

# Foundations for a Healthy Relationship

*There is no “perfect” relationship, just one that is perfect for you. Even the best couples have struggles, but some of them have come to work through them in healthier ways. Expecting two people to live together in perfect harmony is a little idealistic. There are some things that I believe are the foundations for healthy relationships:*

1. Have fun together! Scheduling dates, big or small, is important to maintaining that connection as a couple. Try new things together, and be willing to explore interests that your partner has.
2. Equally as important is to have fun by yourself! Cultivate your own interests outside of the relationship for your own well-being. Being able to be happy on your own is important to your happiness with another human being.
3. Practice respectful communication, even when you’re upset. Communicating your feelings in a healthy, respectful way is an important aspect of a relationship, as is hearing your partner’s feelings without judging. Taking the time to respond instead of react is vital.
4. Take time outs when needed. Sometimes things get heated. It is important to recognize the warning signs before things get “too hot to handle”. Let your partner know you need some space (be specific – 20-30 minutes to gather your thoughts is ample), and always promise to return when you have cooled down to resolve the situation.
5. Recognize the positives in one another. Take the time to thank one another for that little act of love, or to talk about what you love about the other. Everyone likes hearing what they’re doing right more than what they’re doing wrong.
6. Don’t be afraid to speak up and ask for what you need, when you need it. Your partner is not a mind reader! Sometimes after years together, we expect the other to “just know” what we need, and resentment can build when they don’t. When both partners are vocal about their wants and needs, the chances of success are much better.
7. Keep it real....and keep it realistic! Honesty is imperative, as is having realistic expectations of your relationship.
8. Ask for help when you need it. Don’t be afraid to try couples counseling. A good therapist can be the catalyst needed to break unhealthy habits and grow together!

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