

Three Valentine's Resolutions That Last!



By Melissa Orlov, marriage consultant and author of *The ADHD Effect on Marriage*

How often have you found that the requisite roses (slightly wilted at the edges) don't do that much for you? This year, for a truly meaningful [Valentine's Day](#), don't focus on a single romantic gesture. Instead, consider making Valentine's Day the 'New Years' of romance – a time for making resolutions that will create lasting change for your relationship.

The good news? There is science behind how to do this. Here are three resolutions that can make Valentine's Day *matter* for a change:

We will teach ourselves to argue. Significant marital research suggests that couples who argue using the right words, who are conscious of how to start and end a conversation, and who avoid accusatory or critical rhetoric in the middle can use disagreement to strengthen their marriage, rather than weaken it. So forget about what you are fighting about and focus instead about how you disagree. Healthy conflict puts you on a path to resolve your differences. Unproductive conflict, or avoiding conflict all together, means that your problems don't get solved, only aggravated.

We will address ADHD in our relationship. If you have a child with ADHD, patterns of significant inconsistency in at least one spouse, chronic nagging and anger, or very uneven distribution of responsibilities in your relationship, then ADHD may be creating serious problems for you. Learning how ADHD impacts adult relationships will help you overcome the many challenges you currently face.

We will change the proportion of positive interactions to negative ones. University of Washington researchers, including John Gottman, have determined that healthy relationships include at least five times more positive interactions than negative ones. So every time you create a negative reaction in your relationship, you need to self-consciously make up for it by creating five positive ones! Saying 'I'm sorry' is a good start, but it's only one-fifth of the work you need to do – so get to it!

Melissa Orlov is the author of The ADHD Effect on Marriage, and has been featured in the NY Times, on CNN, Today and more. Her website is www.adhdmarrriage.com. For more, Orlov suggests For Better: The Science of a Good Marriage by Tara Parker-Pope and The Relationship Cure by John Gottman, Ph.D. You can also follow Orlov on Twitter: @msorlov.