

## Healthy Relationships During a Crisis



### Get tips on how to manage your relationship at a difficult time.

This is a challenging time that can cause stress, anxiety, frustration and boredom. These emotions can cause conflict in our relationships. Some reports show increased divorce rates in couples coming out of stay-at-home orders. But many people are finding ways to maintain healthy relationships during the crisis.

#### So, how do they do it? Here are some tips that may help:

- **Compassion.** Does your partner seem irritable or otherwise grouchy today? Try to understand their point of view. If your partner seems more irritable or emotional than usual, this may be a reaction to the stress that they are experiencing. Be compassionate by trying to see their point of view.
- **Self-Awareness.** Be sure to check in with yourself and your own needs. If you are feeling stressed, or not taking care of yourself through diet, exercise and getting enough sleep, it can impact your emotional health. If your own well-being is off balance, you may be more likely to take small comments out of context. When you're maintaining your emotional health, you can even defuse arguments with humour. Laughter can definitely help release stress.
- **Schedule time apart.** If you're like most couples, you each enjoy different activities. Schedule time apart to do something that you each enjoy. This can help you relieve stress. For instance, your partner may enjoy jogging, and you can use that time apart to read, do in-home yoga or pursue other hobbies. If you need space, ask for it. And if your partner seems like they need space, allow them to have it.
- **Try new things.** The American Psychological Association recommends staying connected with your partner in new and fun ways to help maintain a healthy relationship. This is no different during COVID-19. Here are some ideas for things that you can do together despite the pandemic:
  - Create a date night with a homemade meal or delivery from your favourite restaurant along with a walk in the neighbourhood and relaxing on the sofa with a film.
  - Revisit memories. This can be a good time to go through and organise old pictures and maybe create scrapbooks together.
  - Throw a video-party. Invite family and friends for a video call. Play games such as charades, do online karaoke or do a group talent show.

- **Be supportive.** Remember that a little bit of kindness goes a long way. Small efforts around the house that show your appreciation for your partner can make a big difference.
  - When you're at the shops, pick up your partner's favourite snack.
  - Wake up a few minutes early and have coffee ready for when they wake up.

### When conflict crosses a line

It is important to remember, however, that you aren't responsible for your partner's behaviour. Violence or threats are never acceptable. If your partner's stress is crossing a line, reach out for help. Notify family, friends or neighbours. Seek support from a hotline or, if safe, from an online service for survivors of violence. Find out if local services (e.g. shelters, counselling) are open and reach out to them if available. If you need urgent help or medical attention because of violence, contact the police or your emergency health services.

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