

Why Couples Grow Apart

As the years pass, many couples begin to feel like they're living in the same house but have parallel lives. Their paths cross in fewer places. What is the trend in your relationship, and what do you want to do about it?

If it feels as though you and your partner have **started living in parallel**, it's time to pay attention to your day-to-day habits. Making simple changes can yield startling improvements. This Special Report will outline some communication patterns and behaviors that are **proven to help** couples who are beginning to drift apart, and ways to **turn things around** when they are just not going well.

Are you concerned about any of the following in your relationship?

- Diversion and distraction in place of connection
- Feeling taken for granted
- An atmosphere of criticism
- Repetitive arguments
- Partner who consistently refuses to discuss problems
- Out-of-bounds behavior, contempt or put-downs

You have probably already investigated how to address the problems. Common recommendations you may have read about or heard from friends might be to



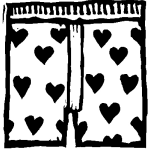
Arrange a date night



Guess how you can make your partner happier



Keep the peace by steering clear of problem topics

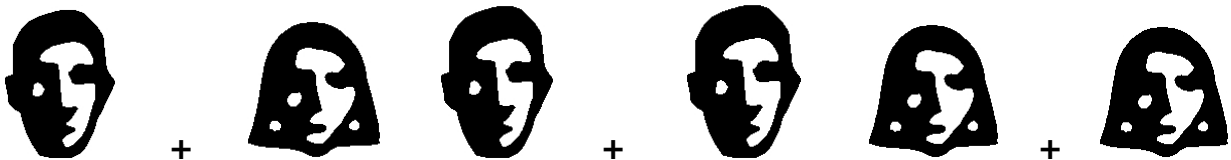


Or just turning up the heat in your sex life.

Nothing is inherently wrong with any of these strategies; however, unless you accompany these efforts with **figuring out how to talk and behave differently**, the problems you are experiencing will probably continue, and even become worse.

Extensive scientific research on the way couples communicate shows that **even slight changes can make very significant differences**. Why do some relationships last forever, and others fall apart? You probably have it in your power to make both yourself and your partner feel appreciated again, and prevent your relationship from becoming a casualty. (Of course if you are being harmed in your relationship, or feel you are emotionally unsafe, we don't recommend compromising yourself by staying in something that makes you feel bad. Look for bigger help than just reading this report, quickly, please.)

Here are some specifics on what you can do to improve the climate in your relationship, starting anytime.



How You Treat Your Partner

- let them know what they do that pleases you
- tell them what it is they do that makes you feel safe and secure
- let them know you appreciate their work
- show respect, listen attentively, express confidence in their abilities
- offer physical affection in a nonsexual way
- respect their need for friendship outside your relationship
- treat your partner as you would your boss, best friend or best customer
- think about what your partner wants and give it to him or her

Your Everyday Routine Together

- spend enjoyable time together regularly (sounds obvious, but not always easy to do)
- in the morning, say goodbye and "I love you" or "Hope you have a good day"

- hug when you say hello and goodbye; it feels good, and it makes you both feel loved
- if your jobs permit it, make an occasional quick call, text or email during the day
- when your partner comes home after a day at work, greet them at the door and say hello
- ask about their day, every day; no-one ever gets tired of being asked
- when your partner faces a challenge at work during the day, ask how it went later
- have your evening meal together as often as you can arrange it
- avoid the temptation to watch TV, read the paper or open the mail while talking
- despite multi-tasking at work all day, look at your partner and have a conversation
- wind down by turning off media and snuggling, no matter what has happened during the day



Keeping Love New

- think of ways you can do the unexpected and be thoughtful
- remember how you acted when you wanted to win your partner over
- pay attention to your appearance; dress nicely, take care of yourself and stay healthy
- develop your own interests and activities so you have something to share and discuss
- let your partner know the ways they bring out the best in you and enrich your life

Simple Considerations

- when you ask your partner a question, make eye contact and listen to the answer
- look for ways to compliment your partner
- be polite; being married doesn't mean you can let go of your good manners
- when you want something, say please
- when your partner does something for you, say thank you

- if you make plans that affect your partner, check first and make sure it's convenient

Conflict That Does Not Cause Harm

- express your thoughts carefully; being married doesn't grant permission to let it all hang out
- even when you're in disagreement, keep negotiating with a respectful attitude
- let your partner know you believe in them, and can still see their good points
- try some humor and gentle, affectionate teasing, if your partner responds to this
- don't insist on an apology; accept any attempts at making things better after an argument

Getting the Strong and Silent Type to Talk

(They come in both genders, and in gay and straight relationships!)

- how much of your side of the conversation is asking questions versus making statements?
- if you tend to be the chatty one, ask more questions
- ask open-ended questions to encourage your partner to "open up" and talk.
- open-ended questions begin like this:

Tell me about...

What do you think of...

What was it like when...

How to Stop Keeping Things Under Wraps

- passive with your partner, because that's the easiest way to avoid conflict?
- over time you will inevitably begin to build up feelings of resentment
- you are stifling your life force: your own feelings thoughts, and opinions
- if you sense that you're overly passive, what encouragement can your partner offer you?
- if it's hard or confusing to bring up, you can write a note and ask for support

Sharing and Caring: Live Within Love

- make a list of your partner's positive qualities
- show them with your partner and state why you think each is true
- ask for , but don't insist on, your partner doing the same for you
- respect each other's private space- over time, many couples let this slide



Relating successfully to another person requires a set of skills that can be learned. Your **relationship is a laboratory** where both of you are practicing communication skills. When it comes to showing affection, not many people realize their partner may show love and caring regularly, but not in the same way they do. There is a simple concept called the “five love languages”, suggesting that people may enjoy receiving and expressing love quite differently.

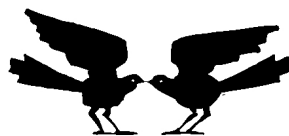
How often does your partner offer you these gestures and forms of communication?

- physical expressions of affection
- saying nice things about you and giving compliments
- buying or making presents and gifts
- doing favors and taking care of everyday tasks and errands for you
- deep conversation and heart-to-heart talks

It's not unlikely that you and your partner have different love styles or languages. We usually offer the kind of affection we would like to receive ourselves. Most people have one or two preferences that stand out in this brief list.

Consider how your partner may be extending themselves, outside of your awareness. Women are particularly prone to insisting on talking as the preferred means of reaching out; for many men, this is the least likely way they are going to let you know they love you. It's just not in their cultural conditioning.

How very sad, to think of all the **overlooked gestures and overtures** that may be going on in couples' relationships. Make sure you're not blinding yourself to love that is right there at arm's length.



The most sophisticated research on couples' relationships shows that doing small things with greater frequency can really be all it takes to improve a relationship, unless there is an entrenched pattern of negative and destructive behavior between people. Researchers who need to break human behavior down into its

simplest components characterize three basic interaction patterns that are possible between people. How do your behaviors fit into this framework?

When you **Approach** your partner, do you do so with positive intention, seeking contact? Do you do your part to exercise curiosity, and stay open to new ideas?

At times you may **Avoid** contact, or steer away from certain topics. This is completely normal, unless taken to extremes. If you recognize you are offering no energy to the relationship, that you want to get away from your partner much of the time or make a particular problem go away, this is cause for concern. We all need relief from problems sometimes, but seeking distraction, and shutting out reality too much of the time just makes matters worse.

Operating in **Attack** mode is another unavoidable and all-too-human behavior. If you find yourself using negative energy against the other person, spending energy trying to put your partner in their place, or demonstrating your superiority, your relationship is already in serious trouble. Trust cannot exist in an atmosphere where one person feels dismissed or undermined. Whether this behavior pattern is one-sided or reciprocal, you will probably need strong support in changing it.



Skills and Habits to Reinforce and Cultivate

- develop rituals of connection on waking, departing, returning and sleeping
- hold a positive perspective: remind yourself you and this person love each other
- maintain an attitude of generosity
- develop agreements for dealing with arguing and when to take a break
- if either of you are prone to avoidance, plan regular times to check in
- don't assume your partner is ready to talk; assess their readiness and receptivity

Signs of Hope to Look For (just for fun)

- increased episodes of uncontrollable laughter
- frequent and random sensations of well-being
- spontaneous good feeling that spills over to family members and friends
- physical symptoms of heart bursting with joy

- mutually gratifying pleasure and intimacy



Getting Proactive and Finding the Right Help

If you are seriously concerned about your relationship and wonder if it needs help, chances are it does. Research has shown that **couples often wait many years after they first notice problems** before seeking couples counseling. This makes couples counseling or coaching less likely to be effective, and it can take longer to achieve improvements. Long-term resentment can sabotage couples work, because the desire to have your relationship improve is a key to success; so the earlier you make a decision to seek help, the better.

When you meet with the professional, you will **share information and clarify the difficulties** that you have faced. The counselor or coach will encourage you to express yourself more fully and also to listen more carefully than you may have been accustomed to doing in your relationship. Important questions will be asked about your communication, the time you spend with each other, and the pattern of closeness you experience, the “moving toward and away from” each other. All of this helps to assess the **duration and intensity** of your difficulties, so **mutual goals** can be established.

You will also schedule one individual session, to gather **candid information** about how you have each experienced your life events. Your different perceptions of the same events may affect your relationship, and can give clues to strategies for change. A skillful couples’ counselor or coach will **not agree to keep secrets** from one partner.

“What will change or become different in your relationship if this help is successful?” Answering this question can help set direction so you know when your goals have been met, or when it’s time to meet less frequently.



You and your partner will try activities and communication exercises at home and in the sessions, then let the counselor or coach know how they worked. The goal is to learn skills to enjoy the rewards of a **warm, affectionate, and supportive** relationship. You will develop **strategies** to use in the future if difficulties return. Support from the professional will help reinforce the changes you learn.

Although couples are unique, few problems are new to us. Couples wanting an improved sex life, strategies for dealing with money problems, children and parenting issues, in-law difficulties, and communication issues are common struggles. Infidelity and cheating, jealousy, balancing demands at work and home, differences in goals and values, and concerns about compatibility all bring couples into counseling and relationship coaching.

If you want to look into help for improving your relationship, please get in touch for a consultation and we'll be glad to provide more details. We have been able to help the vast majority of couples we work with and would love a chance to hear about your goals and desires.

