

Abstinence makes the heart grow fonder

Based on a keynote address given by Nicholas Tonti-Filippini at the Annual Conference of the OMR&RCA and Billings Ovulation Method Council of Victoria, 25-27 April 1997, Templestowe, Victoria, Australia.

Because natural family planning (NFP) is knowledge and not a commercial product offering scope for large profits, both the medical literature and the popular media are quick to ridicule it. NFP is often labelled "the rhythm method" even though no modern NFP is based upon the myth of rhythm. However all forms of NFP do require short periods of abstinence if the couple wishes to avoid a pregnancy. There is a cultural rejection of the concept of abstinence and sexual responsibility. Rightly or wrongly it is very often the male who is seen as lacking the capacity to practice sexual continence.

The case for teaching the woman to recognise her basic infertile pattern and the changes reliably associated with impending ovulation, especially her peak symptoms and the overall pattern of changes that reflect reproductive health, is overwhelming. For the man who loves that women to share that knowledge, understand its significance, and respond with self control is uplifting to the dignity of both.

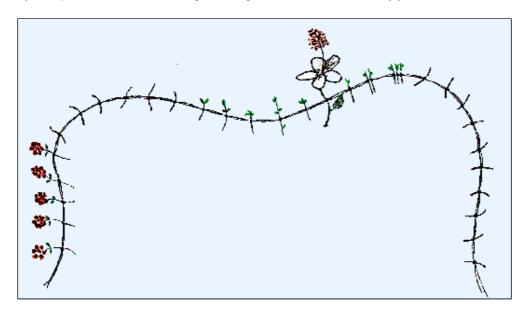
A man's abstinence tends to foster sensitivity to the woman's needs because it focuses attention on her as a person. It brings the relationship past the point of free, available, recreational sex.

There is little romance without abstinence. Without abstinence, sexual expression seems to lose its piquancy, naturally regenerated in abstinence. That which is striven for, that which is wanted and denied gains a value simply through being so.

Knowledge of a woman's cycle and its irregularities deepens a man's understanding of her and her reactions. Knowing that she is capable of emotional highs and lows adds excitement to living with her. Boring male hormonal consistency and dependability is complemented by the flush and flight of a temperament that both sings and weeps.

When people reject natural family planning because of the abstinence involved, it puzzles how they manage in all the many times of abstinence that occur in any case. Abstinence in the flowering relationship is an expression of love and respect, a conquering of oneself in order to mature one's own gift of love in other ways than sexual intimacy, to demonstrate that fidelity is more than sexual. Abstinence is essential to our nature.

This chart was made by a couple who have been teaching the Billings Ovulation Method for many years.



The woman uses as a symbol a red flower for menstruation, a dry twig for a dry day, a twig with green leaves when the mucus begins, and a beautiful flower to mark the Peak day which is the most fertile day of the cycle and means to these people a child. The green leaves continuing for three days after the Peak indicate continuing fertility.