4 Reasons Date Nights Matter

LIVE WELL UTAH
4 REASONS
DATE NIGHTS
MATTER

Need an excuse for a date night? We've got four– that is, four ways date nights can strengthen your relationship.

Make Date Night a Priority

Summertime is a great time to build memories as a family, but don't forget to also take time for a one-on-one date with your sweetheart too! While it can be a challenge to make arrangements or take the time to get away together, research has shown that having date nights can strengthen your relationship in the following ways:

1. **Increasing communication.** Time to talk can provide opportunities to reconnect and discover your partner's newest interests and dreams.
2. **Having fun together.** Date nights provide an opportunity to get out of the routine, build happy memories and rekindle the spark that can help sustain couples through the tough times.
3. **Strengthening commitment.** Setting aside time to go on a date demonstrates your commitment to each other and sets an important example to children and others that you value your relationship.
4. **Providing stress relief.** Date nights allow couples to enjoy time together apart from the pressing concerns of ordinary life.

Make Date Night a Success

In order to make the most of your time together, consider the following tips:

- Make an effort to plan your date, and if needed, budget

so you can put money toward nice evenings out. For date ideas, check out 10 Tips for Romance on a Budget.
- Make an effort to look your best by wearing something special for your date (cologne, jewelry, special clothes, etc.).
- Get ready to music that pumps you up! When you're listening to music you enjoy, you'll begin to feel good and radiate positive energy.
- Give compliments. Compliment yourself and your spouse to build self-esteem.
- Make the car ride special. Use the time driving to get to know your partner better and discover their current hopes, dreams and interests.

Join us for a Date Night

Looking for a fun date night? Come to the Take a Hike! Reaching New Heights in Your Marriage Date Night on June 23, where you will explore the great outdoors as you hike together in the beautiful mountains near Salt Lake City. Reach new heights as you participate in additional relationship enhancement activities along the way to the top. Click here for more information.

This Article was written by Naomi Brower, Utah State University Extension professor

For more information, see "The Date Night Opportunity" by Brad Wilcox and Jeff Dew found at http://nationalmarriageproject.org/resources/the-date-night-opportunity/

15 Easy Dates to do at Home

LIVE WELL UTAH

STAY CONNECTED
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AT HOME DATES

You don’t have to go out on the town to have a fun date! Whether you are looking for something to do after the kids are in bed, or for budget-friendly date ideas, we’ve got some tips for you.

Couples Night In

Finding time alone as a couple is an important aspect of maintaining a strong and healthy relationship.

Couples with children often struggle to have the time or energy to reconnect as often as they would like.

While it can be a challenge to find the time and resources to go “out” on a date, there are many fun activities couples can do at home to reconnect, especially after the kids are asleep. In order to make at-home dates successful, follow these three tips:

1. Keep it simple. Going on a date with your sweetheart is about connecting with each other. Activities do not need to be elaborate or require a lot of time or energy. Even 20 minutes of uninterrupted quality time can boost a relationship.

2. Make a plan. Because you are staying at home, it will be easier to just fall into the normal routine rather than to have a date night, so plan what you will be doing and when. This will also help you to know what you might need to do or buy to be ready for your date. Be sure to take turns choosing the activity (complaints on either side can spoil the fun).

3. Focus on each other. Once again, because you are at home, it is often easy to get distracted by housework, electronics, etc. Commit to focus only on your spouse and the activity you are doing together for the timeframe you have planned.

Where possible, make an effort to connect through conversation throughout your date, especially about personal thoughts and feelings (not just about the kids).

15 Ideas for at-home date nights:

1. **Star gaze.** Set up a blanket in the backyard and enjoy looking at the stars. For bonus points, get a star map and try to identify constellations.
2. **Walk in your partner's shoes for an evening.** Swap your normal "duties" for the night to try to understand life from your partner's perspective. After the kids go to bed, discuss your experience.
3. **Look through old photo albums** and reminisce together. If you feel really energetic, make it a time to put loose photos into albums or delete out-of-focus and duplicate digital files.
4. **Have a fondue party.** Dip your favorite veggies, fruits or snack foods in cheese or chocolate. Yum!
5. **Curl up for an evening of reading.** Find a book you both enjoy and take turns reading to each other.
6. **Go dancing.** Check out a dance instruction video or find one online and turn your living room into a ballroom.
7. **Camp in your own backyard.** Set up a tent, snuggle and tell ghost stories. If you have a fire pit, light a fire and roast marshmallows and make s'mores. If not, improvise using a gas stove, barbeque or microwave.
8. **Go gourmet.** Sample a few types of cheese you haven't tried before with crackers, bread or fruit and critique each one.
9. **Cozy up on a blanket** in front of a fireplace and have a picnic or treat. No fireplace? You can improvise with a bunch of candles grouped together.
10. **Watch a classic romantic movie or funny videos** on YouTube. Make a fluffy bed out of pillows and cushions on the floor for a fun change.

11. **Play board games or card games.** For a fun twist, decide on a service or treat that the winner will receive.
12. **Get sweet.** Have an ice cream sundae bar, experiment with creating your own smoothie recipes or have a chocolate tasting night.
13. **Have an at-home spa night.** Light some candles and give each other a massage, take a bubble bath or if you are feeling adventurous, treat each other to a pedicure or facial.
14. **Create a dream board of pictures** or a list of places you want to visit or fun things you would like to do together in the future. Make a plan to make one of them happen.
15. **Get active.** Try a new exercise video together or take a stroll around the outside of the house to get some fresh air.

This article was written by Naomi Brower, Extension Associate Professor

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Six Tips to Rekindle the Spark in Your Relationship

SIX TIPS TO REKINDLE THE SPARK

LIVE WELL UTAH

You don’t have to wait for February 14 to roll around to think about how to strengthen your relationship. Check out these six tips for rekindling the spark in your relationship.

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1. Find and make time to spend one-on-one with your partner.

Put distractions (i.e. cell phones) aside and enjoy the time and conversation with each other. Go on favorite dates and mix in new activities to explore new interests.

2. Share acts of love and kindness.

Valentine’s Day is coming up, but find ways all year long to share acts of love and kindness. Leave notes under pillows or in lunch boxes. Drop by each other’s work with a treat. Come home with a fun surprise or take your partner on a quick surprise outing for a drink or ice cream.

3. Think before you speak.

When it comes to arguments and differences of opinions, take a step back and reflect on how important the point of argument is. Is it really worth putting your foot down? Is there room for compromise?

4. Be a good listener.

When discussing matters, be a good listener. Don’t interrupt—wait for your turn to speak. When speaking, repeat what you heard to summarize what you understand that you heard. Then use “I” statements by saying “I feel [*what feeling?*] when [*this happens*] because [*why you feel that way*]. Even better

when you can follow up with a request. For example, "**I feel** frustrated **when** you leave for the gym before you help clean the kitchen, **because** I am left to do all the work on my own and it takes the rest of my evening. **Next time can you please** help me quickly right after we are done eating?"

5. Make each other smile.

Capitalize on inside jokes to make special moments of connection. Replay the inside jokes occasionally during conversations, or in texts or emails. This should be sure to make you both smile.

6. Keep traditions alive– or create new ones.

Remember anniversaries and special dates with a date, a gift, or a note. Consider re-creating favorite activities yearly, such as an evening out to a Jazz game or a concert.

Find Out More

Looking for more ways to strengthen your relationship? Plan a date night and attend the Marriage Celebration on February 3 at Weber State University, or the Date Your Mate Celebration on February 10 at the Viridian Event Center in West Jordan.

This article was written by Melanie Jewkes, Utah State University Extension associate professor, Salt Lake County