

24 Tips for Having A Great Relationship

Laurie Weiss, Ph.D.

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Relationships, like living things, either evolve or stagnate.

For over thirty years I have been assisting my clients and my readers in growing their relationships, as well as growing my own. (I have been married to the same partner since 1960 and in business with him since 1972.)

As a relationship coach, marriage counselor, therapist, teacher, and author, I know that people have many misconceptions about how relationships really work.

These tips are many of the things I find myself saying over and over again to the clients I work with.

I hope you, too, use them to help your relationship evolve.

Every relationship deserves a chance to grow and enhance the happiness and satisfaction of the partners who create it.

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About Relationships

1. Expect the closeness and distance you experience with your partner to vary from hour to hour, day to day, and season to season. People experience enough closeness much as they experience enough food—any more leads to discomfort. We all have different capacities.
2. Learn from your experience. Notice what works, and what usually receives a negative reaction from your partner. Do what works and stop doing what does not work.

Communication

3. Ask your partner for what you want. Contrary to popular belief, your partner cannot and should not read your mind. Asking increases the odds of getting what you want. Be specific.
4. Keep agreements you make with your partner. Keeping agreements builds trust, which is the basis of almost everything important.

Difficult Communication

5. Speak in sentences or, at most, paragraphs instead of pages during a difficult conversation. Your partner will only remember the last sentence or two you say and forget the beginning of a long speech.
6. Admit your mistakes—even if you don't like the way your partner confronts you about them. It is tempting to defend yourself by attacking your partner, but if you do, you both lose in the long run.

Play

7. Laugh together. Share the jokes or cartoons that make you grin, rent a funny video or remember the stories about funny (especially in retrospect) things you have experienced together.

8. Challenge your partner to resolve a problem with a squirt bottle duel at ten paces. If the situation is really serious, try aerosol whipped cream (at three paces) instead.

Tasks

9. Hire someone to do the chores you both hate—or do them together. Start by looking at the things that never seem to get done, probably because neither of you wants to do them.

10. Occasionally do a task that your partner does not expect you to do. Let your partner be pleasantly surprised that s/he does not need to prepare dinner or mow the lawn.

Boundaries

11. Name the movie you would like to see, or the restaurant you like best, before you ask your partner's preference. That way you avoid being angry because your partner did not read your mind.

12. Forgo retaliation. If you think your partner is preoccupied and ignoring you, look at the ways you are ignoring your partner and change your own behavior. This works for any behavior you don't like.

Money

13. Create shared financial goals. Be sure you discuss and agree on priorities. If one of you thinks your savings are for a great vacation, and the other expects to use them to invest for financial independence, you are headed for trouble.

14. Spend less money than you make. Use the extra to build a reserve. Relieving money-related stress gives you energy for the things that really matter.

Special Occasions

15. Create your own holiday traditions. You come from different families with different traditions. Choose what is most meaningful from each and combine them into something that will satisfy both of you.

16. Listen for hints about what gifts your partner would love to receive. Pay attention to what excites or delights your partner, and use that information when you shop.

Separateness

17. Encourage your partner to find ways do things s/he loves, even if you don't share the same interest. You do not have to do those things if they are uncomfortable for you. There is no rule that says you must do everything together.

18. Listen even when you disagree. Understanding your partner's position about something is not the same as agreeing with it.

Togetherness

19. Talk to each other for at least ten minutes a day about your daily successes, dreams, hopes, fears and disappointments. These important things sometimes get lost in the challenge of managing the logistics of complicated lives.
20. Avoid blaming your partner for a problem in your relationship. Address all problems as if you both contribute to them. You do!

Care of Your Partner

21. Catch your partner doing something right and acknowledge it. It is easy to complain when something is wrong, but we tend to expect things to go right. Your recognition will be appreciated.
22. Give your partner the greatest gift you can give another person. Listen to him or her with your full attention

Self Care

23. Take responsibility for arranging to get what you need and want in your life. This is not your partner's job, although s/he may be happy to help you in your quest if you communicate it clearly and request help.

24. Make taking good care of yourself a priority. In airplanes, you are reminded to put on your own oxygen mask first, before you assist others. In relationships, taking care of yourself regularly enables you to fully engage with your partner.

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