7 Tips for a Mindful Marriage

Mindfulness can help you more fully enjoy what matters most—including your spouse! Try these seven tips to be more mindful in your marriage.

We live in a fast-paced world, and if we aren't careful, life can slip by without us fully enjoying the people and things we love most. Being mindful, or maintaining an awareness of your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surroundings, can

help you be more mentally, emotionally and physically present, and more fully enjoy those things and people that matter most. Consider these seven tips for increasing mindfulness in your relationship with your significant other.

1. Practice personal mindfulness.

Practicing personal mindfulness can help create a stronger relationship with your sweetheart. Quieting the excess chatter in your mind will help to steady your emotions and lower your physical and mental stress levels, potentially making you less reactive to your partner’s actions or words. It can also help you to focus on the small, everyday moments with your loved one, such as being fully present when you hug or kiss.

2. Prioritize time with your spouse.

In order for us to connect and be mindful of our partner, we need to have time together. Make your spouse a priority and give him or her your undivided attention, even if it is for 10 minutes every day to check in with them about their day. No TV. No phones. No books. Just each other.

3. Continually learn about each other.

Take time to ask open-ended questions so you can know about what is really going on in their world. The more mindful you are of each other’s hopes, dreams and challenges, the more of a support you can be to each other.

4. Show affection.

Let your partner know that you are mindful of them by showing your love daily through affection. Hold hands, give a lingering full-body hug or a five-second kiss.

5. Play together.

Have fun together and try new things. Show that you are mindful of your partner by trying things that he/she enjoys doing.

6. Express appreciation and compliments.

Show your partner that you are aware of him or her by sharing genuine compliments and words of appreciation daily.

7. Service.

Show your partner that you are mindful of him or her by helping ease their load through small acts of service. Even little things like getting up with the kids, making dinner, or doing a chore you normally don't do can make a huge difference.

Naomi Brower is an Extension Associate Professor in Weber County specializing in helping others improve the quality of their lives through creating and strengthening their relationships. She earned her master's degree in Family and Human Development from Utah State University and she is a Certified Family Life Educator. She enjoys hiking, traveling (especially anywhere green) and playing with her husband and adorable little boy. Contact Naomi at naomi.brower@usu.edu or check out videos and other content at relationships.usu.edu.

References:

Doherty, W. J. (2013). Take back your marriage. New York: NY: The Guildford Press:

Gottman, J. M. & Silver, N. (2007). The seven principles for

making marriage work. London, England: Orion Books, Ltd.

Parker, T. (2016, August 24). How to mindfully meditate in marriage. [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://www.gottman.com/blog/mindfully-meditate-marriage/

How to Keep Your Relationship Strong

HOW TO KEEP YOUR RELATIONSHIP STRONG

LIVE WELL UTAH

Keep your relationship strong by removing these three blocks, and replacing them with things that will build your relationship.

---

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/

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

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

---

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

---

10 Things You Should Do

Before Saying “I Do”

Consider these tips to help you have a successful relationship and marriage!

Creating a Happily Ever After

Being in love is exciting and wonderful, and for some people it’s easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of romance. Many people spend more time planning for a wedding than they spend planning for a marriage. Before deciding to tie the knot, consider these tips to help create a more happily ever after.

1. Ask: Am I ready? The happiest relationships are built on a foundation of two happy and healthy people who are ready to take on the challenges of a new life together. Those who are ready to be in a long-term relationship have dealt with their own personal challenges and issues and are not looking for someone to make them happy or to “fix” them in some way (or vice versa).

2. Take time. In order to really get to know someone, it takes

talking (mutual self-disclosure) + being together (in a variety of situations) + time (at least 90 days) (Van Epp, 2007). Because we are usually on our best behavior when we first meet and it takes time for patterns of behavior to emerge, this is a process that can't be rushed, even if you spend a lot of time together.

3. Be extra cautious in long-distance relationships. While online dating is a common way to meet people, steer clear of commitment without spending a lot of time in person in many different situations. It is easier to show only our best selves in long-distance relationships.

4. Play detective. Ask deep and meaningful questions that will help you know if you are compatible with the person you are dating. For example, check out these 10 Questions to Ask Before Saying I Do. To make sure we aren't biased about how we are viewing the person we are dating, it may also be helpful to think about how others might view him or her, or even ask others about their opinions and listen for warning signs you may have missed.

5. Start to become part of the family. Much of who we are was learned from growing up in our family, so we can learn a lot about what someone will be like as a partner and parent from observing, asking questions and spending time with their family. If there are concerns about a partner's family or negative traits that a partner has learned from his or her family, you may want to think twice before getting too serious. While change is possible, it takes time and effort, and it is much easier to change before getting into a serious relationship.

6. Watch for personality compatibility. While we probably won't have everything in common with our partner, happy relationships often have many of these traits in common: emotional temperament, sense of humor, intelligence, energy levels, similar recreation interests and how affection is

expressed.

7. Be aware of each other's values. Some of the biggest arguments in relationships relate to those things we value most because we have strong feelings and opinions about them. Having similarities in how religious/spiritual you are, having common financial views and goals and having similar views about family life are all major factors in lasting relationship satisfaction.

8. Watch for daily life compatibility. While it may not be romantic, the truth is that most of the time we spend with someone in a long-term relationship will be in the everyday routine of life. Consider such things as: Who will earn and manage the money? How will household responsibilities be divided? How will free time be spent? The answers to these questions can be crucial to the happiness of relationships.

9. Learn conflict resolution skills. Because we are all different, conflict is inevitable in even the happiest of relationships. When handled in a positive manner, overcoming conflict can strengthen relationships. Having a conflict plan in place can be helpful. Begin by setting the ground rules, such as choosing when and where to deal with conflict and remember to practice good listening and communication skills.

10. Plan now to keep your relationship strong. Just like cars, relationships need regular preventative maintenance in order to run smoothly and prevent problems. Research suggests that relationship education (such as attending a class or reading a relationship book together, etc.) can help relationships stay strong. Consider what you will do as a couple to keep your relationship strong.

For more information and class schedules on relationships, visit HealthyRelationshipsUtah.org.

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