

4 Reasons Date Nights Matter

LIVE WELL UTAH

A romantic couple is shown in profile, about to kiss. The man on the left has short brown hair and wears glasses and a grey button-down shirt. The woman on the right has long, wavy brown hair and wears a dark red lace tank top. They are holding a large, circular prop with a light blue and white striped pattern and a central pink heart. The background is a teal-colored wall with a subtle pattern.

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/>

**Increase the Joy with
Forgiveness**



INCREASE JOY
WITH FORGIVENESS

LIVE WELL UTAH

So much of our happiness is within our own control. Find out how to increase joy in your marriage or relationship through forgiveness.

Isn't it amazing that the people we are closest to have the ability to offend us the most? One reason for this is that when we love someone, we lower our protective emotional wall so we are more vulnerable to getting hurt. It works the same with the people who love us – none of us are perfect – we have all said or done things that offend those we love the most. It is the way we REACT to offending or being offended that determines the effect on our relationship. It is important to think about how we really want to feel. Do you want to feel anger, resentment, bitterness, pain, and misery or do you want to feel love, peace, joy, and happiness? There are **two** responses that will bring about the positive feelings we all want to enjoy – **forgiving your spouse** when you are offended, and **offering a sincere apology** when you have offended your loved one.

The following five steps can help you in the forgiveness process and will allow you to replace the feelings of bitterness and hurt with positive feelings of love:

1. Take time to calm down before speaking to your spouse. This allows your brain to switch from the “fight or flight” area of the brain to the higher level thinking part of the brain.
2. Talk with your spouse about what happened to offend you. Sometimes you will find it was a misunderstanding or totally unintentional.
3. Recognize you aren't perfect either. Think of the many times your spouse has forgiven you for offenses.
4. Think of at least three memories when your feelings of love were especially strong for your spouse. Whenever you feel negative emotions of anger, hurt etc., think of

these memories.

5. Give yourself time for the hurt feelings to be replaced with feelings of love. It may take some time, but don't give up!

It is also important to learn how to offer a sincere apology. Three crucial steps are:

1. Recognize exactly what you did to offend your spouse.
2. Develop a plan to avoid repeating the same mistake again.
3. Tell your spouse you are sorry.

Making sure you include the first two steps will make the third step more meaningful and effective.

So...think of something you may have done recently to offend your spouse and begin the steps of apologizing – and think of something your spouse has done that offended you and begin the steps of forgiveness. Don't forget the three memories!

Marriage can be hard work when you think about giving and taking, forgiving and asking for forgiveness – but when you are snuggling in the arms of the one you love, it is well worth it!

This article was written by GaeLynn Peterson, Wayne County Director and Extension Assistant Professor, FCS and 4-H Youth

7 Ways to Make Media Work for

Your Relationship

A photograph of a young Black couple sitting at a white table in a bright, modern kitchen. The woman, on the left, has long, wavy dark hair and is wearing a light pink V-neck top. She is smiling and looking down at a black smartphone she is holding. The man, on the right, has short, dark, textured hair and a beard, and is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. He is also looking down at a white smartphone he is holding. On the table in front of them are two white bowls filled with cereal. The background shows a window with white curtains and some greenery outside. The overall mood is warm and intimate.

LIVE WELL UTAH

7 WAYS TO MAKE
MEDIA WORK FOR
YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Does social media add or detract from your relationship with your partner? Check out these tips on how to use media as a tool to strengthen your relationship.

According to recent statistics, over 97 percent of American adults own a mobile phone, and 67 percent own a smartphone.

In addition, the platforms and mediums for connection are seemingly endless (Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, email, Instagram, WhatsApp, IM etc.).

Increased options for instant connection can have positive and negative impacts on relationships. While online resources can help us stay connected to those we love and increase relationship satisfaction, being constantly connected to the world through online platforms can also potentially lead to neglecting our partners, conflict, less relationship and life satisfaction, and affairs.

Consider the following seven ways to use technology to strengthen your relationships.

1. **Checking-in texts.** Take a minute during a break to tell your partner you are thinking of him or her or to send a “kiss.”
2. **FaceTime/Skype.** While media cannot replace actual face-to-face time, it is an important tool that can be used to help couples stay connected. This is particularly true for couples who spend extended periods of time physically apart (e.g. military, those who travel for work, etc.).
3. **Facebook Posts.** Facebook can be used to publicly express admiration and appreciation for your partner. Photographs, memes, videos and messages can all be used to express affection.
4. **Instagram.** Instagram can be a great way to share moments and different aspects of your day and life with your

partner. This can be particularly useful for couples who are often physically separated due to work or other circumstances.

5. **Email.** Emails can be a fun way to share possible gift ideas found online, date night or getaway ideas, silly pictures or jokes or just to check in with each other.
6. **Pinterest.** Similar to emails, Pinterest can be used to collect fun date night ideas, funny pictures to share with each other, or to create a dream board for future events or goals.
7. **YouTube and Videos.** Videos can be a fun way to connect with each other if you are watching, discussing and/or laughing about them together.

While using media to express affection and commitment can be a great boost to relationships, in order to prevent misunderstandings or frustration, be sure to also discuss boundaries for technology with your partner (keeping profiles public, being open and honest about technology use and who you are communicating with, having technology-free zones or time while you are together, etc.). By having an open and honest discussion and agreeing on boundaries as a couple, you can better ensure that technology will be a benefit rather than a detriment to your relationship.

This article was written by Naomi Brower, Utah State University Extension professor, naomi.brower@usu.edu, 801-399-8206, and Elizabeth Davis, Utah State University Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Assistant Professor for Kane County, elizabeth.davis@usu.edu

Ask an Expert: How to Combat 13 Barriers to Relationship Fun



A man and a woman are sitting at a small white table in front of a tea shop. The man is on the left, wearing a blue shirt and black sunglasses, with his hand resting on his chin. The woman is on the right, wearing a black top and blue sunglasses, also with her hand on her chin. They are both smiling and looking at each other. In the background, a glass display case for 'Sunshine Tea' is visible, with the email 'sunshinetea@hotmail.com' and Chinese characters '欢迎光临' (Welcome) on it. A small potted plant sits on the table between them.

HOW TO COMBAT 13 BARRIERS TO RELATIONSHIP FUN

LIVE WELL UTAH

Looking to add some fun back into your relationship? Take a look at these thirteen common barriers to relationship fun, and how to combat them.

Boring, drab, lifeless, stale, dull, tedious. These are probably not the words you hope to use to describe your relationships. How about well planned, frugal, precise, productive, serious, busy? Though these can be characteristics of a strong, healthy relationship, they are not likely those things that make a relationship seem appealing. What made your relationship so attractive in the beginning? What is it about your partner that made you want to be with him or her?

In the beginning, no matter what the “spark” in your relationship was, it was so enjoyable you that both wanted to continue being together. Have your blissful days of being in love continued? Unfortunately strong, healthy, long-lasting marriages don’t just happen. We have to be intentional about our marriages, and research tells us that playing together helps us connect and feel more positive toward each other. Keeping the spark alive can be the most enjoyable work you and your partner will ever do. Make time to play and have fun; it is good for you and your relationship.

Consider the following barriers that stop couples from playing together and also ideas on how to combat them.

1. Lack of energy, unhealthy living habits. Make a plan to eat right and participate in physical activities. Help each other stick to the plan.
2. “Some day” syndrome. Schedule it and leave reminders for yourself.
3. Fear of looking silly. Let your partner know your fears and trust him or her to help you overcome them. Do fun things together that you feel comfortable with.
4. Differing ideas of fun. Find out why your partner enjoys

his or her hobbies so much by asking questions and trying it yourself. Be open minded. Compromise.

5. Serious disposition. Laugh at yourself. Just try playing and see what happens.
6. Resentment. Remind yourself of how you used to feel toward each other by doing things you used to enjoy together, looking at old photos or talking about feelings.
7. Loss of hope in the relationship. Remind yourself of happier times by displaying happy photos, reminiscing, looking at memorabilia, etc.
8. Too competitive. Play a new game. Don't keep score. Work together to complete a task.
9. Lack of money. Find fun things to do together that are free. Or, save for a special occasion.
10. Other priorities. Talk together about what you feel is important to make an enjoyable relationship.
11. View it as a waste of time. Consider play as a way to strengthen your relationship, because it is!
12. No role model. Talk to or read about other couples that have had successful relationships. Watch children play; they are the experts.
13. Feel it is unnecessary. Just try it and see how much more enjoyable your relationship can be.

Now that you have considered some of the barriers to play in your relationship, take action and make a plan to do something fun.

Based on ideas from The Power of Play in Relationships Manual (Braff & Schwarz, 2004) and Your Time Starved Marriage (Parrott & Parrott, 2006).

For additional ideas, see the fact sheet:

http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/FC_Relationships_2011-04pr.pdf.

This article was written by Naomi Brower, Utah State University Extension professor, naomi.brower@usu.edu, 801-399-8206, and Clarissa Barnhill, USU Extension intern

Marriage Survival: It's a Jungle Out There!



LIVE WELL UTAH

5 TIPS
FOR MARRIAGE
SURVIVAL

Interested in strengthening your marriage? Read on!

Research has found that married couples are healthier, wealthier and their children do better in school than those who are unmarried or divorced. But, marriage can be challenging! Gaining skills and tools of healthy relationships can keep relationships happy and strong. Here are tips to keep relationship strong in five important areas of relationships:

Commitment

Being committed to each other is the first step in a good relationship. As part of thinking about “we” instead of “me,” it is important to understand and discuss each other’s personalities and needs.

Communication

Learning and practicing healthy communication skills such as “I messages” and good listening skills can show your partner that you value your relationships and promote positive communication.

Financial Harmony

Understanding each other’s money styles, keeping a budget, and setting financial goals as a couple can all help you to help you grow closer together rather than having finances be a source of frustration and contention in relationships.

Strengthening Your Friendship

Investing in your relationship with quality time, finding small ways to show that you care, and maintaining a positive mind set can strengthen your relationship.

Protect Your Marriage

Learning how to cope with conflict effectively, and learning traits of safe and happy relationships can help you protect your marriage from negative outside influences.



Learn More

Join us for a fun and interactive class to learn more about these five important areas and strengthen your relationship. [Register Here](#)

This article was written by Naomi Brower, USU Extension associate professor, Weber County

On the Menu: His and Her

Needs Pizza

Whatever your Valentine's Day dinner plans may be, try a few slices of his and her needs pizza. Watch the video for some common needs of men and women, then take some time to discuss needs with your spouse or partner.

The Highlights

We all have needs. By understanding and appreciating each other's needs, couples can grow closer together and protect their relationship from outside negative influences.

4 Tips to Becoming a Better Listener

4 TIPS TO BECOME A BETTER LISTENER



LIVE WELL UTAH

Show how much you value and care about your partner and set a positive tone in your relationship by being a better listener. Watch this video from USU Extension expert Naomi Brower for tips to becoming a better listener

Highlights:

1. **Check your body language** to show that you're listening.
 2. **Focus on what the other person is saying.** Don't interrupt!
 3. **Repeat back in your own words** what has been shared in order to make sure you understand the full message.
 4. **Share your point of view** using "I" messages such as, "This is what I think and feel."
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Smart Dating: 12 Questions to Answer About Your Partner's Conscience



LIVE WELL UTAH

Smart Dating:

12 QUESTIONS
ABOUT
CONCIENCE

These 12 questions will help you determine your partner's conscience.

Much of how a person acts in a relationship is related to the maturity and functioning of his/her conscience. A partner with a poor conscience is one who leaves you feeling forgotten, unappreciated and unloved over and over again. Your conscience has two functions: to monitor your actions and attitudes and to transport you into another's perspective that prompts understanding and compassion.

You don't want to find yourself dating a person with a poor conscience, or worse, married to one. How do you determine if a potential partner has a poor conscience? We've compiled a list of 12 questions you can answer about a person to help you find out!

1. How consistent are they with attitudes and behaviors they say and believe?
2. What do they feel strongly about? Right and wrong?
3. How do they handle it when they are wrong?
4. How defensive are they?
5. What type of things make them feel guilty?
6. Do they understand and validate your perspective?
7. How do they respond to your explanation of your view and feelings?
8. How do they react to authority figures?
9. How controlling are they?
10. What special things do they do for you?
11. What are their moods like? How stable or unstable are they?
12. How much attention do they give to your needs – both spoken and unspoken?

Note: It takes about three months for deep-seeded patterns to

show in a relationship. For this reason, it may be hard to determine if a person has a poor conscience if you have not known him or her for very long.

Want to learn more concepts like these? Register for a FREE “How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk (or Jerkette)” course offered by Healthy Relationships Utah. This course is a research-based, smart dating course for singles who want to form healthy relationships. Courses are available throughout all of Utah. To learn more or register, visit healthyrelationshipsutah.org.

This article was written by Megan Hargraves, Media Specialist with Healthy Relationships Utah, megan.hargraves@usu.edu.

Top 10 // Questions to Ask Before Saying “I Do”



Wedding season is here! Amidst all the planning and excitement, it's important for couples to be sure they know each other well.

Something Borrowed, Something Blue

How many weddings have you been to this summer? They are happening left and right!

Before tying the knot, here are some important questions to consider:

- 1. Do I get along well with my partner's family?**
- 2. Does my partner have a good conscience?**
- 3. Do I have common interests with my partner?**
- 4. Can I communicate well with my partner about tough topics?**
- 5. Does my partner take time to understand my point of view, even if he/she disagrees with it?**
- 6. How does my partner deal with conflict?**
- 7. How does my partner handle money?**
- 8. Are my family values similar to my partner's?**
- 9. Are my spiritual values and beliefs compatible with my partner's?**
- 10. What are other people's perceptions of my partner?**

For more information and class schedules on relationships,

visit <http://healthyrelationshipsutah.org/>.

This article was written by Naomi Brower



Naomi Brower is an Extension Associate Professor for Utah State University. She has a Masters of Family and Human Development from Utah State University. Often called the relationship guru by friends, Naomi is passionate about helping others improve the quality of their lives through creating and strengthening their relationships with others.

References:

healthyrelationshipsutah.org
