

Some Thoughts after 50 Years of Marriage  
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Many years ago, a student asked me “How do you stay married and in love for so long?”

I had no answer, so I went home and asked Mary.

“Well, Steve. We’ve had seven different marriages!

“Err...did I miss something here?”

“Our first marriage was when we had no children. Marriage Number Two was when we raised our two daughters. Number Three was when they left and Number Four was they moved back in. Marriage Number Five was when they left again and started their own families. Marriage Number Six was when we retired and Marriage Number Seven began at the Pandemic. And in each marriage, we had to *choose* to *think* differently; including how we saw ourselves, how we saw each other, how we saw the world, and how we saw our relationship.”

Marriage, like everything us, begins with how you think. It begins in our minds.

It began for us when I saw Mary standing in front of a Hilton hotel in Arrowhead Springs in San Bernardino.

I was smitten!

It took me three weeks to accumulate the courage to ask her out, and when she said yes, I rushed to the nearest book store and purchased a book of poems by Rod McKuen titled “A Cat Name Snoopy” and I memorized the first poem.

We went out on a Sunday to Sages, a large drug store to have their delicious strawberry pie. Afterwards we went window shopping at the Inland Shopping Center. Back then, the Shopping Malls were open on Sunday evenings, but all the stores were closed, so there was no one there.

As we walked along looking into the shop windows, I began reciting “A Cat Named Snoopy” in a very sexy register. No context. I just began to recite it.

My vision was Mary holding her hands to her heart after I had finished it, and utter how romantic I was.

But when I did finish, she said nothing! She then remained very quiet for an uncomfortably long time.

Finally she stopped, stood there in the Mall, and looked at me.

“I *HATE* Rod McKuen!”

My heart *sank*, so I drove her home. We did talk some more, but I knew I would never see her again.

John, her sort-of boyfriend had volunteered to drive Mary’s Triumph Spitfire from Michigan to California, and he was waiting for us in the front of the Quonset hut where Mary lived.

Mary introduced us, and I drove home, embarrassed, dejected, and crushed!

John lived in Gross Pointe Woods in Michigan, next to the Fords. His family had “old money” which means they had a LOT. (Their “cottage” was a mansion by Lake Michigan where they keep their sailboats in the ballroom.)

John suggested that they drive up the coast and visit Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, the wineries in Santa Barbara, Hearst Castle, and then the Bay Area.

But Mary responded: "You're twenty four hours too late! I've met the man I am going to marry."

As we grew older, we encountered new things; jobs, moving, raising our daughters, financial challenges, etc.

In other words, we had to begin new marriages.

But there is a wonderful characteristic about the brain that I have mentioned before in my writings: that our feelings primarily come from our beliefs.

And that includes long-term relationships.

When we were young, our hormones colored how we felt-about each other. But as we grew, those hormones subsided, and we had to *decide* how we saw the other person. In other words, we had to change our beliefs.

We still are.

But again...the wonderful characteristic about our brain is that it believes everything we tell it. So when we decide to change our beliefs, our feelings change for each other.

But change them to what?

What do men and women need to believe, and do, for their love to continue growing? (And the answer to this question took me decades to form.)

When people ask me how to continue loving someone for so long, I tell them that that the man must do something, and the woman must do something.

**Men-your assignment is to *PURSUE* your wife.**

NEVER stop pursuing her. Buy her a latte, tell her how pretty she is, surprise her with flowers, ask her out on a date next week, or take her out to lunch.

**Women-your assignment is to simply *RESPOND* to us!**

Women – and I think you *already* know this – we men are SO easy! Just respond to us with a sigh. Wear a pretty blouse, or a new pair of earrings, or a pretty night gown. Gaze into our eyes when you are talking to us, for our eyes are the only visible part of our nervous system. When you look into our eyes, you are looking into the windows of our soul.

I LOVE what Harrison Ford says to Anne Heche in the romantic comedy Six Days Seven Nights. "You know how a woman gets a man excited? She shows up. That's it. We're guys, we're easy."

This may seem simple, but we begin our 51st year of marriage tomorrow, so it works!