



CONNECTIONS

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Feature of the Month

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How to keep a loving relationship alive through ups and downs

Love is wonderful but no one ever said love relationships are easy. Any partnership - even a happy marriage - is a "work in progress" with good times and bad. So why do most of us work so hard at finding and keeping a close, committed couple relationship, whether or not it involves marriage?

"Relatedness is a core aspect of our selves," says Dr. Sue Johnson of the University of Ottawa. "A good, intimate adult relationship is a safe place where two people can experience feelings of vulnerability - being scared, feeling overwhelmed with life, being unsure of who they are. It's a place where we can deal with those things - not control them or deny them."

Can we tell ahead of time if two people will be able to survive their bad times and make it as a couple? Not very often, it seems - but here are some

early signs of strength to look out for and to build on.

- ***Not expecting to always get your way.*** Being flexible and able to compromise. Knowing when to agree to disagree in a constructive, non-hurtful way.
- ***Being able to communicate positively.*** Or, at the very least, being aware that you're not very good at it and having a conscious desire to learn how to do it better.
- ***Having realistic expectations.*** Liking and accepting each other for who you really are. Not thinking that you are going to change the other person.
- ***Being reliable about small things.*** Not making promises you cannot keep because they are beyond your control.
- ***Having your own interests.*** Being able to go your separate ways, pursue different interests and then come back together to share



CONNECTIONS

your experiences.

- **Pulling together in times of trouble.** Trying times can make you stronger, deepen your relationship and give you a new perspective about what's really important.
- **Having a sense of humor.** Being able to lighten up and laugh can make life and relationships so much easier.

The key is good listening

Busy schedules with myriad obligations can put a lot of pressure on relationships. Above all, be a good listener. Let your partner know that you are truly hearing what she or he is saying, not just appearing to listen while you're thinking about something else.

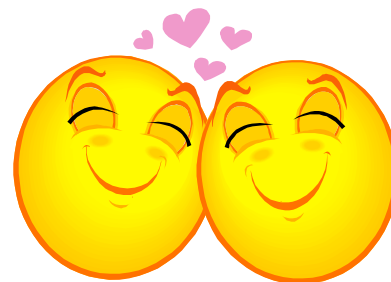
Here are some more ideas to help you create and maintain healthy relationships.

- **Be open to personal growth.** Examine the behavior you learned in the family you grew up in and change those patterns of interaction that do not work for you anymore (or perhaps never did).
- **Separate personal problems from those of your relationship.** If you feel bad about yourself, being married or having a partner will not fix what's wrong. Don't dump your personal problems on your mate. Therapist and author Judith Viorst encourages people to "face the fact that the fault might reside in you, not your relationships."
- **Learn how to fight fairly.** Stick with the issue at hand. Don't turn every argument into

a laundry list of grievances or blow a minor issue out of proportion. Instead of starting a sentence with the words, "you never" or "you always", use "I" statements, such as "I get upset when you leave the room when I start talking about..." Timeouts work for adults too. Agree to continue the discussion when you both cool down.

- **Don't expect anyone to be a mind reader.** Including yourself. Use words. Find out what's bothering your partner. And if you need a hug, say "I need a hug." most relationships can't survive unexpressed hurt or anger very long.
- **Examine the key dimensions of your relationship** from time to time and restate aloud your commitments to each other. Look for new ways to enhance trust, improve communication and build your strength of purpose.
- **Seek out happy couples.** They will make you feel better about life, friendship and carriage..
- **Retain some romantic illusions.** Watch your table manners, treat each other in a courteous way and close the bathroom door.

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The Members' Page



CANADIAN MENTAL
HEALTH ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

The Canadian Mental Health Association is a nation-wide, charitable organization that promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness.

Here is a Work/Life quiz from the Canadian Mental Health Association:

Agree Disagree

1. I feel like I have little or no control over my work life
2. I regularly enjoy hobbies or interests outside of work
3. I often feel guilty because I can't make time for everything I want to
4. I frequently feel anxious or upset because of what is happening at work
5. I usually have enough time to spend with my loved ones
6. When I'm at home, I feel relaxed and comfortable
7. I have time to do something just for me every week
8. On most days, I feel overwhelmed and over-committed
9. I rarely lose my temper at work
10. I never use all my allotted vacation days
11. I often feel exhausted—even early in the week
12. Usually, I work through my lunch break
13. I rarely miss out on important family events because of work
14. I frequently think about work when I'm not working
15. My family is frequently upset with me about how much time I spend working

For further information, contact your Nipissing Regional Branch at 474-1299

CONNECTIONS

Q & A

Question:

A few months ago, my wife was laid off from her job. This situation has put our family into a state of chaos. Financially, we have been able to develop a decent budget, but I am very concerned about the psychological stress our family is going through. Do you have any suggestions that can help us?

Answer:

Unfortunately, it is very common for stress and negative emotions to intrude on the well-being of the family unit when a family member becomes unemployed. In fact, the whole family dynamic can be affected. While negative emotions may be difficult to discuss, it is important to recognize that communication is key to helping your family through this critical period.

Acknowledging that your family is going through a rough situation is very important. Putting your heads together to come up with a 'plan of attack', to handle the pressures your family is facing may be useful.

Also,

- Practice an attitude that treats unemployment as a temporary and manageable situation.
- Remind family members that you are all in this together as a team.
- Communicate with your children realistically, but optimistically about the situation.
- Remember to take one day at a time.
- As a family brainstorm ways to develop positive energy.

If your family does experience difficulties communicating effectively, you may want to consider enlisting the help of an EFAP/North counsellor. He or she will be able to assist your family in a safe and professional atmosphere.

Book of the Month



FROM PANIC TO POWER

Proven Techniques to Calm Your Anxieties, Conquer Your Fears, and Put You in Control of Your Life

By Lucinda Bassett

If you are prone to problems with anxiety and worry, you are probably highly intelligent, very creative, detail oriented, and analytical. These traits can make you extremely successful ... or they can make you *sick*. People with anxiety use these attributes to scare themselves by overthinking and over-reacting. They use their creativity to envision the worst-possible scenarios, most of which never happen.

YOU CAN LEARN TO USE THE ENERGY OF WORRY TO TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE!

* **Relieve Anxiety**

* **Develop Self-Confidence**

* **Stop Panic Attacks**

* **Stop Obsessive Worrying**

* **Eliminate the Need for Medications**

* **Put an end to depression**

* **Drive and Fly Comfortably**

* **Become a Positive Power Thicker**