

Engine Trouble?

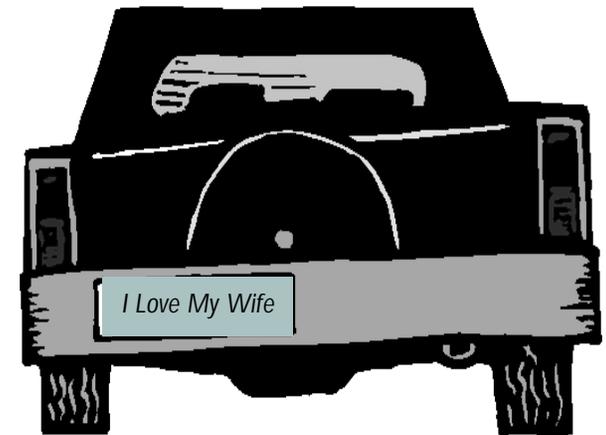
You can fix many of the small problems in a relationship by yourself. But sometimes that ominous clanking under the hood is a signal that something is seriously wrong. That's when it's time to find a relationship mechanic- a marriage therapist who will help you diagnose what's wrong, and guide you to getting your relationship back on the road.



A relationship with another human being is so much more complex than a car. So too is the work required to keep a long-term relationship vibrant, passionate and strong. In the end, maintaining something that enriches us and contributes so much to our lives is surely worth the investment.

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Tune-Up Your Relationship: The Owner's Manual



Buy a car, and you get a reliable machine ready to serve you for thousands of miles and likely many years. You also get a hefty owner's manual with operating instructions, and regular reminders for yearly checkups and tune-ups. Chances are you'll have several years of coverage on the warranty- and if something is seriously wrong, you can take it back.



Find a partner, and you're on your own. There is no owner's manual. No operating instructions, warranty or guarantees for the road ahead. Think about it: it's ten times more complicated to get a driver's license than a marriage license. Although we're taught that it is good and natural to share your life with another person, you've probably never received much specific information on how to make that work. Many of us can do without a car if need be, but few of us want to do without love; most people share a basic human longing for connection with others.

For many the experience and challenge of a committed relationship gives us the space to learn about ourselves and grow as we age.

Like cars, relationships need maintaining and regular tune-ups. But because they don't come with operating instructions, here is a simple maintenance guide to help you keep your love relationship running smoothly and on the road for years.

Know Your Driving Style

Research has shown several qualities that strengthen marriage and other long-term partnerships: communication, honesty and spending time together. However, knowing yourself and what qualities, strengths and challenges you bring to a relationship is just as important. When you work on the most challenging parts of yourself, you create a stronger and better partner for someone else, for the many years that follow.

Watch the Warning Lights

Cars give us little signals when something is wrong; perhaps the wheels feel out of kilter or the oil light turns on. Our partners or spouses also send little warning signs that something is not quite right. It's better to deal

with the problems in the early stages, so that everything is in good working order when real trouble hits. After all, when another car pulls out in front of you, that's not the time to wonder if you had the brakes checked.

Accept Dents & Scratches

Even the perfect car turns out to have quirks and challenges; so do our partners. Let go of your baggage from past relationships and enjoy the person you're with now. Decide which issues are worth pursuing, and let the rest go.



Bless This Car

How many of us stop to appreciate this metal conglomeration, thousands of parts that somehow work together to take us where we want to go? The same goes for our love relationships. Stop, turn off the ignition, and take a moment to be grateful for your spouse or partner and the love you share.