

Repairing your Relationship with Your Significant Other: Some Tips

While our relationships with our significant others can bring us joy and fulfillment, it is inevitable that there are times when these relationships can become damaged. This can be stressful because our significant others are the key people who are supposed to be our biggest supporters. However, they can sometimes cause us distress, anger, sadness, unhappiness and worry. If not addressed, problems with our relationships with significant others can impact our overall well-being and daily functioning. Repairing these damaged relationships can make a big difference in how we feel and function on a day-to-day basis.

Mutual trust is one of the fundamental components of relationships. Loss of trust is often the root of a damaged relationship and typically, creates conflict. Trust can be rebuilt when we behave consistently over time, follow through with what we say we will do and communicate effectively.

Speaking of communication... we have all heard the phrase, "Communication is the key to a good relationship". Poor communication can result in stalemates, isolation and misunderstanding. Good communication increases understanding and respect. It is a skill which requires constant practice.

The following are some steps to take to improve trust and communication with your significant other which can prevent problems and repair damaged relationships.

1. **Carve out time to talk:** Take time to discuss what things were like when they were great – remember what you did and how you acted and try to recapture it.
2. **Prioritize your relationship above all else:** Assess how much time you are taking for yourselves as a couple. Couples need to make their relationship a priority. Do you make one another a priority?
3. **'Win-Win' works better than 'I Win-You Lose:'** Have a willingness to not always be "right". Nobody in a relationship can be right all the time – allow your partner to be "right" some of the time. Even better, compromise or just let it go sometimes. Relationships work best when they involve "give and take" by both individuals.
4. **Use 'I statements:'** When you talk about how something is affecting you directly, your significant other might be more open to listening and discussing. Conversely, statements which start with "You are..." or "You did..." can cause defensiveness. Use "I statements", not blaming statements or accusatory statements when discussing how you are feeling.

5. **Edit yourself:** Don't say every critical thought that comes to your mind. Pointing out every little flaw or criticism only creates resentment and tension rather than improve communication or help solve problems.
6. **Appreciation doesn't cost anything:** Give compliments and tell the other person you appreciate them. A little bit of positive feedback or a compliment can go a long way in relationships.
7. **Remember to focus on the good times, not just the challenges:** Despite there being problems, make sure you are also focusing on the good times and the positive qualities of the relationship. Focusing on what is working and what is good will bring more positive energy to the relationship.
8. **Start small, but start doing something!:** Set up some 'contracts for changes' you would like to see from each other. Both of you write down some small things you are willing to start working on so that you can monitor them over time.
9. **Create a *Couples Repair Kit*:** This kit can include these 'to-do' items:
 - a. *Date Night*: Establish a specific time each week when you will make time for one another to have fun and just focus on one another.
 - b. *Discussions vs. Arguments*: Outline new rules for when you argue or have disagreements that you both agree to follow.
 - c. *Checking In Time*: Schedule a time each week when you just sit with one another and listen, catch up, and make sure you are in tune with one another. Sometimes quantity time trumps quality time.
10. **Get informed:** Read a good book together on couples' relationships and take time to discuss concepts outlined in the book. Some good authors to start with are John Gottman (**Seven Principles of Making Marriage Work**) or Harville Hendrix (**Getting the Love You Want**).

Remember that relationships are two sided. The steps outlined above don't guarantee that the relationship will instantly get better. However, you will have started on the road of change. **Doing nothing at all will ensure that things stay the same or even get worse.** Doing something will help you feel more in control and may give your significant other the opening they were looking for to make amends or to begin the healing process. Strong relationships take time to build and also can take time to repair. Be patient but persistent in your efforts and go into the process knowing that it could take time.

If you are feeling like there has been a severe violation in your trust or you are feeling like it is too difficult to implement some of the above steps on your own, you should seek professional support. A trained counselor can be helpful in sorting through some of your emotions and help you if you are experiencing difficult in a particular relationship.

You can speak to a trained counselor or relationship coach at the **Guard Your Buddy program** about this or any life concern. Take some action! Don't let small challenges turn into large problems at home! **Call 24/7: 855 HELP GYB (855-435-7492).**

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