

Beyond Date Night

CREATING WAYS TO CONNECT

February is the month we celebrate love. And couples with lasting relationships know it's about more than boxes of candy or a bouquet of flowers. Sure, regular date nights are helpful, but prioritizing your partner, sharing new adventures with each other, and showing affection are also important to keep that spark alive. Your Latitude Employee Assistance Program (LEAP) can help you find ways to keep connected.

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Keeping Your Love Alive

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Available anytime, any day, LEAP is a free, confidential program to help you balance your work, family, and personal life.





Best Friends Forever

Most experts agree that relationships that focus on friendship are the most healthy and long-lasting. In a recent article for *The Huffington Post*, Moshe Ratson, a licensed family therapist, identified developing friendship as one of the key activities for creating trust in successful relationships. "Friendship is key to a healthy relationship," Ratson wrote. "Couples that don't pay attention to developing their friendship often separate."

A study from researchers at Purdue University supports his premise that friendship is an essential component of long-term relationships. According to the study's lead author Laura VanderDrift, "romantic relationships are, at their core, friendships."

VanderDrift's team reported its results in the February 2013 issue of the *Journal of Personal and Social Relationships*. The first of two experiments involved 190 students, who had been in a relationship for an average of 18 months at the start of the study. Four months after they filled out questionnaires assessing their investment into their relationships, they were contacted about the status of those relationships.

By this time, 27 percent were no longer with the same partner. However, people who put the most effort into building a strong friendship with their partner were less likely to have broken up. Certainly, this makes the case for focusing on friendship in your relationships. In her article for *Hitched Magazine*, therapist and conflict resolution/affairs expert Sharon M. Rivkin offered these suggestions for becoming and staying your partner's best friend:

- **Take an interest in your partner.** When you talk to your friends, you're interested in knowing how things are going with them, and if they're having problems, you're all ears. You also have patience and words of wisdom to offer. Why not do the same with your spouse? Start simple. When he/she comes home from work, ask them how their day was, and really be ready to listen.
- **Go out on a limb.** In the beginning of a relationship, we're game for anything, but as time goes on, we start getting lazy. If we don't like something, we just pass it off. But that could start creating distance with our partner. The next time your spouse wants to do something that you're not wild about doing, do it anyway. View it as a way to get closer and a chance to spend time with the person you love.
- **Have his or her back.** The healthiest relationships are those where you're a team; where you protect each other and stand up for one another. The next time you witness someone treating your partner poorly, step in and come to his or her defense. The outcome for your partner is a feeling that someone is on his/her side, and that's a really good feeling for both of you.

Try putting these tips into action. They will help you start cultivating a friendship with your partner that can lead to becoming best friends forever. Also, check with your EAP about the relationship resources available.



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