

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Bringing New Life Into an Old Relationship

Fireworks, romance and laughter: that might have been what you signed up for when you and your partner decided to join forces all that time ago. Years later though, the picture looks a lot different; the fireworks have fizzled, the romance retreated, and these days you seem to laugh more at commercials than you do with your mate.

It's not surprising that as people get more comfortable and complacent within relationships, they often make less of an effort. What is surprising though is how a few simple steps can help you give your relationship that breath of fresh air it needs.

Be thoughtful. While flowers, candlelight and chocolate are all nice, romance is really about actively showing that your mate is at the top of your list. From letting your partner sleep in while you look after the kids, to forwarding your mate an interesting article, to making chicken soup for a sick spouse; daily acts of kindness and consideration are just as important, and often more appreciated, than grand romantic gestures.

Listen. Instead of robotically going through the motions, take a few moments out of your day to really *listen* to what your partner has to say. Ask questions to show you're interested and show empathy if your mate is feeling stressed or worried about issues around the kids or work. If there's anything you can do to improve the matter, offer to help out. If not, be sure to lend your emotional support to the situation.

Create a new ritual. Get reacquainted with your mate by carving out a special time every week to enjoy each other's company. Whether it's seeing a movie, reading the paper over a leisurely brunch, or taking a stroll through the neighborhood every morning, rituals are a great way to promote communication and a sense of sharing.

Be your partner's cheerleader. Remind your partner often about the great job he or she is doing as a mate, parent and as a person. But don't just offer praise—celebrate your mate's achievements.

Let the little stuff go. Is that towel on the bathroom floor that big of a deal? Or is your mate's penchant for bad puns really worth fighting over? Ask yourself if these are things that you should really be lamenting over. There are lots of issues to work through in relationships, so save your energy for the ones that really matter.

Remember why your love blossomed. Reminisce with your partner about your romance's early days including how you met and why you knew your mate was "the one." Sometimes in the rush of day-to-day life, it's easy to take your relationship for granted. Going over those long-past details can help remind you about what attracted you to each other in the first place and rekindle those old romantic feelings.

Relationships aren't just about romance and laughter: they're also a lot of work. Put the sparks back into your relationship by actively showing you care, staying connected and taking the time to stop, listen and appreciate each other.

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