

Tried and True Wisdom for the Coach's Wife

★ **Marriage:**

Establish a date night and stick to it. This usually took place on Thursday nights. When the children were small and the money was low, we would wait until the kids went to bed and then popped some popcorn and watched a rented movie. Occasionally, we would go to dinner and a movie, but we always took time out for each other once a week.

Now that the kids are not an issue because of their age and desire not to be seen with their parents we still have our date night, but we usually go out to dinner or dinner home and a movie out. We make sure to catch up on what's going on with family and if he wants to talk about work, we discuss his challenges as a coach and how I, as his wife, can help. As far as work is concerned, I try not to ask him anything right after a game.

Parenting:

When the kids were small we would once a week (most weeks) visit the office and bring lunch or a snack. We always participated together with various events for his positional players. Both my girls grew to love his players wherever we were because that is all they knew. It was like having all these big brothers.

I also realized that it was best on some nights to let them stay up late so that they could see their father. A lot of moms are afraid to altar from a schedule, but football life is different from other schedules.

I always either had the kids at the game with me or in the facility by the stadium with a babysitter. This way they were always around football and felt a part of the activities.

When they got older and their activities took precedence, I relied on help from other parents to make their activities as a divided parent (1 parent can't be in two places). This would often times cause me to miss a football game, but not many. It always seemed to work out.

We established early on with our kids that they could not divide the two of us by asking both of us at different times for things. If one parent said "no" then "no" it was. If we found out they tried to divide and conquer they were grounded.

I really feel the best thing we did for our kids to adjust to the coaching life was to first, not tell them every time Dad was up for a job. Why get them all stressed if nothing was going to come of it. Now that they are older we feel we can share (also need to now b/c it is usually in the paper).

The other "best" is that we involved our kids in the activities. Football coaching is a way of life not just a job and we tried to instill that philosophy into our girls. I always groomed them to accept criticism from fans and strived always to not allow our highs to get too high and our lows to get too low.

★ try to have quality time together

~ we always tried to go on dates ~ it gave our children the security that their mom and dad loved and cared about each other

~ now that they are grown they remember that love that they saw in us

~ we always sat down for dinner together even when dad couldn't and we shared our days~ dad's plate would be saved and when he came home, it would be heated and we would gather

again , those that could

~ we would always go to church and lunch after, before coach would have to go to school
~ I took them to practice and afterwards to his office so they would feel a part of his life as a coach

~our son is always on the sideline when he can come home

~our girls are his biggest cheerleaders

~ our middle daughter married a coach!

~ just try not to take a frustrating day for your husband personally when he comes home and doesn't talk much~ he's talked all day~ give a good hug and kiss to him, he'll know you're with him

- * Some things we do to keep the romance in our marriage (33 years and counting) is to have a "date night" once a week, usually on Thursday, (if we played our game on Saturday). We go out to eat at a nice restaurant, sit across from each other, and talk for a couple of hours (while eating). I have his undivided attention for that short period of time, and I bring him up-to-date on what is happening at home and with the boys and me. Once recruiting season and National Signing Day is over, we leave town for the weekend - get-away at a bed and breakfast or cabin to enjoy each other's company, free of distractions.

When our sons were at home (they're grown and on their own), Coach made sure they all had sideline passes for the games - they took turns being his "cord holder" or ball boy. John would take them out of school (one at a time) for a couple of days and take them recruiting with him - the time they spent together was much more valuable than a day at school. Our boys also attended every summer football camp that he worked - they started attending camps when they were two and three years old!

We often had, and still do, have the players and G.A.'s over for dinner. The boys loved having the players in our home - playing video games with them or just talking football. Several of the staffs we have been on also had "family night" at the football office, where the coaches, wives, and children all ate dinner together (it was catered in).

And in the summer, we attended FCA Family Camps - the boys were able to fellowship and compete with other football coaches and their families. They looked forward to it every summer.

* Marriage:

Keep the romance going by changing the routine, nightie, setting, code words, music.....

Because coaches aren't much on socializing, send Christmas Cards to keep in touch with the friends you meet along the coaching journey. We all know that "relationships" are the real reward. As the years pass, the coach values these more and more. A side benefit- the connection to those strong families and friends also provide accountability in our lives too.

Children:

- Christian summer camp (Kanakuk/Kanakomo) gave our children perspective when their hometown friendships tempted them to compromise values.
- Our daughter recently told me that the thing that meant the most to her growing up was my loyalty to her dad and that I put him first, before the kids. It made her feel secure, and modeled a harmonious home. Now that our kids each have 3 children, they realize the challenge of keeping one's mate #1.

★ I'm no help on the parenting part. Although, I grew up a military brat basically and had the same moving lifestyle we have as coaches. I think looking back my parents did a good job because they always put an emphasis that it didn't matter where we lived but it was all about us being together that mattered. The house was never important. As far as the marriage goes, one thing that we have used is an idea we got from Coach Osborne and his wife; to install a date night. Once a week (usually on Thursdays) we either go out for dinner or bring home fast food. The point is for us to be together and make it not about football. Also another thing that we just started especially since we've had a couple rough seasons is that my husband on his way home will "vent" but once he gets home we don't talk about his office anymore.

★ I have to tell you that when my husband and I got engaged the defensive coordinator that my husband so looked up to gave us both a wonderful piece of advice... he said, "Always find time for the two of you, at least once a month have a date night." We have been married for 15 year, and every month we have a date night, sometimes we don't even go out, we will make a late dinner after the kids go to bed and just enjoy it alone. Or we rent a movie. It really is something that keeps us strong.

How we keep our family strong and by keeping them positive is first and foremost our faith. Church on Sunday mornings is our family time. We have been blessed that even during the season he can go to church with us. We take 2 cars and he leaves for the office from there but we try every Sunday to be as one.(Recruiting time is harder) We also have a family game night, or do Rock band together---Always trying to show our kids that we are a family even though daddy might not be home as much as other children's dads. Our kids are 13,11, and 7. Other people in our town look as if my husband is never around. Our kids and I look at it as if when he is around, we have the greatest time together.

★ I wish that I could offer you some tips but right now since we are almost a year apart in 2 states again- we are in that struggling phase once again. The only thing that I might add is that we have always decided that in moves and stressful times we tried to focus on what our kids needs are first. Then somewhere along the way we end up together again. In our 30 years of marriage with 29 in College coaching we have probably spent a total of 4 years living apart during transition. Also, it has been crucial to keep your husband as upbeat and positive when he is out of a job and feeling dejected, scared-even though you are feeling the same way. This lifestyle is always challenging and most definitely like a roller coaster! Enjoy the top when you are there- for as long as you can!

★ My best tip for keeping romance in your marriage as a coach's wife is that kiss or hug after the game whether you win or lose. He always needs to know you are his number one fan and are always there. Be willing to listen when he comes home or just be quiet and have his favorite food or drink available. He really needs to know that you care and support him. This may also be the time when you asked for your opinion on something which means he really values you.

As a parent in the coaching world be very careful not to criticize parents or friends of players or the players themselves. Children need to understand that you are supportive of the team. Your children need to know that people may make unkind statements about their Daddy but we know that he is a great guy. Help your children want to be a part of the climate. Involve them in

cookie baking for the team, being at practice and getting to know the players so that they can put a face with a name. Be positive and make it positive for them. Our children have children of their own and some are involved in the coaching profession but they continue to remember the great times with Dad's teams the families and players and the lessons they learned about how you treat and learn from people that may disagree with you. They are better people because of the lessons they have learned from the great game of football.

* 1. First a wife has to give her husband a chance to succeed. To me that means sometimes sacrifices have to be made, such as taking children to the hospital by the wife without the husband, and not complaining about it. Going to parent teacher meetings by themselves and not complaining, etc., etc., A wife has to give her husband the opportunity to succeed without worrying about the home front.

2. I have always felt that the husband and wife need to put each other first. When the family comes along the wife has a tendency to put children and their needs first. The husband is getting established in his profession and will put that first. After the children are raised and gone from home and the husband is established in his profession, they may find that they don't have anything in common. Husband and Wife need to put each other first at all times. There are ways to do that even when the demand on time is horrific.

One small example: Coach would always bring me home an almond joy Hershey bar, because he knew I loved them. Across a crowded room we would always find each other and wink. We never leave each other without a kiss and hug. We always have morning family prayer together. To this day, I still get a thrill and butterflies in my tummy when he drives into the driveway. We have been married 58 years.

* My advice for keeping romance in our marriage...no matter how busy and crazy things get, ALWAYS have a date night. I know that's impossible during recruiting but it can be done in between for sure! Sometimes my husband will just send me a small thing of flowers when he is constantly on the road to replace date night, and he has always called to check up on me to see if I need anything. And to keep the marriage strong, after a bad loss, NEVER talk to him and give him his space unless he wants to talk about it first! Usually, he'll want to talk about it, and I just listen and let him get it all out! And we ALWAYS go to church together EVERY Sunday, no matter where we are and no matter how busy he is!

As far as the family and trying to keep them strong in the coaching world, we have always made room for all their activities, even if Mom was the only one who could do it and always tried to include them on the decisions of job changes. Also, my husband always made sure to talk to each child every day whether he was on the road or in the office since they would be in bed by the time he was home when they were little. He always tried to have great quality time when he was around!

When we would make a move when the kids were older (in high school), he would do research on the schools ahead of time and talk to all the coaches in each of our kids' sports. The coaches would hook up our girls ahead of time with the players to do a lunch together to meet so they weren't feeling so out of place when they got to school. It always worked great!

* Don't know how "sage" this is or how earth shattering, but here goes with my "simple statement!"

1. I think our marriage stays strong because we try to be kind to each other, and because we can laugh AT ourselves and WITH one another.
2. Romance in our marriage...well, seize the moment (but know that there may not be too many moments from August through December!)
3. Child rearing... our three boys are grown and married so I am not too sure about today's world, but for what it's worth, they have told me that I used two sets of phrases that pretty much summed up how they made decisions: 1. APPROPRIATE and INAPPROPRIATE and 2. ACCEPTABLE and UNACCEPTABLE. There's probably more to it than that; guess I just got lucky!

* I think the number one thing we have done is to always let each other be ourselves, follow our own dreams, and be supportive of each other's interests. As for romance--surprises are the spice of life--doing something totally out of the ordinary or unexpected--from a little note stuck in his game plan (or underwear) to a table set up with cloth, china, candelabra; etc in the middle of campus for his birthday!

With kids, we just always tried to make games, practice, or whatever a family affair--keeping them involved in what was going on and getting together with our other coaching families!

* We have been married for about 15 years now, and a date night at least bi weekly, WITHOUT children is a must. You must make QT for your spouse and some women/men forget that. Then a book called *The 5 love languages*, by Gary Chapman (I can bring the book with me) is a wonderful very easy read (and I don't read often) that basically ask you to find your love language and your spouse and tune in to that language--Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Physical Touch, Receiving Gifts or Acts of Service. Finally, extending the "don't go to bed mad rule" to give whatever you and your spouse have had a disagreement on, give it the 24 hour rule.

On the children we have 4 children from the ages of 21 (my stepdaughter) on down to a 4 year old and the key no matter what the key is **communication**. Make sure you are on the same page when it comes to their discipline, education and extra activities. Even though the hubby might be on the field 18 hrs a day, you still need to involve him and try as much as possible to ask his opinion. When they have a day off, make sure that day involves dad (and even try to slip away for some ME time). Which brings me to my final point, **ME time is crucial**. My husband knows it all about him from AUG-FEB (or so he think....ha ha) but when he is off the road in March or some of his vacation time in the summer comes up I need to get away. I use to do it one weekend a year but now I do 2 (more kids more weekends) but I get away. Sometimes alone or sometimes a trip to see friends or relatives a plane ride away.

