

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

Relationship Rescue: Making it Through a "Rough Patch"

Maintaining a happy and healthy relationship can be a real challenge in even the most successful relationships. Unfortunately, over time, love can shift from cute notes, cuddles and kisses to sarcasm, button-pushing and taking the other person for granted. While every couple and its problems are unique, there are ways to breathe new life into your relationship. Try to:

Talk it out. While it's easy to notice when you're having relationship problems, it's a little more difficult to figure out why. Sit down with your partner and talk candidly about your feelings and concerns. Put the children to bed, set the cell phones to silent and turn off the TV. If you can't have a discussion without raising your voice consider going to a public place to talk. Avoid dwelling on the past and instead identify what you can do to improve your relationship for the future.

Stop the blame game. When things are going badly, couples often fall into the "he said, she said" trap. But to fix your relationship, both of you need to look at how you have contributed to the problem. Do you constantly blame the other person? Are you open to your partner's feelings and concerns? Do you ever make sacrifices? Take joint responsibility for your troubles—you'll need to work on saving this individually and together.

Take it step by step. You can't fix everything that's wrong in one afternoon. Repairing a relationship is hard work after all. Try to tackle one specific problem or area of conflict at a time and celebrate the little victories along the way. The more minor challenges you overcome, the closer you'll be to a major resolution.

Accept the bad and acknowledge the good. Everyone has annoying habits, strange quirks and views you may not always agree with. If you try to mold and morph your partner into the person you want him or her to be, then you're going to cause some serious resentment. While you can help to bring out the best in your mate, first and foremost learn to accept your partner as he or she is. Become a model of positivity and find the upside of the "little" things that bother you. If your partner is obnoxiously passionate about sports, for example, take a time out to acknowledge that their passionate side also carries over to their kids and family.

Continue the courtship. Do the things you used to do when you were first dating. Compliment each other, show interest in the other person's day, give gifts for no reason at all and make the effort to say thank you. Set aside one evening a week to do something together, just the two of you and try dressing up for each other every once in a while. These simple actions show your appreciation, let your partner know you still value the relationship and, above all, help you have fun together again.

Call in the professionals. Be ready and willing to seek professional help when the going gets too tough. Counselling can help you identify and resolve a variety of relationship problems that are preventing you from being truly happy. A neutral person can help you lower the volume on your squabbles and steer the two of you back to a better place. If you're having any doubts, this will also help you figure out if you should stay and work it out, or move on.

Some couples pride themselves on never fighting, but arguments are both a healthy and necessary part of every relationship. If conflict has become a daily event, however, you need to make some immediate changes. Take a good look at yourself and your partner, determine what's causing tension and identify

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practical ways to make it work. Getting through relationship problems—though all-consuming and gut-wrenching at times—can actually help you build a stronger, better partnership based on mutual love, trust and commitment.