

Tips for improving my relationship

Begin with these ideas. This advice comes from couples who are successful in their relationships.

*Couples can learn how to relate and improve their relationship.

*There are learn-able skills, and not rocket science. With effort and determination, you can do these.

*Many couples who have found themselves struggling have learned how to put the spice and love back in their relationship by consciously working on doing so.

*This is a watershed in a relationship, when relating becomes a conscious and planned activity, rather than a random hit and miss affair.

1. **Express your love often and clearly.** Some couples feel loved with “I love you,” others prefer it said with a visual symphony of flowers. Still others feel loved when something is done for them, such as a meal being prepared, a chore being done, presents being bought, a rose being left on the pillow. Some know they are loved with a soft, cuddly hug. Whatever language of love your spouse is most responsive to, use it often. Firstly, of course, you have to find out what makes them feel loved. Don't assume that what works for you also works best for them.

2. **Be physically affectionate often.** For most people, some form of affectionate physical touching works wonders. This may be sexual, or it may be sensual. Kissing, hand-holding, caressing, and hugs enhance most relationships. Such acts amount to putting money in the emotional bank with account name 'Our Relationship.'

3. **Lighten your partner's load occasionally, especially when they are least expecting it.** Doing little tasks that make your partners day is a way of saying that you notice what they do and appreciate it, to the point that you know by doing the task yourself you are making their load a little lighter.

4. **Support the other, especially in times of acute need.** We all have needs, and at times these are extreme, such as when we are unwell, distressed, under pressure, anxious or feeling down. Emotional and practical support when we are struggling communicates caring, valuing and loving.

5. Take the time to say what you love, admire, respect, and value in the other. A mutual admiration society goes a long way. It is quick to do, and may be precipitated by noticing something which could easily go unsaid. Expressing appreciation is like putting money in the self-esteem bank. We all like to be appreciated, and it signals that we are viewed by our partner in way which supports openness, creativity, spontaneity and being our genuine self.

6. Make quality time for each other. Quality time and quality talk cement and build a relationship. It can be very challenging to meet this essential relationship need, when there are so many demands on your time, especially if you have to find quality time with the children as well. It is during this quality time that many of the other tips described here can be put into action.

7. Prioritize your relationship. The investment in a relationship socially, emotionally, financially and psychologically is huge. Similarly, the cost in stress of a divorce is huge. By giving time, love, attention, affection, understanding, patience, tolerance and needs meeting to your spouse, you are putting your partner first. If you were on your death bed, who would you want to spend your last hour with – the boss, your workmate, your neighbour – or your partner?

8. Talk with your partner about yourself. This could be about your day, your hopes, dreams or fears. Talking about your struggles and your joys is a way to share what matters in your life. This is important not because they are amazing and spectacular, but because they are about you. And you are unique, and mean the world to your partner. For people who are naturally quiet and reserved, it may take some practice to get used to talking about yourself, but is essential in building a bond within the relationship.

9. Treat your spouse to a courting memory. When you were courting, you did all sorts of things for and with each other. Repeat some of these as surprises, showing that your partner's enjoyment has meaning and significance for you. Choose the treats that are OK for you to do, and rate highly for your mate.

10. Expect your partner to be who they are. Give up expecting your spouse to be other than s/he is. You are each different, and you didn't get together so that each could become a clone of the other. Love and accept your partner unconditionally for who s/he is. This does not extend to physical, psychological or verbal abuse of course, but annoying idiosyncrasies are an inevitable part of any relationship. Accept, tolerate

and enjoy the differences between you, and recognize that many others have the ability to enjoy your partner just as s/he is.

11. **Treat your partner as you would want them to treat you - always.** Respect, valuing, kindness, caring, accepting, patience, tolerance and love cost no money, but often considerable time, emotional management, and prioritizing. This can be challenging, and for many couples is often too much so. However, the person you love is worth the time and effort you put into relating in such a way that they feel especially valued and loved by you. Your relationship will profit if you give at least as much as you get, and expect to keep giving.

12. **Be aware that needs meeting is just as important as loving.** People usually 'fall' out of love because they have been unable to meet essential needs in the relationship. Some needs, such as safety, respect, appreciation, loyalty, affection and basic life needs such as relaxation, time out, and time with a range of others should be obvious. However, in addition we all have physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual needs, and these show up in different ways depending on your personality type. Supporting your partner to meet their needs, and sometimes meeting those needs for them, is essential in any successful relationship.

13. **Express love through your partners love language.** By expressing your love to your spouse using his/her love language, rather than yours, you not only demonstrate love but the desire to connect with your partner in ways meaningful to him/her - the ultimate offer of love and thoughtfulness. Love can be expressed a) verbally/auditorally with comments of love and appreciation, b) through the giving of gifts, c) by acts of thoughtfulness and kindness, d) through touch and physical connection of some kind, e) by giving something special that will stimulate the sense of smell, f) or by offering something that will stimulate visual appreciation. More about gifts of love can be found at

14. **Support your partner to be themselves** This is the ultimate, because each of us wants to be ourselves and accepted as such. This means giving up the battle of egos to fully hear, appreciate, understand and support your partner. There can be no greater act of love than to be inconvenienced in support of empowering your partner to be the person they want to be. This requires listening and compassionate patience all round, because BOTH partners need to be themselves, not just one.