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**LIFE**

life advice

Making Your Marriage and Life, Meaningful

Life—and your marriage—is more fun when it has meaning! Here's how to make it happen.

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The alarm rings.

You get up, you brush your teeth, you take a shower, you hug your spouse, you pack the kids/dog/cleaning in the car, you drop them off, you go to work, you do your job, you get in the car, you pick up the kids/dog/cleaning, you make dinner, you clean up, you go to bed, you kiss your spouse good night, you sleep, the alarm rings, you get up, you brush your teeth, you take your shower, you hug your spouse, you pack the kids/dog/cleaning in the car... and so it goes.

And one day you find you can't get out of bed, you can't do it any more, you don't even know why. It's not that you're particularly tired or sick. Nothing's wrong between you and your mate, or the kids or your friends or your boss—you just know you can't do it any more—and all you want to do is lie there and cry.

No, you're not going crazy. Yes, you may be suffering from depression and that possibility needs to be considered, preferably with the help of a trained professional. But in all likelihood, what you are suffering from is a very real and little acknowledged disease of the 21st century—meaninglessness.

Meaninglessness is easy to diagnose: ask yourself, "What is it all for? The shower, the cleaning, my mate, the job, the dog... all of it—why do I do it?"

If the answer comes up, "Because I have to" or, "Because I should," then you are suffering from meaninglessness. It quite frankly isn't valid, once you're past childhood, to do things because, "I have to" or, "I should." One of your greatest freedoms as an adult is the freedom of choice. And one of the most wonderful choices you can possibly make for yourself is to choose to do whatever it is that you do with meaning—including those seemingly unimportant daily-dos that add up to your marriage and your life.

To do something with meaning involves giving that act significance and value. For example, you set your alarm because you care about giving yourself adequate time to get ready for your day. You value yourself too much to rush and beat yourself through your morning. You brush your teeth and take your shower because you value your health, you enjoy feeling well, and you know that cleanliness contributes to good health. You hug your spouse, not because it's part of the daily drill, but because you want to express to your spouse how much you appreciate all the wonderful ways they enhance your life. You pack the kids/dog/cleaning in the car and drop them off, because you enjoy contributing to others' well-being as well as to your own; you go to work and do your job because you enjoy the good feeling of being financially responsible for yourself and your family and of being productive, and so on.

The more you attribute significance and value to the ordinary tasks of everyday life the more meaning your life acquires, and the more good feelings and joy you can experience. Even stopping to pick up your spouse's forgotten towel becomes less an obligation: "I have to, otherwise the house would be a mess," and more a meaningful act. "I want to because I care about making things nice for myself and my

spouse."

How we do what we do can make the difference between a full and enriching life, and an empty and boring one. Deliberately seek for meaning in your every action and watch the joy in your life and marriage grow!

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