

A Return To Love

Struggling to find time for togetherness? Here are some ideas to bring you closer as a couple.

Couple time for me is made up of various ingredients, such as being present, listening to one another, loving and accepting each other, loving unconditionally and being in alignment with one another.

Couple time can also be made of different expectations that often are not met. Couple time is about making the effort for each other and is about loving one another – does your partner know how you like to be loved? How do you love? Do you love your partner the way they like, or do you do it your way?

What do you do when you do have couple time? Do you fill the time and conversation with stuff such as talking about the kids or other family issues? When was the last time you spoke about you as a couple and were intimate through communication, rather than using sex as the vehicle?

With a few simple guidelines, make your time with your partner special, every time – not just on Valentine's Day or special occasions. When you create regular time to communicate and connect with your

partner it sends a powerful message to your loved one that they are special and important, and spending time together can build a unique bond, even amongst the chaos of kids!

Remember why you chose your partner. What made them special? Why did you notice them? Reflect on why you love them and remind yourself of this when challenges and pressures come along that may place a negative slant on life and how we feel about life, love, work, family and sex.

Whether it was conscious or unconscious choice in the beginning, your partner now has an important role in your life and your family. Like a garden, they need to be nurtured, watered and loved. The best, healthy relationships are like the botanical gardens, they get lots of admiration and attention everyday!

The guide to more passion and connection: Set your agenda

If you want to discuss certain issues about kids or other family



topics, do it at another time specifically set up to discuss family matters. Don't try and squish it in between meals or brushing teeth and putting kids to bed. Give the conversation and your partner the respect they deserve.

Get a babysitter

Create couple time by having a regular sitter or friend watch over the kids on a regular night or weekend, so you can enjoy having a Sunday morning sleep in. Stay in bed, watch DVDs, have brekkie in bed, stay under the doona and enjoy!

Discover and learn

Find out what couple time is for your partner and create a win-win situation. Take it in turns choosing an activity and the following week swap. Choose a fun activity each week like bushwalking, bowling, fishing, skating, tennis or dancing. Ask your partner what they would like to discover about you and the best way they can learn about it.

Book a date

Each week book a regular babysitter and have a date with your partner. Together list the top 20 things you would like to experience each 'date night' and take turns choosing an event. It doesn't have to be expensive or elaborate. A simple picnic packed with your favourite wine and snacks, taken to your favourite spot will create a positive space to chat and have a few laughs.

Be present

Clear your headspace, and take a few minutes to clear your head of the days events to allow yourself to be fully present with your partner so you can hear instead of just listen to the conversation. Doing multiple tasks like washing the dishes, ironing, driving the car and such whilst talking with your partner or loved one about an important issue isn't really going to create a quiet space to talk. Make the time to talk and connect.

Get intimate

When was the last time you asked your partner to share

something intimate? When was the last time you checked in and asked how they were feeling about an issue? Just because you have been with your partner for a long time, never assume what they are feeling or thinking. Always respect the relationship and give them the opportunity to share and express.

Be spontaneous

Plan a weekend away as a surprise. Book the kids in to your parents for the weekend and stay at home! Have you ever thought that staying at home without kids is just as much fun as going away?

Schedule time alone

Put in your diary some relaxation time each day to hang out with yourself and do something fun and loving for you. Encourage your partner to do this as well. When you have freedom within yourself and if you can make yourself happy first, it makes for a happier, more content and intimate relationship.

Choose

Create the relationship you deserve. You have a choice about how your relationship looks so choose to create one that is more loving and harmonious with your partner. Write a list of how you want your relationship to be and start to make changes so this becomes a reality. Often when we focus on negative thoughts such as, “my husband is never home... he never helps out with the kids... I never get time to myself... I am never appreciated.” It can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Stay focused on your ‘self talk’ and say to yourself how wonderful your partner is and how they appreciate you. Try this for a week and see what changes.

Love you

Acknowledge yourself daily with compliments for being a wonderful person, mum, partner, friend as well as finding special compliments to say each day to your children and partner. Don't rely on your partner to tell you how special you are. Find it in yourself first, acknowledge you,



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appreciate, love you first. It's amazing to notice the difference when you start to affirm just how loveable you are. Say to yourself, “I am loving, loved and loveable” everyday and notice the change inside yourself.

Stop blame and criticism

Instead, ask for what you want in a clear, specific, and positive manner, and express appreciation for your partner. To elaborate: Partners need to feel competent — that they make a contribution and that it is noticed. Change from a critical habit of mind, to a positive one, in which you catch him doing something right.

Administer AAA

When your relationship starts to break down, you need AAA: an Apology, Affection, and a promise of Action. You say you're sorry for what you've said or done to hurt or disappoint your partner. You immediately offer a hug, a kiss – some meaningful gesture of warmth. You promise to do something that matters to your partner. **NH**

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