

Dating Advice: The Key to a Lasting Relationship



By Alan Strathman for GalTime.com

What makes a relationship last? Many people would say love keeps a relationship going. But if your love doesn't translate into compromise, it might be extremely difficult for both partners to stay committed.

On some level, we all hate compromise – when we compromise, we may not get what we want. In fact, we may not get anything close to what we want. But that's the nature of compromise, and it's necessary if you want to see your relationship go the distance.

Creating “We-ness”

Compromise creates what psychologists call “we-ness,” the sense that both partners feel they’re “in this together.” Partners who have this sense of we-ness tend to use couple-oriented words like we, us, and ours, rather than individual-oriented words like I, me, and mine.

We-ness is self-perpetuating; as we hear the words more often, we *think* the words more often, and when we notice that our thinking has changed, we feel more engaged in “couplehood.” As we become more entrenched in this way of thinking, we are more likely to search for solutions that serve both partners and continue this positive trend.

Obstacles to Compromise

Our willingness to compromise is deeply impacted by our perception of fairness. If we think we’re getting the short end of the stick, we become more stubborn. But it’s important to understand that the amount of compromise may balance out only in the long run. If you zero in on a single negotiation, one person may seem to come out ahead. Fortunately, what often matters more than the outcome of a discussion is that both partners have a say in the negotiating process. This can make even an unfair outcome feel fair.

In addition, comparison can throw off your perceptions of your relationship. It’s common to compare your contribution to the relationship to your partner’s contribution. It’s also typical to contrast your relationship with other relationships. This is a dangerous game. There are many aspects of other relationships that you *don’t* see, so focus on your own relationship and don’t make assumptions. We are all individuals, and our relationships are reflections of this very fact.

Tips for Developing We-ness

A deep connection doesn't typically develop on its own – it's far too easy for us to take our partners for granted, or expect our partners to compromise on our behalf. There are ways, however, to consciously create a sense of we-ness.

Put the Relationship First

We often get so focused on getting what we want that we sometimes lose sight of what would be best for the health of the relationship. Recognize that what is best for “us” as a couple can be different than what's best for us as individuals. In other words, don't be selfish.

Don't Keep Track

Keeping track of who got more, or who won a particular negotiation, is characteristic of the type of short-term exchange relationships you have with car dealers, not the lasting, communal ones you have with people you love.

Have a Win-Win Mindset

Give-and-take involves negotiating, but not the kind of negotiating you do when buying a car. Negotiating with your partner in a lasting relationship should involve finding outcomes that are mutually satisfying. Resentment shouldn't secretly build over any of the decisions you make together.

Consider Your Partner's Perspective

Research has found that both parties end up with better outcomes when each is considering his or her partner's interests – and the possible reasons behind them. Be careful to avoid making decisions based on assumptions about what your partner wants. Instead, listen carefully and consider what he's telling you.

Focus on Feelings over Words

Accept that, sometimes, we cannot clearly express why we want what we want. We often get focused on explanations, but behavior is often driven by feelings, which are hard to put into words.

Compromise can be hard, but if you're focused on the greater purpose of establishing a lasting relationship, you can find the strength to resist taking what you want all the time – and instead focus on giving to the one you love.