

# Change Your Way To Health!



## Create a happier, stronger marriage/partnership

A happy and long-lasting intimate relationship is one of the most rewarding life experiences. But great relationships don't just happen overnight and they take a lot of conscious effort. Sadly, too many relationships don't fulfill their potential when one or both parties aren't prepared to work through difficult issues. While volumes have been written on how to improve a relationship, there are some basic steps couples can keep in mind to help ensure a strong and healthy bond.

Do know, however, that if a relationship is experiencing serious problems, professional counselling may be needed. Working with a relationship counsellor can help you make an informed and rational decision about whether a troubled relationship is worth saving, and if so, give you the tools to go about it.

### Tips

**Make time to be together.** Schedule dates or romantic getaways – it is important that the two of you have time to enjoy each other's company. Relationships flourish when people laugh together, play together, and learn to see the positive side of life.

**Don't take one another for granted.** This means showing and telling your partner of your love, and being tuned in to how he/she thinks and feels.

**Be willing to give in.** Even if you believe you are right (and especially if you believe you are right) be the first to apologize. When you are unwilling to compromise because you believe you are "right" you can damage the relationship. Ask yourself if you are willing to choose being right over choosing to experience love.

**Listen.** Listening does not mean an occasional "uh-huh" or nod of the head. Developing good communication starts with knowing how to truly listen to what the other person is saying. Practice listening. Keep in mind the other person may not be in search of answers or advice, but simply wants to feel heard.

**Show you care.** It is the little things that matter when it comes to showing you care about someone. Giving flowers "just because" or surprising them with tickets for the two of you to go to a game of his/her favourite sport, shows how much you appreciate your partner. The cumulative effect of many small things can make a significant difference in the quality of a relationship.

**Make important decisions together.** Decisions about finances, the family, chores, vacations, etc., should always be made after consulting with one another and mutually agreeing on a course of action. Thus, both partners need to be kept informed of important developments.



While being married or in a committed relationship can add to your happiness, it is important not to consider it the primary source of your well-being. It is unfair to expect your partner to fulfil all your emotional needs. If you think a relationship will make you feel complete and whole, then you are setting the relationship up for failure.

The only way to maintain a happy partnership is if you are happy and secure within yourself. People who feel good about and believe in themselves and have a sense of purpose will bring that into their relationships and are much more likely to maintain a successful union.

## Tips

**Intimate relationships, more than others, make us aware of personal challenges that we need to work on.** By continually working on improving our weaknesses and learning from others, we can grow and become stronger and happier individuals.

**Becoming more aware of our reaction** when our partner is talking with us is a way to become more self-aware. Are we disrespectful or dismissive in any way? Do we get defensive if our partner gives us some honest feedback?

**Learning to take responsibility** for our own feelings and needs is critical for a healthy relationship. Rather than counting on our partner to make us feel happy and secure, we need to treat ourselves the way we want others to respect us. Thus we accept the consequences of our choices and actions without shaming or blaming our partner or ourselves.

**Keep in mind that relationships thrive when people treat each other with kindness.** We all yearn to be treated lovingly with kindness, compassion, understanding, and acceptance.

**When we are grateful for what we have** rather than focusing on what we don't have, we create a positive energy flow between ourselves and our partner. Constant complaining creates stress, while gratitude creates inner peace and emotional/spiritual well-being.

**It's important to learn how to set personal boundaries.** Communicate clearly your expectations to your partner and tell him/her whether his/her behaviour is not acceptable to you. Having healthy boundaries means being honest with ourselves, and communicating that in a direct and sincere way.

**Learning to extend forgiveness** means we let go of resentments that eat away at us and the relationship. If our partner has hurt us, forgiveness does not mean we deny our feelings, however it does mean we give ourselves permission to move on.

We want your questions, comments, and suggestions.

E-mail us at:

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For more information, to book a counselling session, or to access any of your EFAP services our Client Services Representatives are ready to speak with you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in English or French. All calls are completely confidential.

**1.800.663.1142** (Toll Free English)

**1.866.398.9505** (Numéro sans frais - en français)

**1.888.384.1152** Hearing assistance (TTY)

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