

## How to Keep a Long Term Relationship Fresh and Fun

If you are like many couples who have been in a long term relationship, you now feel completely at ease with one another and have reached the point of knowing one another so well there are little or no surprises.

The honeymoon stage may have passed long ago and you may secretly look at your newly coupled friends with a jealous eye. The freshness of being one half of a new couple seemingly takes no work at all. Wanting to impress one another and show off your best qualities is all part of the getting-to-know-you stage.

When the initial infatuation passes and reality settles in, it can be difficult at times to come up with new ways to reignite the fire your relationship once had. What some people may forget about keeping a relationship alive and healthy for the long term is that it really does take real work from both sides. The ideal fairy tale ending showcased in books and movies is really just a romantic fantasy. The stories never touch on what happens to the couple years down the road. It's not romantic to think of what Cinderella and her Prince are doing when they have been married for twenty years.

Putting the spark back into your relationship can happen with a little work and imagination.

Begin by never taking each other for granted. Thinking the other person will always be there regardless of your situation is one way to put a damper on your romance. In the beginning you wanted to impress one another and didn't know if your love interest would look another way. It was a stage where you would dress your best and act your best. You would also appreciate your partner. Why would this change? Remember to show your partner appreciation and use your closeness to bond with one another on a regular basis.

Keep communication open and turn off that TV! According to psychologist and sexologist Serenella Salomoni, couples who keep a TV in the bedroom have sex half as often as couples who do not. Communication is key to a healthy relationship and TV is one way to prevent it. In order to gain more appreciation for one another, set time aside everyday to reconnect. Whether you sit down for a coffee together on your lunch hour, phone one another at a set time each day, or sit down at dinner - without the TV! be sure to let your partner in on what is happening in your life away from him or her.

Schedule regular date nights. It can be difficult to spend the much needed time together with today's hectic work schedules, kids, and other distractions. Be sure to pencil your partner in. Go dancing, go for a hike and view the sunset, see a movie you both have wanted to see, try out that new restaurant in your neighbourhood. If you do have kids, don't be afraid to get a babysitter. Whether it be your parents or that trusting, mature

neighbour. It is worth it to have someone available on those nights you need and deserve to be with just one another.

Exercise together! It has been proven that exercise can put the spark back into your sex life. With exercise come physical endurance, body confidence and higher self esteem. Spot one another at the gym or go outside for a jog. If you are feeling a little more adventurous, sign up for a team sport in your area such as softball, soccer or ultimate frisbee. Feeling your best and knowing you are doing something together can help maintain that feeling of closeness.

Don't be afraid to plan surprises for each other. If you see something you know your other half would appreciate, let them know they are appreciated and you are thinking about them even when they are no there. If you are in need of a vacation and have the time available off work, book a week away. Rent a cottage up north, plan a weekend at a spa and enjoy couples massages or take a road trip together. Spending time together in a car with nothing else but music, a map and each other can open communication.

Of course it is only natural for romance to fade the more time you spend in a relationship. Romance can't just exist without work from both parties involved. Show your partner you care by making the effort and you will withstand the test of time.