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Five Ways to Refresh Your Relationship

By Rinatta Paries

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A relationship is like a delicate rose bush. If you care for it, it will bloom year after year with unsurpassed beauty. If you don't, you might end up with a dull, lifeless entity that is struggling to survive.

Below are five ideas to keep your relationship in bloom for years to come.

If you are single, read these tips with an eye on what you will want to do in a long-term relationship. If you are in a relationship, pick one or two of the five ideas and integrate them into your relationship now. You will be amazed at how many nice feelings you can create quickly by taking a few simple steps.

1. Make time for your relationship week after week.

Take time for each other every single week. For most couples, it is a good idea to have a standing date night. Communicate to your friends, kids, everyone, that this night is reserved especially for the two of you. Keep the date every week, no matter what. Make it your priority.

2. Do fun, pleasurable things together.

Sharing fun and pleasure fosters intimacy. Intimacy is what relationships are all about. Share good meals, share play time, share jokes and funny movies, share outdoor activities. What matters most is that the activity is fun and pleasurable for each of you.

3. Do long-term activities as a couple.

Do something long-term together. Learn about investments, take dance lessons, refinish the furniture, reach your fitness goals. Do some long-term activity that will enrich and interest each of you, together. By doing this you will stay connected to each other and foster common ground in the relationship. Make sure that this is above and beyond child rearing.

4. Resolve conflict quickly.

It is hard to say you are sorry in the heat of an argument. In some ways it is easier to have a fight and

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go into your separate corners. But unresolved conflict, or conflict that lingers, fosters long-term hurt and resentment. It's ok to disagree. But it's important to find a resolution quickly.

5. Keep the romance alive.

In a long-term relationship, romance is not something that happens automatically most of the time. Everyday pressures and time constraints have a tendency to rob us of spontaneity.

Romance needs to be consciously created. Remember that romance will keep your relationship fresh and exciting and will keep the two of you close. Take turns creating romance intentionally.

Your Relationship Coach,

Rinatta Paries

www.WhatItTakes.com

(c) Rinatta Paries, 1998–2002. Do you know how to attract your ideal mate? Do you know how to build a fulfilling relationship, or how to reinvent yours to meet your needs? Relationship Coach Rinatta Paries can teach you the skills and techniques to attract and sustain long-term, healthy partnerships. Visit www.WhatItTakes.com where you'll find quizzes, classes, advice and a free weekly ezine. Become a "true love magnet(tm)!"

Having coined the phrase "relationship coach," Master Certified Coach Rinatta Paries works with singles to help them attract their ideal relationship, and helps couples create more love and fulfillment in their existing relationships. Visit her web site at www.WhatItTakes.com or e-mail her at coach@WhatItTakes.com.

Can We Still Be Friends?

By Kevin B. Burk, Author of The Relationship Handbook

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Even when we know it's time to end a romantic relationship, we're often reluctant to let go of our partners completely. We've shared so much of our lives with our partner, it seems almost callous to simply cut them out of our lives—especially if we're ending the relationship on good terms. It's natural that we want to hold onto the loving and supportive part of the romantic relationship, and simply let go of the parts that aren't serving us. This is entirely possible: we can remain friends with our former lovers. We both need to want to build a friendship, however.

If we choose to stay friends with a former romantic partner, we will have to establish new boundaries and expectations in the relationship. The old checklists are no longer appropriate, and

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it may take some time to make a successful transition to the new relationship. It's best, in fact, if we do not spend any time together once we've officially ended the romantic relationship. A clean break is essential. We need time to separate our life from our partner's. We need to reestablish our own boundaries and our own identity. And we need to spend a little time mourning the death of the romantic relationship. It takes time for the emotional connections to adjust, and it takes time for us to gain perspective on the entire relationship.

Once we're ready to spend time with our partner again, we must recognize that any friendship that we build is a new relationship. It is not an extension or continuation of our romantic relationship. We will need to start slowly, and to build up a new level of trust. It will take some time to make sure we're using the appropriate checklists. We can't expect the same kind of support or commitment in a friendship as we did in a romantic relationship. By the same token, we may find that we could tolerate certain behavior from a lover, but that we won't accept it from a friend.

In many ways, friendships are far more demanding than romantic relationships. We look for a higher level of shared interests and compatibility with our friends than we do with our romantic partners. We may discover that our former lovers don't make the cut as friends—and there's nothing wrong with that. We have a much easier time letting friends drift out of our lives than we

do with letting go of romantic partners.

Kevin B. Burk is the author of *The Relationship Handbook: How to Understand and Improve Every Relationship in Your Life*. Visit <http://www.everyrelationship.com> for a FREE report on creating AMAZING Relationships.



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