

## Tips for Loving Couples

1. **Keep Love Alive**—Even if you have been together for a long time, you can keep love alive by reviving the kinds of things you did in the romantic phase of the relationship, such as lots of spontaneous hugs, and kisses, hand-holding, and small courtesies.
2. **Get in the Habit of Being Spontaneous**—The unexpected gift of a favorite food, flowers, a book by a favorite author, or a new CD can help keep the spark lit. It may seem unromantic to schedule six months worth of partner-surprises in your appointment book, but it may be the best way to learn spontaneity.
3. **Appreciate Your Differences**—Recognize that it is natural for your partner to have pursuits of his or her own and it is only fair that he/she be allowed to follow them as long as it does not strain the relationship.
4. **Stop, Talk and Listen**—Maintain emotional closeness by setting aside time to express your thoughts and feelings about work, hobbies, and friends. Listen carefully to your partner's thoughts and feelings. Make it a habit to schedule a set time for intensive sharing each week.
5. **The Many Faces of Love**—Keep in mind all of the roles of a mate: confidante, friend, lover, caregiver, and when applicable, parent or member of an extended family. Nurture all of these roles so that none are neglected more than absolutely necessary (sudden illness, unforeseen travel) and all have a place in your relationship.
6. **Agree to Disagree**—If you and your partner seem to agree on everything, chances are there is something wrong with the relationship. Either one of you doesn't know your own mind, or cannot face up to conflict or your partner. Part of your initial attraction should have been your differences and what they bring to the relationship.
7. **It's All in How You View Your Differences**—If you view differences with your partner as stemming from mostly value-neutral differences in upbringing or biologically-influenced (e.g. sex-linked or innate temperament) behavioral dispositions and not as a matter of right vs. wrong or not being loved enough, you should be able to react to them with graceful, genuine, and willing tolerance.
8. **It's Better to Sleep Angry Than Stay Mad**—It is actually better to go to bed angry than to risk damaging your relationship by taking pot-shots and blind-siding your partner with harsh words you may regret later. State that you are upset and will talk about it later when you've had time to cool off and sort through your feelings. Doing so will help you see both perspectives better in the light of day.
9. **Hear Each Other Out**—When you have a serious discussion about making improvements in the relationship, arrange at least an hour to discuss the issue. Come prepared to exercise self-control and to listen with an open mind to what your partner has to say. Take turns listening without interrupting the other. The restraint you practice translates to respect for each other.
10. **Develop Your Couple Skills**—Skill in providing empathy, compassion, trust, openness, intimacy, and honesty; knowing when and how to change yourself in loving ways; and helping your partner do the same, are the true love potions of relationships. Make it your business to seek out and participate in skill-training programs that will teach you those behavioral skills.

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