



Regena Thomashauer, relationship expert “You have to take charge of your own romantic destiny”

Regena Thomashauer (a.k.a. Mama Gena) is a true believer that each of us can have a fun, pleasurable relationship that gets better and better over a lifetime. Author of *Mama Gena's Marriage Manual*, she also runs Mama Gena's School of Womanly Arts in New York City. For more than 10 years she's taught thousands of men and women about relationships, communication, sensuality and pleasure.

How is your approach to relationships different?

I don't delve into a couple's problems. I help them find specific ways that they can create fun, intimacy and passion in their lives. We've all had problems. But what's stopping us from having our way now? Everyone can have a hot, juicy romance and live life to the fullest. You just have to be open to it.

What's the best way to do that?

Just make the fun things in life as important as doing the laundry. Men know how to do this, but for some reason women don't. If there are chores to be done on a Saturday, a man will still go golfing as he had planned. But a woman will cancel her manicure appointment to take care of the chores. All those things will still be waiting for you when you get home, so keep that appointment.

What can a couple do to spice up their relationship?

Create a date night—you plan it one week and he plans it the next. You have to risk being totally goofy. Try having a kids' day where you each bring your favorite childhood candy and play Twister or Go Fish. Have an indoor beach night and wear your bathing suits and serve hot dogs.

How can a woman get her husband to be more romantic?

Just ask him! But make sure it's a specific thing he can do for you. Say, "Honey, when I get home, would you light some candles, draw me a bath and have a glass of wine waiting?" Later, tell him how great it was and how happy it made you: That's what a man lives for.

What if he's not that into it?

Ah, yes. Watch out for what I call the "knee-jerk no." The first time you ask him for something, he'll immediately say no. Plan on asking a few times if you have to—keep it playful, but don't give up.

What are some of your favorite Valentine's Day ideas?

Instead of chocolates, roses and dinner, do something original like jelly beans, daisies and going to the circus. Or take the time to do something sweet. One woman filled a small bag with notes on all the ways she appreciated her husband. Guys don't hear that enough.

How can single women bring romance into their lives?

It's all about exploring the things that make you happy: poetry, music, food, travel. You could have a Chocolate Research Week and try 20 kinds to find out which is your favorite. Start the day by listening to Aretha Franklin and boogying in front of the mirror.

What's the key to making a relationship last a lifetime?

Communication! Instead of getting mad when your husband isn't romantic, just let him know what you'd like. **w**

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tip

Floating flowers in a glass bowl make a romantic centerpiece.