

Relationship Problems

Relationships have the potential to create happiness for two people that they may never have experienced alone but also the potential, when they go wrong, to bring sadness and anger. Relationships of course can be everything between these two extremes and as each of us is unique, so are our relationships. While everyone starts a relationship with high hopes, many people find their relationships follow a disappointing pattern. For some people relationships just seem to work and for others they can seem doomed to fail. There are many factors which impact how people experience relationships and many positive things you can do to improve your own relationship.

Consider the following regarding your relationship:

- Learn about how your partner is different from you. Find out about their childhood, previous relationships, life experiences, passions. Learn about what makes them feel good, what upsets them, how they show affection and what makes them feel good about your relationship (it may be very different from what makes you feel good about it). How you experience the world may be quite different from your partner's experience.
- Learn how to agree to disagree without doing damage to your relationship. It is important that if you disagree you are able to express your thoughts and feelings in a way that does not leave your partner feeling put down or intimidated, but that also leaves you feeling like you were able to have your say.
- All couples fight, however some couples damage their relationships when they fight. When you fight listen carefully to try to understand how your partner might be experiencing things differently from you. Try to talk about how you feel rather than what the other person did that was wrong, and take time out if you feel you are fighting unproductively. Apologise when you are in the wrong and take the steps you need to avoid it happening again. Remember that not all problems are solvable so don't waste energy trying to solve unsolvable problems.
- No matter how frustrated or hurt you might feel, it is important to avoid violence or hurtful behaviour. If you have used violence or hurtful behaviour it is important that you seek professional help.

- Make the time to talk to each other about what is happening in your lives; your hopes, fears and frustrations, the good and bad about your relationship, and remember to laugh together.
- Spend time doing interesting things with your partner. Sharing significant life experiences together will further bond you and your partner. This might be sharing a holiday, sharing your hobbies, leisure activities or a sport. Sharing religious or spiritual beliefs and practices may also bring you closer together. Having enjoyable time with your partner is an essential ingredient for a healthy relationship.
- In contrast, it is also important to have some time apart from each other to pursue your own interests. This is equally as important as sharing time together as it is your own activities and interests that reinforce your sense of self as a unique individual. With a clear sense of self, you are more likely to be a happy person within the context of your relationship.

Please feel free to contact Life Supports on 1300 735 030 if you would like to discuss your situation with a professional counsellor. You can find more information about Life Supports services by visiting www.lifesupports.com.au.