

# Expert Relationship Advice: Dogs Make Everything Better



By [Dr. Amy Osmond Cook](#)

We all know how great dogs are; no one can quite match your dog's unique brand of love. While your fuzzy fur baby will always be the love of your life, did you know that your dog can also make your human relationships better?

According to my research, having a dog is good for you. Not only does having one in your life lower your stress levels and blood pressure, but your furry family member also boosts your immune system and brings added joy to your personal relationships. Here are four reasons being a dog person makes you a better people person.

# Expert Relationship Advice On Dogs In Relationships

On the edge of your seat...click here for more

**1. Improve Communication:** If it's hard for you to make connections with people, your fur buddy can help. An early study by [Therapy Dogs International](#) discovered that people who were in elder care facilities that used canine therapy treatments were more social with other people in their facility. They were more verbal in general and more alert.

I found that when you play with, pet, and talk to your dog while in the presence of other people, you'll feel relaxed, which may make others see you as approachable. Introverts especially benefit communication-wise by owning a dog. If you're an introvert without a pet, go out and get one. You won't be sorry.

**2. Strengthen Relationships:** While many believe children are key to strengthening a marriage, research has found a dog will have a similar effect. In an Association for Psychological Science study, researchers found that participants experienced more positive feelings about their partner after viewing a picture of them with cute animals.

[James K. McNulty](#), the psychological scientist over the study, said, "One ultimate source of our feelings about our relationships can be reduced to how we associate our partners with positive affect, and those associations can come from our partners but also from unrelated things, like puppies and bunnies." While there are many ways to make your relationship with your partner stronger, such as by celebrating one another and staying connected, to me, when people bring a dog into their life, they are strengthening their relationship with each by having something special to share.

**[Related Link: Relationship Advice: 8 Creative Ways That Older](#)**

## [Couples Can Keep The Romance Alive](#)

**3. Develop Patience and Empathy:** When it comes to emotional intelligence, canines score high. That intelligence can rub off on their owners, who can become more empathetic and loving toward other humans. A study published in the [National Center for Biotechnology](#) found that when children have the opportunity to care for another living being, they become more empathetic.

Getting better at empathy also helps you read people's nonverbal cues. Improving your ability to read nonverbal cues can be particularly helpful in relationships. The way that your partner is looking, moving, reacting, and listening can tell you whether he or she cares, how well you're being listened to, and if they're being truthful.

As a pet owner, patience is a must. Animals are going to misbehave. Your fuzzy family member will try to steal your steak off the counter or pee on the floor. Dealing with your pet's slip-ups may make it easier for you to handle the ones that your partner makes.

[Related Link: Four Ways to Stay Connected to Your Spouse](#)

**4. Renews Focus on Others:** In relationships, it can be tough to figure out the point that the other person is trying to make as well as what he or she really wants. Often, the reason behind this is our own [lack of focus](#). If you typically forget a person's name right after being introduced, it's likely because you were paying attention to how the person was perceiving you instead of what they were saying.

When you take a dog to a trainer, your furry friend will learn how to focus to pay attention to your words and actions. The next time you're in a social situation, think about your pet and how he or she focuses—mimic that.

If you aren't a pet owner and find most of your personal

relationships challenging, consider becoming one. Along with making life just better in general, owning a dog improves your personal relationships by making it easier for you to communicate. With a dog in your home, you'll learn [how to be a better human](#) by feeling more positive about your partner, empathizing more and focusing on the people in your life. As [Orhan Pamuk](#) wisely put it, "Dogs do speak, but only to those who know how to listen."

*For more information about and articles by our relationship expert Dr. Amy Osmond Cook, click [here](#).*

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## **Expert Relationship Advice: Four Ways a Positive Attitude is Good for You**







By [Amy Osmond Cook, Ph.D.](#)

It seems Hollywood celebrities are famous not only for their creative work, but also for their personal lives. Everybody has a story about their road to success, but amid the sparkle of superstardom and robust social media platforms, there are a handful of celebrities like [Emily Blunt](#), [Jim Carrey](#), [J.K. Rowling](#), and [Shania Twain](#), who persevered despite personal obstacles and adopted a profoundly positive attitude.

Now, studies show that not only is a positive attitude good for your career and relationship, but it is also good for your health. Here are four reasons from [relationship expert](#) Dr. Amy Osmond Cook why looking at the bright side of life is good for you. This [expert relationship advice](#) will help you build a happier life for you and your partner!

## **Expert Relationship Advice to Cultivate Positivity**

**1. It controls stress:** Nobody would deny that stress is real,

but sometimes the way we view various stresses in our life makes a big difference in how we manage it.

As the administrator of Park Manor, a busy rehabilitative care center, Ben Flinders is aware of the stress this work environment presents to his staff. Flinders recognizes his role in creating a supportive environment that fosters positivity in the workplace. "For example, sometimes the best way to navigate the stress of work that robs us of needed energy is to step away and relax," he said. "Many times, a quiet walk during a work break or a brief meditation session can help relieve pressure." His management style encourages staff to work smarter not just harder by self-monitoring energy levels, emotions, and attitude and to take necessary measures to refocus.

"Positive thinking doesn't mean that you keep your head in the sand and ignore life's less pleasant situations," says the staff at the [Mayo Clinic](#). "Positive thinking just means that you approach unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way. You think the best is going to happen, not the worst." Having that kind of mental control over any outcome is a powerful tool to control stress.

**Related Link:** [Expert Relationship Advice: 4 Ways to Build a Healthy Relationship with Your Body](#)

**2. Reduces recovery time:** Healthcare providers witness the power of a positive attitude daily. "Our therapists are experts at providing care, but they also recognize that a positive attitude enhances those services," said [Karissa Ly](#), director of rehabilitation at St. Francis Heights Convalescent Hospital. "Attitude makes the body more receptive to recovery, and it can heighten a patient's belief in themselves to get better." Ly added that the physical work is important in recovery, but it also requires a mental toughness that needs positivity to support it.

**3. Improves social connections:** As more [studies](#) emerge emphasizing the importance of friendships and social interaction, they also note that a positive attitude is an important vehicle to secure those social connections. “In short, they (optimists) manage their relationships better, and as a result, when faced with adverse health events, they can rely on their social networks to a much greater degree and receive more support, managing the resulting stress more effectively,” explains PsychologyToday.com contributor [Utpal Dholakia, Ph.D.](#)

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**4. Extends longevity:** A [study](#) published by The Journals of Gerontology examined the relationship between an optimistic perception of aging and its impact on reducing markers of stress-related inflammation associated with heart disease and other illnesses. It seems a positive attitude will help you live longer and it will influence healthier lifestyle choices, as well. “Every day brings new challenges,” says [Martha Beck](#), author, speaker, and life coach. And how we face those challenges plays an important part in our health. So when life warrants an attitude adjustment—be grateful! It’s good for you.

*For more information about and articles by our relationship expert Dr. Amy Osmond Cook, click [here](#).*

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## Expert Relationship Advice: 4



# Ways to Build a Healthy Relationship with Your Body



By [Amy Osmond Cook, Ph.D.](#)

If you hope to build healthy relationships with other people, the best [expert relationship advice](#) is to start on your relationship with your body.

Body shaming is a real issue. [Selena Gomez](#) responded to it and so did Tyra Banks. Even celebrity [Emma Stone](#) wasn't immune from an encounter. The repercussions of this are a soaring number of cases of eating disorders and depression. For instance, the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders reports that at least [30 million](#) people of all ages and genders suffer from an eating disorder in the US.



Social and political forums are scrambling to find ways to eliminate body shaming activities. One of the best defenses you can build against forming a negative self-image is to concentrate on building a healthy relationship with your body. “I am not a woman whose self-worth comes from her dress size,” says [Kristen Bell](#) when confronted with negative comments about her physical appearance. “Comparison is one long, agonizing death and does not interest me at all.”

Working on your relationship with your body will help you build healthy relationships with others. Here are four tips from [relationship expert](#) Dr. Amy Osmond Cook.

## Expert Relationship Advice for Loving Your Body

**1. What you eat is what you are:** The focus of a healthy diet shouldn't rest on deprivation or discouragement. Instead, healthy eating is about providing fresh, nutritious, quality foods that nourish your body. We have the power to choose what fuels our body. One trend that supports a healthy relationship with our body is cooking at home. [Market research](#) shows the meal kit delivery services industry generated almost \$1.5 billion dollars in sales over the past three years and projections estimate a multi-billion dollar growth in the next five years. [Culinary schools](#) that cater to the amateur chef are popping up in cities across the country, offering hands-on instruction from professional chefs. The idea is to embrace healthy eating, which in turn, allows us to celebrate our bodies.

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**2. Make exercise a routine:** The benefits of an exercise routine extends beyond better health. A commitment to daily

exercise helps other aspects of our lives, especially our jobs, by developing self-discipline, time management skills, and increased productivity. “Some employers take a healthy workforce for granted, until they aren’t,” says [Ryan Westwood](#), CEO of Simplus, who encourages exercise in the workplace.

“Employed athletes who pursue passions outside of the workplace bring that self-discipline to their job,” says [Cody Ferraro](#), cofounder of InXAthlete, and a former collegiate Lacrosse player. “What an employer gets is a productive, self-motivated employee who has a strong concept of time-management.”

Along with the physical benefits, exercise enhances mood and staves off depression. “Even moderate physical activity improves muscle strength, maintains healthy joints and bones, and it can help reduce high blood pressure,” said [Tonya Fisher](#), executive director of Bainbridge Island Health and Rehabilitation. The [American Psychological Association](#) says that researchers have also explored exercise as a tool for treating, and perhaps preventing, anxiety. A strong body boosts a strong mind, and that reinforces a healthy relationship between both.

**Related Link:** [Relationship Advice: 5 Things To Do Before You Get Petty](#)

**3. Find a purpose:** An essential defense against negativity is finding meaningful ways to spend your time. “Living on purpose feels alive, clear, and authentic,” say [Barb Leonard, PhD, RN, PNP, and Mary Jo Kreitzer, RN, PhD](#). The article also points out that purpose influences health, including life extension, reduced risk of heart disease and Alzheimer’s disease, and it allows for better pain management. In a world seemingly brimming with shallow, superficial conversations, finding a deeper meaning that adds value to your life is a solid strategy for being a part of the world but not consumed by it.

**4. Surround yourself with great friends:** Whether conscious or not, experts say we are defined by the people with whom we spend the most time. “Your best friend could be a key contributor to your success,” said CNBC contributor [Ruth Umoh](#). “[Research](#) shows that having a close friend boosts your resilience and helps you bounce back from hardships.”

One of the reasons why celebrities can bounce back from harsh criticism is their social support system. Although it may seem the more popular the star, the bigger the entourage, experts say quality outweighs quantity when it comes to friendships. “Although being friendly can get you more friends, you don’t need hundreds to help you through life,” says [Susan Krauss Whitbourne, Phd](#). “You may have to prune your friendship tree as you get older to be sure that you give enough attention to the ones who will really matter for your well-being.”

By focusing on diet, exercise, personal fulfillment, and great friends, you will develop a healthy relationship with the one person who matters most: you.

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## **Expert Relationship Advice: Spring Cleaning Tips for a**

# Happier Life



By [Amy Osmond Cook, Ph.D.](#)

When the smell of spring is in the air, it can only mean one thing. No, not the spring sale at Neiman Marcus. Instead, for many of us, the end of winter ignites a passion for cleaning. But along with hauling old furniture and clothing to the curb, let's take a look at our emotional well-being and the relationship we have with others.

So, in the spirit of renewal, here are four areas where we can benefit from some mental and emotional spring cleaning. Don't miss the [expert relationship advice](#) below!



# Expert Relationship Advice for Spring Cleaning

**1. Examine relationships:** It's time to address the negative feelings that may be lingering with others. "Releasing your grip on a gripe can free up emotional energy that you can then invest in other, more positive areas of your life," says [Julie Hanks, PhD, LCSW](#).

This same belief also applies to people who may have a negative influence on your ability to feel good about yourself. "Feel good about who you are, how you have grown, and what you offer in your personal and professional relationships," says [Jeffrey Bernstein, PhD](#). "If you have trouble remembering your own value, then think about what you would say to a family member or close friend who wanted to return to a toxic relationship." Bernstein says thinking about how you may value or advise someone else can help you treasure yourself and move on.

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**2. Find your passion:** There's doing things you enjoy, and then, there's doing things about which you are passionate. "I've always said that passion is my drug of choice," says [Steve Sims](#), a professional ultimate experience concierge, founder of Bluefish, and author of *Bluefishing: The Art of Making Things Happen*. "I can get further with passion than I can with any amount of money in the world. Passion is my secret weapon."

Hey, we all have dreams: We can visualize our dream vacation, career, life experience, celebrity encounter, or life partner. But Sims often encounters clients who are afraid to realize those dreams or passions. "One of my first questions for clients is how far they are willing to go to make this passion

– this experience – truly unforgettable.” If you are ready to uncover your passion, three of Sims’ many life lessons are to never underestimate the power of simplicity, to ask yourself why this matters to you, and to realize that nothing is ever going to happen if it benefits only you. “Work for win-win every time,” Sims says.

**3. Make physical health a priority:** Remember that New Year’s resolution to lose 10 pounds? Fewer than [10 percent](#) of us actually achieved that goal. However, it’s never too late to adopt healthy lifestyle choices. With the warmer weather and more hours of sunlight, outdoor activities and exercise are easier. And research shows that exercise is not only good for your body but that the brain gets a healthy boost as well. “Exercise is a scientifically proven mood booster, decreasing symptoms of both depression and anxiety,” says a published article from [Walden University](#). “Physical activity kicks up endorphin levels, the body’s famous ‘feel good’ chemical produced by the brain and spinal cord that produces feelings of happiness and euphoria.”

Experts say even moderate weekly exercise can improve depression and anxiety. In some cases, doctors recommended an exercise regimen for these conditions before turning to medication, which is particularly good for older adults who are generally [more susceptible](#) to depression. “Clinical depression is a major concern for those of us working in healthcare since it is so common with older adults,” says [Derek R. Orme](#) of Mission Hills Post Acute Care. “Healthcare providers and loved ones focus on the physical needs of patients, but we also need to make sure their emotional needs are addressed.”

**Related Link:** [Expert Relationship Advice: Six Ways to Keep Work & Life Demands in Balance](#)

**4. Declutter:** Whether it’s clearing out stuff in the closet, garage, or your married and gone son’s bedroom, removing the

physical clutter from your surroundings is essential for your mental health. “Clutter can increase stress by distracting us and overwhelming our senses with extraneous stimuli – toppling piles and unsightly messes as well as associated smells and noises,” says [Jonathan Fader, PhD](#).

[Organizing expert Lauren Piro](#) says that when facing a cluttered space, we should ask ourselves tough questions like, “Is this item enhancing my life?” or “Is this something I’ll want my children to see one day?” Sometimes, forcing yourself to defend owning an item can help gain a realistic perspective on the true value of that item. Keep in mind that you don’t have to clear the area to gain inner peace. “Take comfort in knowing that your home and desk do not have to be pristine for optimal living and working,” says Fader. “The key is finding what environment is most efficient and productive for you.”

Now is the time for some personal spring cleaning. By tending to relationships, our health, passions, and the physical clutter that surrounds us, we are on the road to authentic rejuvenation and renewal.

*For more information about and articles by our relationship expert Dr. Amy Osmond Cook, click [here](#).*

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## **Relationship Advice: Keys to Growing a Business When the Marriage is Over**



By [Amy Osmond Cook, Ph.D](#)

Hollywood certainly has its share of dramatic endings – relationship endings, that is. Stars like Laurence Fishburne, Fergie, Chris Pratt, Jennifer Hudson, and Danica Patrick, to name a few, were invested in a long-term [celebrity relationship](#) and either personally or professionally called it quits. But what happens when a couple's livelihood relies on maintaining a relationship after the marriage is over?

Christina and Tarek El Moussa can relate. After becoming household names as co-hosts of HGTV's hit reality TV show *Flip or Flop*, they publicly announced their [celebrity divorce](#) just over a year ago. Despite moving on in their personal lives, both are committed to working together to make their successful business grow.

**Related Link:** [Celebrity Divorce: Christina & Tarek El Moussa Announce Break-Up](#)



It's not uncommon for former partners to maintain a business relationship. There are an estimated [3.3 million businesses](#) in the U.S. that are jointly owned by spouses. In some cases, a partner buys out the remaining portion of the business. But in a growing number of cases, the former married couple opt to remain invested in the business long after the divorce is final.

"I worked with one business where, actually, [the ex-spouses] were better business partners and got along better after the divorce and stayed together within the business for a while," says [Dann Van Der Vliet](#), executive director of the Smith Family Business Initiative at the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell University. Van Der Vliet believes that, when the divorce relieves the anxiety in a relationship, the partners can focus on the strengths they contribute to the business.

## **Reality TV Stars Open Up About Celebrity Divorce & Share Relationship Advice**

I talked with Christina and Tarek about their transition from a blended life to one that is now exclusively professional. They shared five rules they follow to maintain a positive and supportive professional relationship, even though they now lead separate personal lives:

- 1. Be professional:** Part of their success derives from their ability to separate professional obligations from personal responsibilities. "We believe in this company, and that means keeping our personal lives separate," Tarek explains. "When we're on set, it's like a different life than what we live outside of the set. When we're doing our job, we're doing our job."

**Related Link:** [Relationship Advice: Is Your Job Killing Your Relationship?](#)

**2. Focus on the ultimate goal:** Whether it's personal or business, staying focused on your goals can help minimize distractions. "Every day that we film, I remember why I'm there," says Tarek. He says his priority is to support his kids and family. "Second, I remember how I worked my entire life to build this thing. I don't want to throw it away because of a divorce. We are good at what we do," he adds. "We love flipping houses, and we enjoy delivering a great TV show that helps change people's lives."

**3. Put kids first:** Tarek and Christina understand that it is in everyone's best interest to get along. "Children come first, and that means doing things that are best for them," says Christina. "In our children's case, it was in their best interest to do things together." Often that decision requires some sacrifice and adjustments on the parent's part.

**4. Don't sweat the small stuff:** When tensions are high, it seems everything is a big deal. Immediately after a divorce, no matter how amicable, there is going to be a transition period. "Take time apart in all areas to better understand what you want," says [Kate Taylor](#). "As you redefine your relationship, you should draw clear lines around your roles and responsibilities at work."

Christina quickly discovered that not everything is worth fighting about. "When you're not with that person, you're not entitled to have those disagreements anymore," she shares. "When Tarek and I first separated, if there was a disagreement, it was important that we walk away from it." When disagreements happen, her rule is: Don't react, because that is the moment when you need to think more clearly.

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**5. Keep it fun:** Tarek and Christina make sure to contribute to a positive work environment. Their professionalism means everyone feels happy and comfortable when they are at work. “We have a great crew,” says Christina. “We’ve been friends with all of them for a long time. Because of that, it makes everything much easier because it’s such a great workplace.”

There are those who are skeptical that this type of relationship can work, but Christina is unfazed by the criticism. “Business is what we’ve always done best together. Tarek and I both agree that we work great together regardless of whether or not we are married,” she explains. “We make a great co-parenting team as well. There is nothing I would have done differently.”

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## **Dating Advice: The Sex-C Single’s Guide to Confidence in Holiday-ting**





By [Amy Osmond Cook](#)

Hello, holidays! Aside from the huge boon this season is to retailers, there's no other time of year when online dating sites see their [biggest spikes in activity](#). Romance-seekers start wondering: Who do I bring to my company party? Who should I enroll in my family's festivities? Who's my plus-one to my coupled best friends' snowsport weekend? And who'd be in for the ride if they knew I couldn't have intercourse?

Make no mistake: There are [millions](#) of people who remain silent and grapple with that question, and it's confidence-shattering enough to cause them to dodge dating altogether. Health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, cancers and related treatments, traumas, congenital abnormalities, and even PTSD can preclude individuals from engaging in sexual intercourse – as would be expected in the course of a romantic relationship.

## Dating Advice for the Holidays

Related Link: [Expert Relationship Advice: First Comes Love –](#)



## [Now What? Creating Intimacy Without Intercourse](#)

This makes modern-day dating especially tough. There is one online dating site, [RomanceOnly.com](#), that completely eliminates the need to disclose this dilemma. After all, Sex-C (sexually-challenged) men and women are no different from anyone else in their needs for affection, companionship, and attraction-based physical connection. Sex-C individuals are also in the same holiday-ting quandary as the rest of singledom. Rather than sidelining the pursuit of someone special, here is some [dating advice](#) to improve the Sex-C adult's chances of kindling a real connection this season.

### **Jingle, Jingle: Get Out and Mingle!**

A person who sees themselves as different in a shameful way can experience crushed self-confidence, which in turn can cause them to [avoid social interactions](#). But in truth, getting outside of oneself, if even just to [smile at a stranger](#), can really make a difference in restoring self-confidence. Talk to that person in line next to you at the grocery store. Accept invitations to parties – and don't hesitate to go alone! Join a local Meetup group. You'll not only meet fascinating people, but by being open to being out there, you'll increase your chances of meeting someone special.

**Related Link:** [Expert Relationship Advice: Four Survival Tips When Bah Humbug Meets Father Christmas](#)

“Remember it's a numbers game,” says Laura Brashier, the visionary behind the world's premier Sex-C dating website. Any measure that helps you to be open and upfront from the beginning about the awful quandary of “when and how do I share my secret” serves as one less stressor in dating. But it all starts with building confidence, and that starts with meeting people and finding a common interest. Shared commonalities are the cornerstone of any fulfilling relationship. “True pleasure can be found in a variety of social connections and

relationships.”

## **Spread Holiday Cheer: Go Volunteer!**

When people desire a deeper and more satisfying relationship, character counts. You're not defined by your inability to have intercourse! The holidays abound with opportunities to work alongside other volunteers looking to help those in need. It's another wonderful chance to get out and do something good for others that will make you feel even better about yourself. If the person next to you is attractive or interesting, don't hold back in asking them out! Start with something simple, like a coffee date – you'll know in 30 minutes if there's a connection.

[Date ideas](#) like hiking, dancing, attending concerts, pairing up to take an art or cooking class, spending a couple hours at a museum together, or trying a restaurant that's new to both people are all ways to gauge common interests. They're great avenues by which two people can share interesting and meaningful things together, which are building blocks for a solid relationship – friendships and romantic partnerships alike!

“The benefits of such activities extend beyond the immediate pleasure of being together,” says [HealthyWomen.org](#). “The new interests will stimulate your brain and provide numerous new opportunities for conversation.” Finding things in common makes for a nice beginning.

**Related Link:** [Dating Advice: New Year's Resolutions to Rekindle Your Relationship](#)

## **Naughty or Nice: Sex-C Delights**

Once you feel you've found that special someone to take beyond the mistletoe, there are plenty of options for physical delights outside of intercourse. When you think about sexiness, the authentic allure of a desired person goes beyond

the temporal desire of sex itself and rests on a physically sensual connection. It's a spark, an undeniable urge to share yourself physically with another. RomanceOnly.com offers [articles](#) that cover alternatives to intercourse that can spice up any couple's physical connection.

According to Michael Castleman, M.A., [great sex without intercourse](#) means experimenting, which can feel strange. But he says, "Novelty is key to sexual zing. Doing things differently stimulates the brain to release dopamine, and dopamine heightens erotic intensity. Once you get on board with sex without intercourse, it's pretty easy. It involves the same leisurely, playful, whole-body touching, caressing, and massage that sex therapists recommend to all lovers."

So for all you Sex-C people, make your holidays merry and bright by putting yourself out there. You have nothing to lose but being alone! Go to some of your local community events, listen to music, and just put yourself out there. Say yes even if you're tired! When you do meet someone, and even if that the person doesn't seem like The One, go and just have fun. Always date safely with exit options. The bottom line is that you deserve the companionship you're after, and you can't find it until you connect with others.

Cheers to 2018!

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## **Expert Relationship Advice:**

# First Comes Love – Now What? Creating Intimacy Without Intercourse



By [Amy Osmond Cook](#)

The power of love can never be underestimated, but it is also often misunderstood. As one of the leading Google search topics, the matter of love and how it pairs with sex is on most people's minds. It's possible to have sex without love, but can love survive without sex?

Most people say yes. A [study](#) conducted at San Diego State University reported that couples who reported having a satisfying relationship also reported having less sex as the relationship progressed. In an era where sex is used to sell



everything from perfume to bathroom cleaner, this study shows that people may be buying it, but they aren't necessarily "doing it."

## Relationship Advice on How Sex Relates to Love

"Despite their reputation for hooking up, Millennials and the generation after them (known as iGen or Generation Z) are actually having sex less often than their parents and grandparents did when they were young," says Jean M. Twenge, the study's lead author and professor of psychology at San Diego State University.

**Related Link:** [Dating Advice: 4 Reasons Going Outside Your Comfort Zone Is A Good Idea](#)

Recognizing that romantic love and intercourse can be mutually exclusive is encouraging news for millions of people who are unable to "seal the deal." Whether limited by emotional challenges or physical obstacles, these champions of celibacy are coming forward with candid conversations, new desires, and innovative ways to create satisfying relationships beyond the bedroom.

"While these people are unable to have intercourse, they still crave intimacy but are unable to open up about it," says Laura Brashier, founder of RomanceOnly.com, a site that promotes and supports those seeking intercourse-free relationships for "whatever" reason. "I've discovered that people facing difficulties with sexual intercourse still want to show love and be loved in return."

**1. Connection:** Successful connection requires recognizing the difference between love and erotic love. "Love proper is to do with the other person," says [Olivia Fane](#), [relationship author](#) and sex therapist. "It is about the care, respect, and

understanding of that human other. Love like this grows; it cannot help it. The more of yourself you invest in another person, the more you receive.” This connection unites two beings into one unit; their pain is your pain, and their joy is yours too.

**2. Unconditional Caring:** An authentic love says I care how you feel. But loving unconditionally doesn't mean you have the responsibility to deliver everything the other person wants. “When we love people unconditionally, we accept them as they are and how they aren't and contribute to their happiness as wisely as we can,” says Greg Baer, MD., author of *Real Love: The Truth about Finding Unconditional Love & Fulfilling Relationships*. Connection happens when we genuinely care about the happiness of the person with whom we share our lives.

**Related Link:** [Relationship Advice: Listen With Your Heart](#)

**3. Communication:** It's one of the most common pieces of [expert relationship advice](#): Honest and open communication is an integral part of a healthy, loving relationship. For people struggling with sexual intercourse, the anxiety that accompanies being honest about their inability is hard to express. “Knowing what each party brings into a relationship and being able to own and acknowledge this can often provide a basis from which a couple can grow and improve together,” says psychotherapist [Michael Betts, MSc, MBACP](#). Rather than viewing sexual intercourse as a deficit, people can emphasize other qualities that they can contribute to a relationship.

**4. Intimacy:** As noted earlier, intercourse does not equate to meaningful intimacy. In fact, in many cases, it is the total opposite. “Our cultural talent for commercialization has separated out sex from intimacy,” says [Lori H. Gordon](#). “In fact, intimacy involves both emotional and physical closeness and openness. But we wind up confusing the two and end up feeling betrayed or used when, as often happens, we fail to satisfy our need for closeness in sex.” Sharing time and

experiences, engaging in meaningful conversation, being responsive to needs, cuddling, and enjoying non-sexual physical contact help a couple feel valued, cared for, and safe. And all of these factors contribute to feelings of intimacy.

To paraphrase lyricist [Jackie DeShannon](#), what the world needs now is not more sex, but love, sweet love. And not just for some but for everyone. For those suffering from sexual challenges—as well as those who don't—physical gratification outside of intercourse, within a loving relationship, is an intimacy in a league of its own where both sides win.

*For more information about and articles by our relationship expert Dr. Amy Osmond Cook, click [here](#).*

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## **Relationship Advice: Is Your Job Killing Your Relationship? How To Choose The Right Company To Work For?**





By [Dr. Amy Osmond Cook](#)

When Andy Sachs ([Anne Hathaway](#)) took the job as an assistant for the infamous Miranda Priestly, (Meryl Streep) in the 2006 hit, *The Devil Wears Prada*, viewers knew things would get rough in the workplace. But this movie also illustrates the impact a stressful work environment has on a relationship. Studies conducted by [relationship experts](#) show that more than half of women are kept awake at night by job-related stress, according to [Metro.co.UK](#). Fortunately, not all bosses have this negative influence on employees, and many leading companies place employee engagement and job satisfaction as top priorities. Here are three things to look for in a company that values your personal life as well as your work life so you can avoid [relationship problems](#).

## **Relationship advice that will help you balance work and love!**

**1. Choose a company that values flexibility.** In a global economy supported by cloud technology, the parameters for



innovative work structures are more flexible than ever. For example, companies like Simplus and Clif Bar offer remote and flexible work schedules for full-time employees. “That’s why nine out of ten employees report plans to grow with their companies for a long time,” says Jennifer Parris from WorkFlexibility.org. “And workers, grateful for the flex, report that the overwhelming majority (95 percent) will do extra if it means getting the job done.”

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**2. Choose a company that values culture.** Finding a company that values a positive work culture means management respects work boundaries and recognizes the importance of personal time. “We often hire with our work culture in mind,” says Ryan Westwood, CEO of Simplus. “We want our employees to thrive, and we understand that supporting employees’ personal lives is an important of that. We aim for high employee satisfaction, which is one reason we were ranked the #2 top company culture by Entrepreneur Magazine.” Things like yoga classes, healthy lunches, and generous vacation packages ensure companies retain valued staff, and employees can focus on other things when the workday is over.

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**3. Choose a company with good benefits.** While things like prenatal care or family dental coverage may not matter now, however a solid benefits package will support you when your long-term goals include starting a family, buying a home, or retiring early to kayak around the world. A generous benefits package means a company wants to keep you around for a while and be a part of your personal and professional growth.

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Contrary to what the movies may show, a qualified employee shouldn't have to sacrifice a valued relationship for work demands. Follow this work-related [relationship advice](#), and you're sure to bypass all that unnecessary stress Andy Sachs had to put up with. If you have the skills that an employer values, you can position yourself for positive professional momentum while nurturing cherished relationships at home.

*For more information about and articles by our relationship expert Dr. Amy Osmond Cook, click [here](#).*

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## **Relationship Advice: 5 Things To Do Before You Get Petty**





By [Dr. Amy Osmond Cook](#)

[Katy Perry](#) has a new look, and her new attitude is the cherry on top. Between her sassy new song dissing Taylor Swift and her poorly reviewed album that just came out, Katy Perry has taken some heat in the past few weeks. Say what you will about Katy Perry, [Taylor Swift](#), and any of the other celebrities caught up in the drama relationship problems, *\*cough Nicki Minaj cough\** but there are a few notes we can take to apply in our lives about being petty. Think about these four key pieces of [relationship advice](#) before you take any rash actions against your significant others, especially when it comes to breakups.

## Relationship advice that will help you be the bigger person.

**1. Put your phone away:** Your first instinct may be to tweet or text your way through frustration, but this can blow any situation out of proportion. Whether it's your boyfriend or your best friend, putting your problems out on social media in

the heat of the moment can lead you to say things you'll regret. Just think of all the celebrity Twitter drama that could have been avoided had these celebs given things some time to blow over. Try to keep things between the people involved until you feel like you have a handle on the situation.

**2. Take some time:** Similar to the phone tip, take a few hours or days to think about things before making any decisions. You might be contemplating a breakup or deciding on whether it's time to meet the family; give yourself time with your thoughts. "Respect is earned simply by giving it," relationship expert Toni Coleman says, "And, if you are disrespectful, this is what will come back to you." Even if someone betrays your trust or says something rude, taking the time to evaluate the situation will help you decide what the best way to handle it.

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**3. Consider their perspective:** Have you ever heard the phrase, "Broken hearts break hearts?" Well, sometimes it's true. Maybe your heart was recently broken. Maybe your boyfriend said the wrong thing at the wrong time. Maybe your crush bailed on plans. Emotions are natural, but when thinking about their situation, feelings, and intention, you can gain a little perspective of your own. "When you act without regard to how your behavior will impact your partner and relationship, you are sending a very clear signal that their feelings and needs are not a priority," Coleman says. If they need some time to sort through personal hardships or just don't feel the connection like they once did, hearing them out and giving them the benefit of the doubt can be very healing. However, this isn't an excuse to justify actions that are disrespectful, manipulative, or unkind.

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**4. Talk to a friend:** If you've taken the time cool off, now might be the perfect time to talk to a friend. He or she can give you a different outlook on the situation, be a safe person to vent to, and help you avoid making any rash decisions. Your friends might know you better than you know yourself, and they can be a source of honesty when you're looking for advice. Confide in someone you trust. Ask them what they see in the relationship.

**5. Change your look:** If all else fails and you feel the need for a little control in your life, follow Katy Perry's lead and freshen up your look. I'm not saying chop all your hair off, but trying a new style out or adding some color to your wardrobe can give you an extra boost of confidence.

Being petty hardly ever pays off. Try these tips to deal with the rough patches in the varied relationships of your life, so you're more likely to keep your dignity, have fewer regrets, and avoid burning bridges.

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# Relationship Advice: Things A Nurse Will Tell You But Your Friends Won't





By [Amy Osmond Cook, Ph.D.](#)

What do actresses Bonnie Hunt, Julie Walters, and recording artists Paul Brandt and Tina Turner have in common? They were all trained as nurses! In honor of the “Year of the Healthy Nurse,” now is a great time to recognize the role nurses play in our lives. The demands placed on nurses every day are huge. Our nurses are committed to providing the best care possible, and they try their hardest to meet that challenge every day. And sometimes that commitment means being brutally honest about a patient’s symptoms or habits. Your friends may not tell you that your moodiness has hung around for weeks, or your jeans are fitting a bit tight – but a nurse will tell you. In the spirit of good health and valuable [relationship advice](#), here are five things your nurse is willing to discuss that your friends aren’t.

## Relationship Advice That Come Straight From Nurses

**1. Weight gain.** Despite your friends insisting they can’t see

a difference in your waistline, your nurse on the other hand will likely confirm your biggest fears – yep, you have gained weight. If you have been diligent about exercise and diet, your nurse will discuss the possible reasons behind the weight gain. Things to consider may be your medications or your thyroid. A nurse may also discuss your sleep patterns or your ability to cope with stress. Putting a stop to unhealthy weight gain in the early stages will make you feel better sooner. Not to mention, your nurse probably has an arsenal of [fitness secrets](#) that can help you get in shape and ready for the dating scene.

**2. Skin symptoms.** Your friends may discount your less-than-glowing skin, but a nurse will explore the reasons why your skin is less than luxurious. Who couldn't use helpful [beauty tips](#) from someone who actually studied medicine? "A helpful acronym to remember the specific questions to ask patients when taking a skin history is 'OLD CARTS,' which gives a systematic approach to questioning in a skin assessment," health writer [Julie Van Onselen](#) says. This includes onset, location, duration, character, aggravating factors, relieving factors, timing, and severity.

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**3. Mood swings.** You may not realize it, but a nurse assesses mental status during your physical. "The mental status assessment is an essential part of the examination," experts at the [Nurses Learning Network](#) say. In general terms, mental status could be described as an individual's state of awareness and responsiveness to the environment. It also includes the more complex areas of a person's mental functioning, such as intelligence, orientation, thought process and judgment. Your friends may steer clear of the neighborhood grouchy pants, but a nurse will face your behavior head-on to determine the root of your negative feelings and [relationship problems](#).

**4. Lack of exercise and poor diet.** We may try to lie about our daily habits, but our vitals will always paint another picture. Unlike a friend who may look the other way, a nurse will know the truth about how many times we hit the treadmill versus how many sets of pants are draped over it at the moment. “It is so important for patients to be truthful about their daily habits. When patients try to hide their smoking or drug and alcohol use, for example, it prevents us from providing the best care to fit their needs,” Julie Aiken, CEO of Ameritech College of Healthcare, said. “Another thing patients don’t think about is the importance of mentioning any dietary supplements or over-the-counter medications that they’re taking along with prescribed medications. Doctors need a comprehensive view of a patient’s health history to design the ideal treatment plan.

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**5. Address your stress.** Stress kills. And as much as you may try to hide it, the effects of prolonged stress can affect your physical well-being. Nurses know a thing or two about controlling stress; it’s a large part of the job. So when the topic of stress comes out in the open, a nurse may prescribe a variety of helpful remedies. Things like taking a walk, reading, soaking in a hot bath, talking with friends, or crocheting, are popular ways for nurses to deal with stress. Many nurses have also found a healthy connection with yoga, meditation, and other relaxation exercises. “We bring in a massage therapist for staff every few weeks where they can receive a 15-minute neck and upper back massage,” said Julie Aiken, CEO of [Ameritech College of Healthcare](#). She added that faculty and staff could participate in weekly yoga sessions, daily group walks, and both students and staff are encouraged to use essential oils to help with stress relief.

We love our trusted friends, and we count on them to support us when we need it most. But when it comes to our health, and sometimes even relationship advice, the dedication of our



nurses is something we can truly count on to keep us healthy every day.

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## Relationship Advice: 3 Ways Bad Credit Can Ruin Your Love Life



By [Dr. Amy Osmond Cook](#)

Congratulations on your new relationship! It's an exciting

time to join two lives together to build a bright future. You brought the pets and furniture while your partner brought along a big screen television—and bad credit history. Is this union doomed from the start? Not always. But the road to repair can be rocky. A bad credit history can be fixed, but it takes time, patience, honesty, and a lot of self-discipline to change the habits that got you in this financial situation in the first place. If you want to avoid [relationship problems](#) and change your spending habits, here are three ways bad credit can impact your love life. With the following [relationship advice](#) and [dating tips](#), you can prevent heart ache and an empty wallet.

## **Relationship advice that history is wrecking your love life with the following relationship advice.**

**1. Deception invades your relationship.** It's one thing to hide the department store shopping bags from your loved one or screen calls from creditors, but when your spending habits cause you to lie about how you are handling your financial responsibilities, it's time to make some changes—fast! “The best healthy financial habit you can make is to develop and maintain a good credit history,” Anthony Bell, a financial expert and blogger from [rescu.com.au](#) says. “The best way to do this is to spend less than you earn and budget your expenses so that you know what you can afford, what you need to repay, and by when.” It's solid and simple advice.

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**2. Bad credit makes it hard to move forward with goals.** It's hard to move forward with your goals when you face financial barriers. Think about the natural progression of a

relationship; Those plans often include buying a home, a car, or other big-ticket conveniences. But when you bring a bad credit history into the relationship, those goals will either not be possible, or you will face high-interest rates in the purchase. Keep in mind, moving forward with goals isn't impossible, but it will take discipline and determination to achieve them.

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**3. Bad credit destroys your self-confidence.** Nobody enjoys rejection. Hearing “no” can ruin the mood of the most optimistic of people. Just imagine being denied day after day. In that case, even the most basic consumer decisions become an issue when you are denied a cell phone, a gas card, a new bank account, or even an apartment. Such negativity can take its toll on your self-worth and your relationship. “Partners should treat this as another relationship goal to solve together rather than letting it drive them apart,” Elle Kaplan, [relationship expert](#) and financial advisor says. “Both partners’ debts and credit scores are now tied together for the long run.” In other words, this requires a new attitude concerning money.

The good news is that you can repair your poor credit. Start by requesting a credit report, looking for possible errors, learning your credit score, and discussing financial strategies with an expert, such as [Lexington Law](#) or [CreditRepair.com](#). As you move from this moment on—make sure you are moving toward a life of happiness and financial health.

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# Relationship Advice: Our Connection With Sleep



By [Dr. Amy Osmond Cook](#)

More people do this than you may think. [Taylor Swift](#) does it. [Kendall Jenner](#) does it, too. Some people have caught [Katy Perry](#) and Demi Lovato doing it, and supermodel Heidi Klum credits it as one of her best beauty secrets. What are they doing? They nap. And they make sure to get a good night's sleep. With less than 40 percent of Americans getting a satisfactory amount of sleep each night according to [gallup.com](#), it is evident we have a love/hate relationship with sleep. What happens when we sleep? And why is it so



important for our well-being? “While we doze, our brains and bodies aren’t slacking off, they’re at work, repairing us after the day’s battles and refueling us for tomorrow’s slog—in more ways than you likely realize,” [prevention.com](https://www.prevention.com) writer Sarah Klein says. The brain and heart are recharging, the liver is detoxifying the day’s activities, and skin cells are reproducing and repairing. With the role of sleep being such an important part of our wellness, it’s time we build a healthy relationship with sleep. Here are four ways to do it.

## Want to feel less tired during the day? Then follow this relationship advice about sleep.

**1. Don’t ignore sleep.** The notion that sleepless people can accumulate a “sleep debt” is true. And the long-term effects of neglecting the need for better sleep can have a negative effect on daytime functions. “The curious thing is that with sleep deprivation, you can only pay off a recent debt,” Brandon Peters, M.D. says. “Fortunately, the short-term effects of sleep deprivation are quickly reversed by getting adequate rest.” Although the damage from years of not sleeping may be difficult to remedy, we can start improving our sleep habits now with immediate benefits like improved motor skills, better concentration, and decision-making skills.

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**2. Pampering is required.** The best way to welcome a good night’s sleep is to adhere to a routine. Experts from The Mayo Clinic suggest going to bed and waking up at the same time each day. And try adding a soothing ritual like a hot bath, relaxing music, reading a good book, or dimming the lights for quiet meditation. It will help lull you into a deep sleep that

will allow you to wake up energized for the next day.

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**3. Let the process progress naturally.** Although getting seven to nine hours of sleep per night is the popular belief, some of us simply don't need that much sleep. The National Sleep Foundation conducted recent studies that place more emphasis on the way you feel rather than dictating a specific amount of time. "Pay careful attention to your mood, energy, and health after a poor night's sleep versus a good one," experts at Sleep Foundation say. "Ask yourself, 'How often do I get a good night's sleep?' Like good diet and exercise, sleep is a critical component to overall health." The National Sleep Foundation uses a series of questions to measure adequate sleep. For example, after sleeping seven hours, do you feel productive and happy? Are you overweight? Do you rely on caffeine to get you through the day? And do you feel sleepy while driving? The answers may help you better gauge how many hours your body needs to stay healthy.

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**4. Give sleep your full attention.** If you want to improve your sleep quickly, put down the electronic devices before you go to bed. "The pervasive glow of electronic devices may be an impediment to a good night's sleep," [Washington Post](#) writer Meeri Kim says. The culprit is the blue light emitted by computer and smartphone screens. The physiology behind it stems from the tiny pineal gland in the brain. It releases melatonin a couple of hours before you are ready for bed. However, the blue light of electronic devices prevents the pineal gland from releasing melatonin, which means you don't feel sleepy. And, morning arrives before you've had a chance to get a good night's sleep.

The health risks from a lack of sleep are enough to keep you awake at night. But by catching up on lost sleep, sticking to a routine, gauging how we feel each morning, and unplugging at night, we are on our way to a healthy lifestyle that can lead you to your future sweetheart. And, that's just dreamy!

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