

## Rebuilding Solid Relationships as a Couple and as Family



### ❖ As a Couple

1. Rule #1 : **If you want different you must do different-**
2. Make each other a priority ; practice date nights and get-aways.
3. Take time to rediscover feelings of love, and the enjoyable experiences you had in the early years of your relationship or marriage. This entails taking the occasional walk down memory lane. It may help to actually physically revisit the places you frequented when dating or in the early years of your marriage.
4. Take time to TOUCH, hug and hold. Nurture the closeness – both physical and emotional. *Human bonding is linked to Oxytocin , a protein based neurochemical released in the brain. Oxytocin is released in response to gentle , intimate touching, holding and caressing. In the absence of regular intimate touch the bond in a relationship can actually fade, as oxytocin levels decline.*
5. **Create an environment where neither feels threatened nor fears sharing how they feel.** This is crucial in order for the following pointers are going to actually work for you.
6. Take time to TALK about roles, responsibilities (who is expected to do what). It is important that such “expectations” be voiced and be clearly understood and agreed to.
7. Make your needs known.
8. Talk about how you feel and what you are thinking. Voice displeasure before it festers and grows. BUT
9. Also talk about the GOOD things you have going in the relationship. DON'T be always dwelling on the negatives.
10. Foster common interests (as well as individual interests)

11. Have common goals for the future. Keep in mind that if you have children they will eventually leave home. Hence you need to have shared vision of the future with just the two of you.
12. Make sure that both of you have the same definition and perspective on crucial concepts such as:
  - a. Love
  - b. Fidelity
  - c. Time together vs time apart
  - d. Finances
  - e. Sex
  - f. Time with extended family
  - g. Career and higher education
13. Act the part of being mature, responsible adults who are building a mutually caring and committed relationship . Adult maturity cannot be "married into" ; each spouse must become a complete individual in his or her own right if a marriage - and any subsequent family that includes kids - is ever to achieve a sense of "oneness". The basic human requirements of character that cannot be "borrowed" from someone else are the abilities to :
  - Connect emotionally
  - Be vulnerable and share feelings
  - Have an appropriate sense of power and assertiveness
  - Say NO! to unreasonable demands
  - Have initiative and drive
  - Have at least a minimal amount of organization
  - Be real, but not perfect
  - Accept imperfections and have grace and forgiveness
  - Grieve
  - Think for oneself and express one's opinions
  - Learn and grow
  - Take risks
  - Grasp and use one's talents
  - Be responsible and follow through
  - Be able to think freely and yet display self-control and reason.
  - Be spiritual ( within mentally healthy limits)
  - Have a moral sense
  - Have an intellectual life.
  - A mature, complete adult takes responsibility for him or herself while also expecting the same from the person they love. Mature people nurture, develop, and care for themselves and others (ref. Cloud & Townsend, 1999)

❖ **As a Family**

1. **Create an environment where each family member feels comfortable sharing how they feel.** This involves creating a nurturing and accepting Family system.
2. Make your family a priority. Work and home life must be kept in right perspective. Post this axiom in some prominent place at home and at work : Your family needs your Presence not your presents.
3. Create a sense of security and peace at home. When you and your spouse have differences leading to heated arguments, take it private away from where the children are. Keep your language civil. Avoid profane language and name calling.
4. Be the adults. Take leadership as parents setting age appropriate limits and assigning chores accordingly.
5. Be consistent in discipline and do not contradict or undermine each other.
6. Notice when your children do what is right or take the initiative to do something on their own without being told. Don't just focus on negatives.
7. **Set down family values and standards of conduct.** Share family history and stories that convey the importance of these values.
8. Establish meaningful rituals and traditions [ holidays, vacations, family reunions that build memories and a unique sense of unity.]
9. Establish regular family meetings structured around a fun event such pizza and movie night. The meetings are for discussing family affairs such as allowances and plans , weekly schedules, vacation plans, chore assignments, and other such matters.
10. Practice forgiveness and flexibility. Don't be rigidly legalistic. Practice unconditional love and acceptance remembering that the ultimate goal is to raise children having a healthy self-esteem , self-confidence , and eventually able to make their own independent way in life.

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Ref.

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- Taylor & Sytsma (2002) : "Current Thinking on Helping Couples with Low Sexual Drive" , Marriage & Family Journal, Vol 5 : Issue 2