



# Making Time to Connect



## There are 168 hours in a week. How many do you devote to your relationship?

How much time do you devote to your partner in a single day? What about in a week? Life is hectic. Sometimes it can feel like we do not have any time for ourselves, let alone our partners and families. But couples who have the strongest relationships find time to work on their relationship every day through shared interactions.

Couple rituals are shared interactions that are repeated and significant to both partners. They do not have to be time consuming. In fact, you might be surprised how quickly just a few simple daily rituals can add up.

### Following are a few ways you can spend just 5 extra hours each week connecting:

**Before leaving:** Do not leave without knowing one interesting thing that will happen in your partner's day.

2 minutes a day X 5 working days  
= 10 minutes per week

**When returning:** Have a 20 minute stress-free conversation. Give full attention. Show support and understanding before giving advice.

20 minutes a day X 5 working days  
= 100 minutes per week

**Admire and appreciate:** Find some way every day to give or show genuine affection and appreciation. Call, text, or email to touch base when you are away from each other.

5 minutes a day X 7 days  
= 35 minutes per week

**Affection:** Cuddle, kiss, and hold hands. Go to bed at the same time even if you do not go to sleep at the same time. Remember to kiss each other before going to sleep.

5 minutes a day X 7 days  
= 35 minutes per week

**Alone time:** Devote at least 2 hours a week to uninterrupted time alone together. Avoid talking about who will do what chores or tasks. Spend time catching up, reminisce, talk about your hopes and dreams, and just enjoy your time together.

120 minutes per week

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**TOTAL:** 300 minutes per week (5 hours)

**Commit to putting in a little extra effort every day to strengthen your relationship!**



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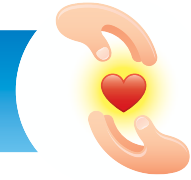
Adapted from: Gottman, J., & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

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# Ways We Like to Share



Over time, because couples get busy with work, chores, and family responsibilities, they spend less time focused on each other. No matter how long couples have been together, it is still important to find ways to spend meaningful time together. Small moments of connection can add up to deep intimacy and passion.

Following is a list of some simple things couples can do together to nurture positive interactions.

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|--|---|
| 1. Call or text just to say, "I love you!" | 11. Plan a vacation                     |
| 2. Go for a walk                           | 12. Send funny/flirty emails or texts   |
| 3. Cook dinner or dessert together         | 13. Watch a sunset or look at the stars |
| 4. Volunteer together                      | 14. Have a tickle fight                 |
| 5. Attend a sporting event                 | 15. Plant flowers or a tree             |
| 6. Play cards or a board game              | 16. Flirt like you just met             |
| 7. Go to a free community event            | 17. Hold hands                          |
| 8. Listen with all your attention          | 18. Make up a song                      |
| 9. Do household tasks together             | 19. Go to the park                      |
| 10. Ask about each other's day             | 20. Write love notes                    |

Now come up with your own lists of ways to share and spend meaningful time together.

There are probably some hobbies or activities you like to do together, as well as some things that one of you likes to do but the other does not enjoy as much. Take some time to write down a few things you each like to do, as well as a few things you like to do together.

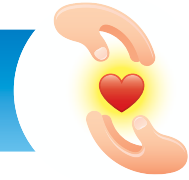
I like to:	My partner likes to:	We both like to:
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____	10. _____

From time to time when you select an activity, try out something from each other's lists. You might discover more activities you enjoy doing together!

***Small moments together add up to a stronger friendship and deeper connection.***



# Building a Couple Identity



Partners become strong couples when they work together to decide who they are as a couple and what they can do to strengthen their relationship. Their relationship is defined by the values and goals they share, the things they do together, and the ways they protect their relationship from negative or disruptive influences.

## Identify shared values and goals to direct the relationship

Shared values or goals allow partners to focus their relationship in a common direction. Partners might want to work together to save money for a home, or have values they want to pass on to their children. *What are some goals you have in common?*

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## Engage in common purposes

Working toward a common purpose together helps partners deepen their friendship. Think about one of the goals you listed above. Name 3 specific things you can do together to work toward that goal:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Protect the relationship from negative or disruptive influences

Healthy couples are defined by what partners do together, but also by the things they limit in their relationship. Partners show loyalty by avoiding certain thoughts, threats, and interactions with others. Think back to the goal you identified. Are there any negative or disruptive influences that might stand in the way of reaching that goal? How can you work around those challenges?

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***A strong couple identity can provide lasting stability and satisfaction.***