is having a problem or there's an issue she wants to discuss with you. Being present and understanding goes a long, long way for women.

Ned: Terrific.

Steevie: And probably for most men.

Ned: Right, right. I think listening always helps regardless of who you are. Steevie, thanks so much for joining us today and being on the show. I really appreciate it.

Steevie: You're welcome. Thanks so much.

Ned: Well, of course. And you can find out a lot more about Steevie's practice on her website. It's drsteeviejaneparks.com. We'll, of course, have a link to that in the show notes. You can also give her a call at 919-918-1014.

Thank you so much for joining us today, and I hope you'll join us again next week. We always love to hear from you. You can comment on this or any other episode or call our listener comment line at 919-256-3083 or email us at comments@stayhappilymarried.com. I'm Ned Daze and until next time, stay happily married.

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