Ways to Improve Your Romantic Relationship: Valentine’s Day (February 14)

Love is a wonderful thing. We all fantasize about finding that storybook romance. Romance novels make it seem so easy- meet, look into each other's eyes, fall in love, and live happily ever after. Unfortunately, love does not tend to work that way. Healthy and happy relationships take some serious work. Deciding to be with someone forever is a serious commitment requiring a lifetime's worth of effort. Happily ever after is not as easy as the movies make it seem, but trust me when I say it is well worth the effort.

# **The Benefits of a Healthy Relationship**

Your relationships play a significant part in your health, happiness, and overall quality of life. There are many benefits to a healthy relationship, including:

* [Living longer](https://www.apa.org/monitor/2018/03/life-saving-relationships#:~:text=Strong%20social%20relationships%20increase%20the,7%2C%20No.)
* More mental [resiliency](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2921311/)
* Less pain and quicker healing
* Lower [blood pressure](https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/12/3/e054812) and better [heart health](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3696881/)
* Increased motivation to care for your health
* Stronger [immune](https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/28258/chapter-abstract/213384140?redirectedFrom=fulltext) system
* Decreased stress
* Emotional support
* Higher self-esteem
* A greater sense of purpose

These are only a few of the seemingly endless benefits of being a part of a healthy relationship. While building a healthy relationship is not always easy, it is always well worth it.

# **Ways to Improve or Maintain a Healthy Relationship with Your Partner**

## **Communicate, Communicate, Communicate**

Strong partnerships require healthy communication. It is possibly the most important thing in keeping a happy, healthy relationship. Now, not everybody has acquired healthy communication skills throughout their lifetime. If that is you, it is not your fault. Fortunately, there are ways you can improve your communication skills. A few of these ways include:

* Listen fully. When your partner is talking, listen to what they have to say. While this may seem obvious, truly listening can be challenging. Many of us tend to begin thinking of our own responses before the other person has had the chance to finish sharing what is on their mind, getting distracted by our environment, or allowing our emotions to cause us to shut down in the conversation. This prevents you from actually hearing what your partner has to say. So, work on listening fully to your partner's thoughts before considering your own reactions and responses.
* Allow yourself to express your feelings. We will all feel angry, hurt, or annoyed by our partner at one point or another. Ignoring these feelings will do nothing but build resentment toward them. Rather than pushing your negative feelings aside, learn productive techniques to express your negative emotions. Before blowing up at your partner or shutting down the conversation altogether, take a pause and consider how you are feeling and why. As you become more aware of your thoughts and emotions, share them with your partner. Sharing your grievances in this manner will allow your partner to hear what you have to say with a better sense of empathy and understanding for your point of view.
* Learn when you are in the right headspace to approach a subject. Sometimes, our emotions can prevent us from having productive conversations with our partners. In these moments, rather than blowing up and potentially saying something you don't mean, take a moment to cool down before talking about it.
* Take some time to learn about non-verbal cues. We all have them. Sometimes, our verbal answers and non-verbal cues do not match. This can often occur when we are unsure about how we feel or how we wish to approach a subject. If you feel confused about your thoughts, you can be open with your partner by letting them know you need some time before answering.
* Seek the help of a professional. Sometimes, we could use professional help to develop healthy communication skills. If this is you and your partner, you may benefit from seeking couples counseling or individual therapy. Both options will allow you to learn the communication skills you need to build a healthier relationship.

## **Make Time for Each Other**

Set aside time dedicated to your partner for a few minutes per day and date nights at least once a week. Doing so will allow you to grow in and discuss your relationship, continue getting to know each other as you evolve, and keep the intimacy alive.

## **Be a Team**

It can be easy to fall into a pattern of comparing difficulties or competing over who hurt who more. However, this way of thinking can quickly deteriorate your relationship's quality, health, and happiness. The two of you are a team. When one of you wins, you both win. When one of you struggles, you both struggle.

## **Don't Forget About Physical Intimacy**

Life can be exhausting. Perhaps work has been especially rough lately, or the two of you have found yourself busy with the kids. When we feel exhausted, finding the time or energy to get physical can become difficult. However, physical intimacy is necessary for relationship satisfaction. Make a goal to get intimate a few times a month, and if you feel that your intimacy has lost its spark, mix things up!

## **Express Your Appreciation**

We all want to feel seen and appreciated. When we are in a relationship, it can become easy to forget to appreciate your partner. We get used to them making our coffee in the morning, cooking us dinner, doing the dishes, or taking over with the kids to give us some alone time. However, forgetting to express gratitude toward your partner can have dire consequences for your relationship. So, challenge yourself to notice the little things your partner does to express their love, and show them you see and appreciate it.

## **Compliment Them**

Yes, you know that you think your partner is beautiful, kind, intelligent, and a joy to be around. However, they are not mind-readers. If you don't express the things you love about them, they may never know just how in love with them you are! So, tell your partner what you love about them at every chance you get.

## **Don't Lose Yourself in the Relationship**

While it is important to spend time with your partner, spending time alone is important, as well. Make time to pursue your hobbies and spend time with yourself. Maintaining your own identity outside of your relationship will allow you to feel happy on your own, taking the pressure off your partner to be your only source of happiness.

## **Don't Hesitate to Seek Advice**

Ask your grandparents how they have stayed in love for all these years. Talk to your friends with kids and ask how they keep the spark alive. Attend couples counseling and relationship retreats. Read that book full of relationship advice. There is no shame in seeking advice for your relationship. Learning from the professionals will give you some great ideas for maintaining a healthy relationship.

# **We Are Here to Help**

We all dream of living happily ever after with the love of our life. However, some issues from our past may prevent us from forming the happy, healthy relationship we have always dreamt of. If you struggle to develop and maintain healthy relationships, our therapists are here for you. [Contact](http://michiganpsychologicalcare.com/contact.php) us today. Our trained, compassionate counselors can help you with many concerns, such as building trust, learning healthy communication skills, decreasing codependent tendencies, and so much more. Don't suffer from relationship issues alone. We are here for you.

**References**

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2018/03/life-saving-relationships#:~:text=Strong%20social%20relationships%20increase%20the,7%2C%20No>.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2921311/>

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