

# Make Your Relationship Count This Year



By Dr. Tranquility – Lydia Belton, PhD, Ct. H.A.

## **how to improve your love life in the new year**

Many couples come to me as part of my Date Therapy for Couples protocol and ask how they can make their relationships healthier. Being each other's strongest support system and not taking each other for granted is key. These underlining core values are the bond that makes it all possible. So whether you've been married for over a decade or you're in a brand new relationship, you can still keep the romance alive. Here are five tips to help make your partnership the best it can be in 2014.

**Related Link:** [Create an Action Plan to Make Every Date Feel Like Valentine's Day](#)

**1. Date night:** Love is easy and exciting in the beginning, but as we settle into real life, there's a noticeable shift. We're not always on our best behavior – which we automatically engage in during the courtship or “honeymoon” phase – but a date night can make a big difference. Keeping your romance fresh and making time for just the two of you is a great way to keep your love strong.

A date night can be as simple as preparing a romantic meal or as complex as planning a weekend getaway at your significant other's favorite bed and breakfast. Those of you staying at home can add a little extra romance with flowers and candles. Dress up and pretend like you're enjoying a fancy night out. Get creative and make this night your own!

**2. Conflict resolution:** All long-term relationships experience ups and downs, and it's important that you address the issues head-on. Find a moment in the nearby future to discuss it so neither one of you let the problem fester and get even worse. Gently, calmly, and thoughtfully share your feelings with your partner. Be sure to avoid using a fussy, loud, or defensive tone; instead, think of your situation as telling a story. Once you have the initial conversation, give yourselves about 15 minutes of alone time to fully digest everything; when you reconvene, I bet you'll work things out without any trouble.

**Related Link:** [3 Ways to Know He's Just That Into You](#)

**3. Trust:** Trusting each other enough to allow your partner the space they need is important. Take Jada Pinkett-Smith and Will Smith, for instance: While they are each other's strongest support system, they trust each other enough to enjoy their space apart as well. This time is key in allowing yourselves the blessing of missing each other. After all, they say that absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Plus, taking care of your own needs outside of your relationship will help you be a better partner. When we are nourishing ourselves, we can better nourish our joined energy, our love.

**4. Real expectations:** As we spend more time together, it's natural to inadvertently take advantage of your partner and vice versa. As I've said before, healthy boundaries are key. Be fair in your expectations of your partner. For those of you who are workaholics, even if you work with your significant other, your work is your work, and your relationship is just that: your relationship. Take time to nurture and enjoy it, and it will thrive.

Think of all of the celebrity couples that have experienced long-term love: Kyra Sedwick and Kevin Bacon, Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell, and Pauletta and Denzel Washington, to name a few. There are good and bad times in all relationships, but remembering why you love your partner and what first attracted you to them will help you get through the rough patches.

We all grow and change, and we need to allow our relationships do the same. Making new memories to tie into your growth as a couple will keep your love strong.

**Related Link:** [Kyra Sedgwick Opens Up About Love for Husband Kevin Bacon](#)

**5. Gratitude:** Remember that, in this day and age, whether you're married, living together, or only dating, you always have the choice to stay or leave. Take your relationship day-by-day. Visualize where you want to be in five or ten years, and share this exercise with your partner. If you start each morning with gratitude for your partner, a day becomes a decade before you know it. True love is a gift, so be grateful for it!