

Maintaining Positive Relationships Over the Test of Time

A good relationship can mean different things to different people. However, good adult relationships generally involve two people who respect each other, can communicate, and have equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities. Most, would also expect our relationship with our partner to include love, intimacy, sexual expression, commitment, compatibility and companionship.

It could be expected that all couples want to have a successful and rewarding relationship, yet it is normal for couples to have ups and downs. It takes work to meet these challenges, and to keep relationships healthy and happy.

Remember that friendship is the foundation of all successful long-term relationships. All relationships are different, but there are a few elements that are proven to exist in positive relationships.

Stay Curious

In a long-term relationship, it's easy to assume you know all there is to know about your partner, forgetting that as individuals we constantly learn, develop and change. Try to be aware of what is happening in your relationship and understand who your partner is and where they are at.

Stay curious about who your partner is, what interests them and where they are at. Ensure that your curiosity is respectful of each other. Just because you love each other doesn't mean you will be able to communicate well or can read your partner's mind, or that they can read yours. Stay up to date about your partner, ask questions, provoke honest communication – in return communicate your needs, dreams and desires. Don't wait for your partner to try to guess what is going on with you.

Be Grateful

Remembering to thank your partner seems simple, but gratitude may provide the everyday dose of sparkle that keeps you together over the long haul. Gratitude helps to remind us of, and helps us appreciate the good qualities in our partners. It's easy to get into routines and start taking our partners for granted, but gratitude can work as a booster shot, injecting positive emotion into the relationship.

Focus your gratitude on the other person; it helps the other person to feel better about themselves, and reciprocate, before you know it both parties feel good about themselves and the relationship is stronger.

Communicate the Conflict

If you have something to bring up, do it gently and try to be objective - going on the attack rarely gets you what you want.

Rather than seeing conflict as a source of anxiety, frustration, fear and anger, we can acknowledge and experience conflict moments as an opportunity to grow, to learn about each other, to make the necessary changes, to upgrade the quality of their friendship and love. Accept conflict as normal and as presenting an opportunity to practice patience and forgiveness.

Be Affectionate and Attentive

Demonstrate your commitment to the relationship. Actions are worth a thousand words; doing something for someone tells them that you love them.

We tend to give our partner what we hope to receive but be mindful that they may prefer another form of affection. Do they like gifts, quality time with you, a note or a cooked meal? Once you know what they like, make an effort to provide it.



Converge International is your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. To make an appointment or speak to a consultant call:

1300 our eap
1300 687 327

Maintaining Positive Relationships Over the Test of Time

Get Back in Touch

Having regular sex does wonders for relationship satisfaction and well-being, but for couples whose sex life has stalled, even just a little warm touch can make a difference.

Research has shown that a partner's gentle touch on each other's neck, shoulders, and hands, increases oxytocin, a hormone that facilitates bonding, and reduces partners' blood pressure and physiological stress levels. In other words, you can reap the benefits of physical closeness even when you don't have the time or energy for full-blown intimacy. Just a quick hug or back rub can boost your mood—and your connection with your partner.

Celebrate your Achievements

Through thick and thin, we look to our partners for a shoulder to cry on when times are tough, but how we celebrate our achievements as couples is equally important. Partners who respond enthusiastically to each other's successes (asking questions, paying compliments, and cheering each other on) report greater relationship satisfaction over time.

When something good happens to your partner, a promotion, a compliment from a coworker, or even just a witticism that gets a big laugh - seize the opportunity to celebrate it. You don't need a major event as an excuse to break out the good china.

Dream On

Make plans and set goals for your relationship and plan for your future. This demonstrates that you are both committed to the relationship for the long term. Plan holidays, day trips, activities, a bush walk, an afternoon doing something that you enjoy, and then work together to turn your plans into reality. Don't forget to have fun and enjoy yourself.

Look After Yourself

You may think the best way to improve your relationship is to focus more on your partner, but that's not always true. Investing in your own life and happiness will pay off, too.

By making your life more satisfying, you take pressure off your relationship to be your sole source of happiness. The bonus of this is that by taking care of what you need to in your own life, you bring a more positive attitude to contribute back into the relationship.

Whether you choose to say thanks, invest in some support, or coin a silly nickname, a little positivity goes a long way. Small gestures matter. Expensive gifts and exotic vacations are nice, but not as meaningful in the long term as simple actions like taking the time to notice a new outfit or cheer a partner's success. Positivity expands your awareness, begetting more positivity—more noticing, more engagement, more appreciation, and more trust.

Little actions help build goodwill that will keep your relationship replenished.

References

Darby Saxbe (2009) 10 Ways to Perk Up Your Relationship <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200910/10-ways-perk-your-relationship>

Relationship Tips for Success (2014) http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Relationships_tips_for_success?open

Julianne Holt-Lunstad, PHD, Wendy A. Birmingham, BS, And Kathleen C. Light, PHD, (2008) Influence of a "Warm Touch" Support Enhancement Intervention Among Married Couples on Ambulatory Blood Pressure, Oxytocin, Alpha Amylase, and Cortisol https://familycenter.byu.edu/Documents/Influence_of_a_Warm_Touch_Support_Enhancement_Intervention_Among.pdf

Your Prescription for Life (2013) Dr Susan Biali



Converge
international

Converge International is your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. To make an appointment or speak to a consultant call:

1300 our eap
1300 687 327