Successful long-term relationships

Tips for a successful relationship

Tips that may help you improve your relationship (and be better prepared to meet the challenges along the way) include:

- Talk to each other and communicate your needs – don’t wait for your partner to try to guess what is going on with you.
- If you have something to bring up, do it gently – going on the attack rarely achieves a positive outcome.
- If you say something hurtful to your partner, let them know.
- Listen to each other – often we are so busy defending ourselves or making our own point that we don’t hear what our partner is saying. Let your partner know that you have heard them before you give them your response.
- Remember the positives about your partner – this helps protect your relationship. One critical comment needs five positive comments to counteract its effect.
- Think carefully before criticising.
- Make repair attempts – if your attempts to talk about an issue don’t go as planned, try not to let the situation become even more negative (such as not talking for extended periods or ignoring the other person’s attempts). Saying sorry or touching your partner in a caring manner shows you care, even though you disagree.
- Spend time together – make your relationship a priority and make time for each other, even if you have to book it in. Regular ‘deposits in your relationship bank account’ will help protect your relationship.
- Work on feeling good about yourself – this will help the way you feel about your relationship.
- Accept and value differences in others, including your partner. We often choose people who have qualities and abilities we would like more of. This is one of the reasons why our relationships offer us significant opportunities to grow and develop as people. Remind yourself of this.
- Make plans – set goals for your relationship and plan for your future. This shows that you are both in the relationship for the long term.
- Be supportive – try not to judge, criticise or blame each other; we are all human. Remind yourself that you are a team, and in order for the team to be successful, you each have to cheer the other on.
- Learn from arguments – accept that arguments will happen, and try to resolve them with respect. The strongest predictor of divorce is ‘contempt’, which is any action whereby your partner feels ‘put down’ by you, whether it is the tone of your voice or what you say. In arguments, we sometimes become overwhelmed and this often leads to behaviours that harm our relationship.
- Stay calm during disagreements – or if this is not possible, take time out. Taking an ‘us’ perspective that prioritises the relationship rather than a ‘you’ and ‘me’ perspective can be very useful.
- Look at your part in the conflict rather than focusing only on your partner’s contribution. Your partner is more likely to acknowledge their contribution if you do the same. Research has shown that relationships fall into difficulty when partners begin to think ‘here we go again’ and this negative cycle is associated with loneliness, hurt and disappointment.
- Be sexually considerate – be affectionate (sometimes a lingering kiss or a warm hug are just as important). Accept that individuals have different sex drives and to sustain a healthy and happy sex life requires negotiation. A reduction in a couple’s physical connection is often a warning sign of problems in a relationship.
- Be attentive – demonstrate your commitment to the relationship. It is what you do for someone that tells them that you love them. We tend to give our partner what we hope to receive but they may prefer another form of affection. Do they like gifts, quality time with you, a note or a cooked meal? Once you know what they like, make an effort to provide it.
- Enjoy yourself – have fun and celebrate your life together. Rituals can enhance your relationship. It’s also important to try new things as a couple. Doing fun activities together is very important, as often ‘deep and meaningful’ conversations about couple issues can turn into disagreements which leave you both feeling worse, not better. Fun activities are like glue.
- Be flexible – let your relationship grow and adapt as you both change.
- Share power – ensure that each of you feels that your opinion counts. Research shows that relationships where the female partner feels that she can influence her partner are the most successful.

Successful long-term relationships
In a long-term relationship, it’s easy to assume you know all there is to know about your partner. But people change. Try to be aware of what is happening in your relationship and understand who your partner is and where they are at.

Stay curious about, but respectful of, each other. It is really important to stay up to date about your partner. Friendship is at the basis of all successful long-term relationships. Successful couples tend to be realists who recognise that a relationship will go through ups and downs.

### Seeking help for relationship problems

If there is something in your relationship that is difficult or painful to talk about to each other, consider seeing a counsellor. A counsellor can be of great value to help you talk things through, particularly if you are going over old terrain and each of you is feeling isolated, disappointed or hurt by the lack of progress.

### Where to get help

- **Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) National Register (Family and Relationship Therapy)** Tel. (03) 9486 3077
- **Australian Association of Relationship Counsellors** Tel. 1800 806 054
- **Relationships Australia** is a provider of specialist family and relationship services, including counselling, mediation, dispute resolution, relationship and parenting skills education, community support, employee assistance programs and professional training. Services and programs are available nationally Tel. 1300 364 277
- **1800 RESPECT** is the national sexual assault and family violence counselling service for people living in Australia Tel. 1800 737 732
- **beyondblue** is an independent non-for profit organisation that provides telephone and online support for depression, anxiety, and related disorders, as well as online resources and information Tel. 1300 22 4636
- **Mensline Australia** provides national telephone and online support, information and referrals for men with family and relationship concerns Tel. 1300 78 99 78
- **Family Relationship Advice Line**, Australian Government Tel. 1800 050 321
- **Qlife** provides telephone and online support to help lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex communities work towards better health, including mental health Tel. 1800 184 527

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More information

Relationships

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- Relationships basics
- Developing relationships
- Family relationships
- Separation and divorce
- Remarriage and repartnering
- Relationship difficulties
- Violence and abuse
- Work and relationships
- Getting help

Relationships basics

- Relationships – tips for success
  
  A good relationship doesn't just happen - you have to work at it...

- About child, family and relationship services (video)
  
  Services include parent education to maternal and child healthcare, child care, crisis support, child protection, family violence and relationship services...

- Managing a relationship breakdown
  
  Breaking up is a tough time. It can be better or worse depending on how you deal with it. Here is some information to help you recognise how you're feeling, and why. You’ll also find...

- Parenting on your own
  
  A person can become a single or sole parent for many different reasons. You may have chosen to start a family on your own, you may be separated or divorced, or your partner may have died. As a...

- Relationships and communication
  
  Good communication is about the way we talk and listen, and about our body language...

- Relationships - dealing with conflict
  
  With the physical and emotional closeness of a partnership, it is inevitable that there is sometimes conflict...

- Relationship support services
  
  You may need outside help to resolve problems and ensure your relationship stays healthy and strong...

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Strong relationships, strong health
Throughout your life, the number and strength of your relationships affect your mental and physical wellbeing. The benefits of social connections and good mental health are numerous. Proven links.

Developing relationships

- 10 tips for being assertive
  Practise speaking in an assertive voice...
- 10 tips for making new friends
  Forget about gossip and build strong relationships...
- Assertiveness
  It is helpful to imagine assertiveness as the middle ground between aggression and passivity...
- How to volunteer and boost your health (slideshow)
  Volunteering is great for our health – it makes us feel good, while helping others in the process...
- Making friends
  Friendships are an important part of life, but many of us find it difficult to find, make or keep friends...
- Peer pressure
  Peer groups can be a very positive influence on your teenager's life...
- Relationships and communication
  Good communication is about the way we talk and listen, and about our body language...
- Intimacy in a relationship means being able to share a whole range of thoughts, feelings and experiences that we have as human beings...
- A good relationship doesn't just happen - you have to work at it...
- Secrets to healthy ageing (slideshow)
  Experts say the key to living well into our 80s and 90s is making a commitment to live healthily. Check out these simple ideas and embrace your senior years!
- Strong relationships, strong health
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Family relationships

- Happy families
  It might be valuable to occasionally evaluate the dynamics of your family to ensure that everyone is as happy as they could be...
- 10 tips for managing sibling rivalry
  Teach your children to sort out minor differences themselves...
- Sibling rivalry
  Sibling rivalry is a common problem, particularly among children who are the same sex and close together in age...
- Family conflict
  It is normal to disagree with each other from time to time and occasional conflict is part of family life...
- Managing a relationship breakdown
  Breaking up is a tough time. It can be better or worse depending on how you deal with it. Here is some information to help you recognise how you’re feeling, and why. You’ll also find...
- Parenthood and your relationship
  The birth of your first child can significantly change your relationship with your partner and may impact on other relationships...
- Parenting on your own
A person can become a single or sole parent for many different reasons. You may have chosen to start a family on your own, you may be separated or divorced, or your partner may have died. As a

Recent arrivals, asylum seekers and family support services

Provides an overview of family support programs and health services available to refugees and asylum seekers living in Victoria.

Separation and divorce

- Family breakups - supporting children
  Separating parents can help children by giving them honest explanations and emotional support.

- Family breakups - tips for children
  A family breakup may be even harder for children if they have to move house as a result.

- Managing a relationship breakdown
  Breaking up is a tough time. It can be better or worse depending on how you deal with it. Here is some information to help you recognise how you’re feeling, and why. You’ll also find.

- Stepfamilies
  Becoming part of a stepfamily involves adjusting to a number of changes.

Remarriage and repartnering

- 10 tips for happier step-parenting
  Give your undivided attention when your child asks for it… 10 tips for happier step-parenting.

- Managing a relationship breakdown
  Breaking up is a tough time. It can be better or worse depending on how you deal with it. Here is some information to help you recognise how you’re feeling, and why. You’ll also find.

- Relationships – remarriage
  A step-family will be different from your previous experience of family.

Relationship difficulties

- Work-related stress
  Work-related stress causes an increase in sick days and absenteeism, a higher turnover of staff and a drop in productivity.

- Breastfeeding and work
  You can successfully combine breastfeeding with work if you have support from your employer, colleagues and family.

- Tertiary studies - mature age students
  Returning to study as a mature age student presents many challenges and rewards.

- Computer-related injuries
  Using a computer can contribute to problems of the muscles and joints, eyestrain and overuse injuries of the arms, wrists and hands.

- Tertiary studies - managing stress
  Stress is a common issue for all tertiary students, but there are lots of ways to manage your stress.

- Holiday stress
  Holidays are supposed to offer relaxation and recuperation, but some people find them disappointingly stressful.

- Workplace safety - overuse injuries
  Occupational overuse syndrome, also known as RSI, is caused by repetitive movements or awkward postures.

- Look after your health at harvest time (slideshow)
  Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness.

- Shiftwork
  A person working the night shift is at greater risk of various disorders and accidents.

- Christmas can be stressful
The expense of gifts and food, the pressure of shopping, and the expectations of the season can make Christmas an extremely stressful time...  

- **Workplace safety - coping with a critical incident**  
  Stress responses can develop over time after trauma, and support may be required by some workers or groups...  

- **Christmas - tips to reduce the stress**  
  Christmas doesn't have to be a financial headache if you plan ahead...  

- **Work and your health**  
  Work can provide satisfaction, but loss of a job or work-related problems can affect our physical, emotional and mental health...  

- **How to volunteer and boost your health (slide show)**  
  Volunteering is great for our health - it makes us feel good, while helping others in the process...  

- **Anger - tips to resolve arguments**  
  There are many people you can talk to who can help you overcome feelings of wanting to lash out...  

- **Assertiveness**  
  It is helpful to imagine assertiveness as the middle ground between aggression and passivity...  

- **Making friends**  
  Friendships are an important part of life, but many of us find it difficult to find, make or keep friends...  

- **Anger - how it affects people**  
  Well-managed anger can be a useful emotion that motivates you to make positive changes...  

- **Strong relationships, strong health**  
  Throughout your life, the number and strength of your relationships affect your mental and physical wellbeing. The benefits of social connections and good mental health are numerous. Proven links...  

- **Peer pressure**  
  Peer groups can be a very positive influence on your teenager's life...  

### Violence and abuse  

- **Family violence explained**  
  Perpetrators often make excuses for their violence, for example, blaming alcohol or stress...  

- **10 tips for being assertive**  
  Practise speaking in an assertive voice... 10 tips for being assertive...  

- **10 tips for happier step-parenting**  
  Give your undivided attention when your child asks for it... 10 tips for happier step-parenting...  

- **10 tips for making new friends**  
  Forget about gossip and build strong relationships... 10 tips for making new friends...  

- **10 tips for managing sibling rivalry**  
  Teach your children to sort out minor differences themselves... 10 tips for managing sibling rivalry...  

- **1800RESPECT**  
  1800RESPECT is a national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service...  

- **About child, family and relationship services (video)**  
  Services include parent education to maternal and child healthcare, child care, crisis support, child protection, family violence and relationship services...  

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- Family break ups - tips for children
  A family breakup may be even harder for children if they have to move house as a result.

- Family conflict
  It is normal to disagree with each other from time to time and occasional conflict is part of family life.

- Family violence and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience both far higher rates and more severe forms of family violence compared to other women.

- Family violence and children
  Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural problems.

- Family violence and culturally diverse women
  All forms of family violence (also called domestic violence) are illegal and unacceptable in Australia. But for women from culturally diverse backgrounds, the situation is complex.

- Family violence and the LGBTIQ communities
  Within Australia, intimate partner violence is the most common form of family violence. Evidence presented to the Royal Commission into Family Violence suggests intimate partner violence is as...

Work and relationships

- Breastfeeding and work
  You can successfully combine breastfeeding with work if you have support from your employer, colleagues and family.

- Work-related stress
  Work-related stress causes an increase in sick days and absenteeism, a higher turnover of staff and a drop in productivity.

Getting help

- Family violence services for women
  Family violence can have an enormous impact on the health of women and their children.

- Parenting support to help prevent abuse
  There is a range of non-government agencies available to help families under stress in caring for their children.

- Relationships Australia
  Relationships Australia is a nationwide community-based organisation that provides relationship support services for individuals, families and communities.

- What is family violence?
  Family violence can be physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, economic, spiritual or legal abuse. All family violence is illegal and unacceptable.

- Getting help for someone with a mental illness
  The sooner a person with a mental illness receives treatment, the better the outcome is likely to be.

- Personal and relationship services
  There are personal and relationship services available to you that offer counselling and relationship advice.

- About child, family and relationship services (video)
Services include parent education to maternal and child healthcare, child care, crisis support, child protection, family violence and relationship services...

- **Relationships, family and mental health**
  When you, your partner or someone in your family has a mental illness, it can cause stress and worry for everyone...

- **St Kilda Crisis Contact Centre**
  The St Kilda Crisis Contact Centre offers support, information and referrals to people who are in difficult situations...

- **Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault Forum**
  The 15 Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASAs) that are spread throughout Victoria support women, men and young people who have been sexually assaulted...

- **Social worker**
  Social workers are trained to help people experiencing a range of issues including family problems, anxiety, depression, crisis and trauma...

- **Victoria Legal Aid**
  Victoria Legal Aid provides free advice to people with legal problems, focusing on criminal law, family law and some civil law matters...

- **Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service**
  The Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing or recovering from family violence or sexual assault...

- **safe steps Family Violence Response Centre**
  safe steps is a service for women and children experiencing family violence...

- **Victims of crime**
  Victims of crime in Victoria are entitled to free help and may also obtain victims of crime compensation and receive victim support services...

- **Anger - tips to resolve arguments**
  There are many people you can talk to who can help you overcome feelings of wanting to lash out...

- **Relationship support services**
  You may need outside help to resolve problems and ensure your relationship stays healthy and strong...

- **Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria**
  DVRCV provides support, information and referrals to people experiencing family violence...

- **Men’s Referral Service**
  The Men’s Referral Service is a free, confidential telephone helpline that offers counselling, advice and support to men who have anger, relationship or parenting issues...

- **Sexual Assault Crisis Line**
  SACL is a telephone crisis counselling service for people who have experienced sexual assault...

**Related Information**

- **Relationships and communication**
  Good communication is about the way we talk and listen, and about our body language...

- **Assertiveness**
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- **Making friends**
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- **Peer pressure**
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- **Relationships - creating intimacy**
  Intimacy in a relationship means being able to share a whole range of thoughts, feelings and experiences that we have as human beings...
Related information on other websites

- Australian Government - Family Relationships Services Program (FRSP).
- Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA).
- Relationships Australia.

Content Partner

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Relationships Australia Victoria

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