

## **10 Strategies To Keep Your Relationship Healthy**

- 1. Seek to understand the situation from the other person's point of view.** Too often when couples have disagreements, they each work very hard to get their own point of view across. They explain, defend and argue why they see things from their perspective. In doing this they continue to widen the gap between themselves and push each other further apart. Instead of arguing your own point, you should be seeking to understand your partner's perspective. By trying to see things from each other's perspective, you acknowledge that one another's feelings and opinions are valued and important. This not only helps bring you both closer together in a time of disagreement, but it helps you both come to a quicker resolution by decreasing defensiveness.
- 2. Fight with a purpose.** Conflict is generally handled in two ways within a relationship – either it's avoided at all costs or used as a means to tell the other person how wrong or awful they are. However, many studies now show that conflict is actually necessary and can be a good thing in a relationship. To make your conflicts more constructive, do this one very important thing – set a goal for the disagreement. Many couples forget that the point of an argument or conflict is to resolve disagreements and reach common ground. Instead, they first start off arguing about an issue and soon turn it into who's the most careless, who's the most neglectful, who's done the worst things in the relationship, etc. The best way to prevent your arguments from unraveling into hours of personal attacks is to agree upon a clear purpose for the argument. What is it we are trying to solve? What is it we are trying to understand, trying to determine in this conflict? Once you set a common goal for the disagreement, than you already feel like a team working together for the same outcome. This helps you both feel connected and prevents getting sidetracked with other irrelevant information.
- 3. Don't criticize each other's character, keep focused on debating the issue.** Another strategy to keep your conflicts constructive is make sure to never attack your partner's character and stay focused on the issue. For instance, if your partner's forgotten to pick up the milk from the store, tell him how disruptive this is to your plans because you can't make the cake you wanted, because the kids won't have milk for their breakfast, etc. Don' attack his character by saying things like you don't really care about me or the kids, you are neglectful and thoughtless, etc. Just stick to the issue!
- 4. Don't take on a parental role.** Acting like a parent by directing and managing your partner kills the chemistry and passion in a relationship. Allow your partner to do things his/her way without micromanaging his/her methods of getting things done. Of course, there are a million different ways you could have done this or done that differently (or even better) than your partner, but remember this isn't the point. Keep in mind that

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you're not there to teach your partner about life, they already have parents for this. As romantic partners you are both on the same team and on the same level. Of course, if you are stronger in one area than your partner, you are allowed to make suggestions, but watch your tone and make sure you are not imposing your expectations, making your partner feel like a child.

5. **Generate synergy in your relationship.** Synergy is created when the result of putting two parts together produces a greater outcome than each individual part could have accomplished alone. Remember you are two adults put together fighting for one chief common outcome – the wellbeing of your family. You now have two sets of eyes, two sets of hands, and two brains to work through every issue. Use this to your advantage. Rather than fight about whose way it's going to be, figure out whose way would give you the most benefit in any particular situation. Brainstorm together, read books together, talk and generate ideas together; exchanging knowledge and combining two different perspectives is always going to get you a better solution than one.
  
6. **Create emotional safety.** When you have emotional safety in a relationship, you know that you can open up, be vulnerable and honest with your partner and they won't turn around and judge you or use this confidential information against you later. Many people demand honesty or get angry when they find out their partner's withheld information from them, but being honest and opening up is quite challenging. Many people would rather lie or cope with things on their own, rather than open up to a partner and risk being criticized and hurt. Creating this type of safe space takes time and work, but the rewards of a deeper connection, intimacy and honesty are much greater.
  
7. **Seek to empower.** Try to help your partner become a better, more stronger and successful person for having met you. Sometimes I see people hindering their partner's growth and development because there is an underlying fear that if their partner becomes better, than they'll leave them. Don't let your insecurities dictate your support in your relationship. Encourage your partner to take that extra class, help them eat healthier and become fitter, urge them to take up a new hobby that they'll enjoy. You'll get an overall happier and healthier partner and she/he will love you more for having such a positive impact on her/his life.
  
8. **Allow both partners to exercise different parts of themselves.** We are complex beings and we have many different sides to us. In the public world, we are sometimes reluctant to show ourselves fully – like the man who never cries or shows sensitivity in front of his friends or the woman who wants to always appear in control. Give your partner the ability to experience his or her different sides, don't typecast your partner as “the clean one”, “the strong one”, “the nurturing one”. While we all have more dominant sides to ourselves, we don't necessarily want to always be this way, but if our partner has come

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to see us mainly in this light and counts on us being this way, it can feel like we have to always play this part. This is very stifling and can hinder your partner's sense of freedom, so allow your partner to be the fullness of who they are.

9. **Point out all the wonderful things your partner does on a regular basis.** Sometimes couples get to a point in their relationship, especially if they've been together for a long time, where they no longer praise or compliment each other for all the wonderful day-to-day things they do for one another. Remember the big smile you use to give him when you were first dating and he opened the door for you or how cute you told her she was when she reminded you to take your coat because it was cold outside. People often are very quick to criticize when their partner's done something wrong, no matter how minor, but rarely give the same courtesy when they've done something wright. Criticizing not only makes the person feel bad about themselves, but it also starts corroding the relationship because who wants to stay in a relationship where they can't seem to ever do anything right? Keep pointing out all the things your partner does that you love and appreciate and you'll be surprised at how this behavior will quickly increase.
  
10. **Listen and see with your heart and not just your logical mind.** Your partner won't always do things right, they'll screw up, they'll make mistakes, but rather than being quick to judge and criticize, practice compassion. Keep in mind that there are and will be plenty of times when you make mistakes. In these instances, you don't want your partner quickly jumping at the chance to tell you how wrong you are, even if the problem and solution were glaringly obvious to them. Instead you want a hug and you want to know that they are able to look past your transgressions and love you regardless.

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