

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Building better relationships

TIP SHEET

Relationships Australia WA's education team have developed a range of tips to help support you during the COVID-19 outbreak. As a free resource, we encourage you to share this with your community.

Intimate relationships can be both most rewarding and most challenging. A crisis situation will often push an intimate relationship to its limits.

The COVID-19 crisis is set to pose more challenges to intimate relationships than ever before, with couples living in very close proximity and facing a myriad outside stresses. Therefore we can expect that many relationships may be pushed to breaking point.

Luckily we can turn to relationship science for help. John Gottman has been observing relationships for over 40 years. His research shows what tears a relationship apart and what will strengthen it so that withstands the challenge of this time.

Here are some suggestions to help you build a better relationship:

1. Nurture your friendship

It is important to see your partner as your best friend. A friend is someone who will support you during times of crisis. The number one way of strengthening friendship is through expressing love and admiration. Take time every day to show and express love to your partner, notice what they do and thank them.

2. Strengthen your commitment and trust

The old promise goes; for better or for worse. We are now facing worse. Commitment is about the promise of being with your partner no matter what - no comparisons or wishes about how they should be better or different. Trust is about being there for your partner when they need you.

3. Have a positive perspective about your relationship

Don't let the negativity in the world swamp your relationship. Instead focus on the ways in which your relationship is strong and how you are working well together in order to handle this crisis.

4. Manage conflict

The challenges and difficulties many couples are facing may seem overwhelming and even unresolvable. The focus here is not on solving problems, but rather managing conflict interactions so that the relationship is not damaged. Start discussions gently, speak respectfully about your position, listen to what your partner has to say, consider all options and be prepared to find a win/win.

5. Make and accept 'Repairs'

Everyone makes mistakes, everyone has bad days. Recognise yours and reach out to your partner to make amends. When your partner reaches out, meet them half way, accept the repair attempt and move on.

6. Create shared meaning

In many ways COVID-19 has forced us to spend more time together. Make this time meaningful by creating routines and rituals that will make your relationship richer. These could include candle-lit dinners, reviewing your values as a couple, exploring healthy lifestyles and improving your relationship skills.

If you follow these tips, you will not only build a relationship that survives the COVID-19, you may just build the type of relationship that lasts a lifetime.

As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support and connection amongst your community or if you'd like further support from Relationships Australia WA you can call us on 1300 364 277.

Our Education team will continue to facilitate Relationship Australia WA's seminars, workshops and courses face-to-face once government guidelines allow. You might like to like us on Facebook to keep up to date with support information and details of services we can offer during this time.

If you'd like to register your interest in attending a course on ***Building Better Relationships*** once available, or any of our other courses, please email education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au or call 6164 0200.