

Eight Small Things That Can Make a Big Difference in Your Relationship

A strong, supportive relationship is built from a couple's words and actions. With work, children, and other responsibilities, sometimes it is easy to take your partner for granted or forget to do the things that strengthen the relationship. Here are some little things to do that can have a big payoff for your relationship:

- **Find something to laugh about.** Laughter helps us cope with stress and the pressures of our busy lives. A sense of humor helps relationship survive problems, large and small.
- **Have a shared activity both of you enjoy.** It can be anything from going out to dinner, dancing, or gardening. You may need to make time to do things together, but this is a great way of keeping intimacy alive and well.
- **Edit yourself.** Couples who make a point of not saying every critical thought when discussing touchy topics are consistently the happiest. No one wants to be in a relationship with someone who always has to be right.
- **Discuss the things that bother you.** Letting things build up day after day without discussing and resolving them leads to anger and resentment that hurts your relationship. The more quickly something can be addressed and taken care of, the more time you will have for the enjoyable and healthy parts of your relationship.
- **Pick the right time to bring up an issue.** Five minutes before you have to leave the house for work or when you are tired and getting ready for bed is not the right time to bring up an issue. Make sure you will be free of distraction for a period of time to discuss things and find solutions.
- **Have high standards.** Happy couples have high standards for each other. They refuse to accept hurtful behavior from one another.
- **Chart your course.** Charting a course establishes a shared vision for your relationship. It also can be useful to establish some markers to ensure you are moving toward your goals.
- **Seek help early.** The average couple waits approximately six years before seeking help for relationship issues. The sooner you seek assistance, the easier it is to repair and strengthen your relationship.

Check out T.E.A.M.'s Work-Life Services tab at www.team-mn.com for more information and resources on maintaining a healthy relationship.

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