

Recharge your relationship

TIP SHEET

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

We've all had to deal with some major changes to our lives and the world during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it may have thrown some extra challenges at your relationship.

Dealing with increased stress can put a strain on our relationships, and may shine a light on areas of weakness. We can all do with a little extra support at those times to recharge our relationships and remind ourselves to focus on our strengths.

Here are some suggestions to help you recharge your relationship:

1. Accept that love relationships can be challenging at times

Sometimes we think that if you are in love, everything should be easy. You shouldn't disagree, you shouldn't argue, you should share the same goals and expectations. However, this is rarely the case. Accepting that relationships can be challenging and putting in the hard work to deal with differences is likely to make your expectations of each other more realistic.

2. Make time to reconnect with each other

We may spend a lot of time with our partners, but do we truly connect with them? Being fully present with each other allows us to reconnect. This involves listening without distraction, being interested and curious about what is happening in your partner's daily life, and trying to empathise with what they are going through. So put down your phone, turn off the TV and make time to actually talk with each other.

3. Remind yourself about your partner's good points

It's always easy to point out someone's failings, but research shows if we focus on our partner's strengths, then we are more likely to have satisfying relationships. So take time to see the good in each other. Make a habit of reminding yourself daily of all the things you like about your partner, then share these thoughts with them.

4. Remember, friendship is an important factor in any relationship

Happy couples act like good friends. They treat each other with respect, look for ways to spend fun time together and manage conflict in gentle positive ways. Do you still treat your partner like your best friend? Consider how you might become better friends. Choosing to do fun activities together,

getting to know each other's inner world and showing a genuine interest in each other is a good starting place.

5. How you deal with conflict is important

Conflict between couples is almost inevitable. It's rare for a couple to be on the same page all the time. So how you deal with conflict is more important than whether you disagree or not. How you raise issues is important - bring up problems gently, express your concerns but don't blame. You can express your concerns by saying 'I feel' rather than 'you don't'. Try not to hold on to issues, but deal with things as they come up.

6. Don't wait too long to seek help

Half of all marriages end in the first seven years, however the average couple waits six years before seeking help for relationship problems. This means that there is a lot of dirty water under the bridge by the time most couples seek help, making it more difficult to deal with issues. If you feel there's any sign of trouble in your relationship, seek help early. Even if there are no obvious problems, seeing a counsellor or attending a workshop can help you deepen your connection and give you tools to deal with any difficult issues that may arise.

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 are continuing to facilitate Relationship Australia WA's seminars, workshops and courses face-to-face and online.

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