

Love Workout: 5 Ways to Nurture Your Relationship Every Day

If you've been in a long-term relationship that ended, you can probably point to the time when you saw things going downhill. Maybe your loved one stopped sending you thoughtful texts during the day or stopped treating you to the occasional night out. Maybe *you* were the culprit.

When I got married, I wasn't there for my wife and kids as much as I should have been. I grew up without a father figure for most of my life, and when I started a family of my own, I was still struggling to figure out how to be a good husband and father. My marriage ended in divorce, but now I understand what it means to truly be there for another person.

Just as with fitness, the key to a healthy relationship is making an effort to get a little better every day. Here are a few things I've learned about keeping a relationship strong:

Make the Time

One of the biggest signs that your relationship is suffering is when you and your loved one just don't spend any time together. (Those few minutes scarfing down a bowl of cereal in the morning or brushing your teeth before bed don't count.)

To nurture your relationship, you need to actively carve out that time to spend with the other person. Change your plans so you can meet your significant other for a drink in the evening, or drive to her office for an impromptu lunch date. Even just calling to catch up when you're apart for the day will cheer you both up and give your relationship a boost.

Look for New Ways to Grow Your Happiness

People tend to get stuck in certain patterns of behavior and the ways they choose to solve problems. Getting comfortable in your habits can be the kiss of death for a romantic relationship. Maybe you always eat at the same restaurant or just sit around on the couch on Saturday nights.

Instead of going through the motions in your relationship, find novel ways to spend time together and grow as a couple. Even something as simple as finding a new place to have that heart-to-heart conversation or taking a new class together can keep your relationship feeling fresh and new.

Take the Initiative

A lot of relationships break down because neither party is willing to be proactive and take the lead. As this pattern continues, it becomes harder to reach out, and you and your significant other drift farther apart.

By taking the initiative to buy concert tickets, start a conversation, or make a fun dinner, you can stop this cycle and pull your relationship out of its rut.

Surprise!

As well as adding more planned activities and gifts to your relationship routine, the occasional surprise can really spice things up. And you don't have to stick to flowers — though flowers are always a welcome surprise.

Bringing your significant other a muffin at work or sticking an “I love you” note on her pillow can make her day. These gestures may seem insignificant, but they go a long way toward showing your loved one that you care.

Put Yourself in Her World

No matter how much you care about your loved one, work, kids, and social activities can make you feel like two ships passing in the night. When you and your significant other are leading separate lives, it's a struggle to find the time to address and fix your problems — let alone have fun together.

Try to be a part of her world every day, even if it's in a small way. Ask about your loved one's friends and job, or set up a double date with your mutual friends. These gestures show your significant other that you're invested in her world as much as your own and will encourage her to show you the same kindness.

By approaching your relationships like a daily workout — spending a little time and effort every day to nurture it — you'll start to notice monumental changes. You and your loved one will be more in sync, live and parent better together, and ultimately be happier in your relationship.

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