



Healthy Couple Relationships

Have you given your relationship a “check up” lately? A healthy relationship needs preventive care to assure its health in the same way that we care for our physical health by eating right and getting enough exercise and rest. The Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment (A.C.M.E.) offers these four essential ingredients for a healthy relationship:

A mutual commitment to growth in the relationship. Even when anger is present, the commitment to growth can still be there.

A communication style that “works” in the relationship. All relationships have a communication style. If your style does not demonstrate respect, find a class to improve your communication skills.

A creative and healthy use of conflict. Conflicts will happen in caring relationships. The better we know our partner and the more honest we are with ourselves and our partner, the more conflicts will appear. We do not have conflicts over things that do not matter to us at all, but when one flares up, we need to learn what is behind that conflict. Conflicts emerge from a variety of sources, most often from feelings not expressed that need to be dealt with.

A desire for and a willingness to maintain intimacy in the relationship. The goal of intimacy is not always to “feel close,” but to live your life in such a kind and caring way that intimacy can be built up. Choosing to give this relationship a priority of caring, listening and understanding provides a healthy climate for intimacy.

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Weaving a Committed Relationship

Relationships are built upon the tiny threads woven daily, weekly and monthly, which eventually create a rich tapestry. Here are some ways to weave this tapestry so it will develop a strong partnership built on love, communication, commitment, trust and respect.

- *Devote time to your relationship. Set one night a week as a date night and do something together that does not involve other people or your children.*
- *Do special things for your partner. Think about what really makes your partner happy and make a vow to do these things.*
- *Discuss all the things about your partner that you really appreciate.*
- *Share memories, painful and pleasant, from your childhood. Tell family stories, look at family pictures, and remember the special times that you have shared as a couple.*
- *Take a weekend away. Find a romantic inn, hotel or camp.*
- *Set goals as a couple and family.*
- *Help each other in hard times and be a comfort to one another in your troubles.*
- *Communicate openly and positively. Listen to each other with empathy.*
- *Develop a value system and a spirituality that is beyond self-interest.*
- *Appreciate and respect the differences between the two of you.*
- *Discuss financial issues and make money decisions together.*
- *Create rituals and traditions that celebrate you as a family.*

By working together to create the tiny threads that will keep partnerships together over the years, couples are investing in their shared lives.

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