

How to Make a Relationship Better

After all the effort it takes to get into a quality relationship, it may seem like the hard work is over once you start dating someone. However, a healthy relationship is like a living, breathing thing — it takes constant care and...

Staying Passionate



1.

Don't take the relationship for granted. If there's one thing you do to make your relationship better, make it this. Being in a happy relationship is a privilege — it's not something that is guaranteed all of the time. Because of this, you should always treat your relationship like it is something special and worthy of celebration. Always seek to please your partner and look for opportunities to show your love. Never assume that because you are in a relationship you can "let yourself go" and become unpleasant, disrespectful, or entitled.^[1]

1. This doesn't mean that you have to constantly treat your partner to luxuries (though the occasional present or fancy dinner is always a nice gesture). Instead, make this advice more about your actions. Treat your partner to heartfelt shows of love and affection. Be there when s/he needs you most. Look for creative, memorable things to do with him or her.

2.



Show interest in your partner's life. Your partner wants to be admired and respected as a full person — not simply kept around for emotional support. Always play an active role in your partner's life. Conversely, let your partner take an active role in yours. By taking lots of opportunities to talk about each other and do things with each other, you give yourselves chances to grow as a couple. Just a few ideas are below:

1. Ask your partner's opinion when you're having trouble making a decision
2. Talk about each others' successes and frustrations with work, school, etc. often
3. Help your partner with difficult work/school tasks occasionally
4. Take an interest in your partner's creative pursuits (writing, drawing, etc.)

3.



Never stop flirting. Many couples complain of losing a certain romantic "spark" as their relationship matures. Keep the magic alive by treating every day like you're still trying to woo each other. Gently tease each other, play hard to get, make subtle innuendos — whatever worked for you before you were in a relationship. You can never know a partner too well to stop flirting.^[2]

4.



Touch. Touching is a way to foster greater physical intimacy without necessarily doing anything sexual. For example, holding hands, hugging, and giving massages are all ways of showing your affection through touch. These sorts of actions are a simple but effective way to show that you enjoy the way your partner feels when you're together.

1. While touch is a great way to gain a closer bond, you should always respect your partner's personal boundaries. Don't touch your partner when s/he isn't in the mood for it — this is disrespectful and a good way to start a fight.

5.



Don't be afraid to acknowledge your love. If you and your partner have reached the stage where you're comfortable using the "L word," feel free to make it part of your regular vocabulary. Reminding your partner that you love him or her can be just the boost of positivity and passion that's needed before starting the day, going to bed, or doing something hard. It can also bring you back together after an argument — you may have your differences, but you love each other, so you can work through them.

1. On the other hand, if this is something you find yourself saying *every time you get together*, you may want to resist the urge. Saying "I love you" constantly can cheapen the phrase. When you really mean it, it may have less of an effect.

6.



Commit. Uncertainty about the future of a relationship can kill long-term passion. On the other hand, knowing that your partner will be there for you (and vice versa) allows you to approach each other with

confidence. You know neither of you are going anywhere for a while, so you can relax a little and be your true selves. As a result, your relationship will grow in honesty and affection.

1. This doesn't mean that you need to decide to get married right off the bat (or ever). However, you should talk about what both of you want to get from the relationship early on so you don't run into any conflicts months or years later.

Avoiding Tension



Be open and honest. Communication between you and your partner should be completely open while remaining respectful. This is crucial for a healthy relationship. If your partner respects you, s/he should be able to listen to your concerns and come to an agreement that is fair to both parties. Remember: you'll usually regret staying silent more than you'll regret speaking up and making a mistake.^[3]

1. For example, if you are concerned that your partner is uncomfortable around your family, it's important to discuss this, rather than hoping the problem goes away. If you don't, future interactions may get tense and awkward since you'll be forced to simply *guess* what's wrong.

EXPERT TIP

Picture 8 of How to Make a Relationship Better

Sarah Schewitz, PsyD
Love & Relationship Psychologist

Sarah Schewitz, Psy.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist by the California Board of Psychology with over 10 years of experience. She received her Psy.D. from the Florida Institute of Technology in 2011. She is the founder of Couples Learn, an online psychology practice helping couples and individuals improve and change their patterns in love and relationships.

Picture 9 of How to Make a Relationship Better

Sarah Schewitz, PsyD
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Communication is essential to a healthy relationship. According to love and relationship psychologist Dr. Sarah Schewitz: "Healthy communication involves sharing how you feel, rather than bottling things up. You also have to understand where your partner is coming from, even if you don't agree with it. At the end of the day, **if you and your partner both feel heard, understood, and validated, a lot of problems in a relationship just dissolve.**"

2.



Deal with problems as soon as possible. Letting issues between you and your partner fester is never a good idea. If you sense tension, bring it up. Similarly, if your partner brings up a problem with you, give it the attention you deserve. Be willing to work towards a quick, mutually-satisfying solution — even if it means setting aside your ego and apologizing for something you don't think is a big deal.

1. Some couples enjoy using the "One Day Rule." With this system, when you and your partner have an argument, you swear to fight it out and solve the problem together within the same day. This avoids long, drawn-out emotional battles.

3.



Be trusting. Trust is the cornerstone of all great relationships. Always remember that your significant other is an equal partner, not someone you can control. You need to be comfortable letting your partner out of your supervision for your relationship to thrive. Trust him or her to make wise decisions and stay faithful even when you're not around. This can be difficult for people who are naturally a little jealous, but being able to do this is a sign of maturity and respect that relationships can't grow without.^[4]

1. Similarly, do your best to deserve your partner's trust. Act with respect for him or her, even when you're apart. For instance, don't talk rudely about your partner to your friends, even if you're angry. *Definitely* don't do anything that would call the foundations of your relationship into question.

4.



Be willing to compromise on important things. Partners in a committed relationship won't always agree on everything (nor should they). Because the occasional disagreement is inevitable, both partners need to

be comfortable not getting what they want sometimes. If you can reach "middle ground" with your partner during an argument, take this route so that both partners get some of what they want. If this is impossible, realize that you may need to simply give in sometimes. Your relationship should be worth more to you than a petty argument.^[5]

1. Ideally, both you and your partner should share this responsibility equally. Unequal sharing of burdens can lead to resentment.^[6]

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