

Valentine's Day tips to keep your relationship healthy

February 11 2014, by Julie Newberg



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Ah, Valentine's Day – a time for love and sweet times spent with your significant other.

If only it were so easy. Romance can be a [balancing act](#), especially if you live with your [partner](#).

Jess Alberts, Arizona State University President's Professor in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, has spent recent years

researching conflict in personal and professional relationships, including [marital conflict](#), the division of domestic labor and couples' daily interaction.

To make your relationship with your partner work better, Alberts shares these recommendations for managing conflict:

- Agree with your partner to never do any name calling, ever. "It wounds, and it wounds deeply," Alberts said.
- Look at how you attribute blame or how you react to something your partner does or doesn't do. How you interpret your partner's behavior has a significant impact on the reason why you are angry. "We don't respond to what people do. We respond to the reason that we think they did the behavior," Alberts said.
- If you have a problem with your significant other's behavior, ask them about their perspective or why they thought their actions were a good idea. The reasons behind what they did may surprise you. Sometimes people are exhausted and not thinking straight. Or, they may think that you would do the same thing in their situation. Or, they may not have been thinking about you when they made their decision. "People usually have reasons for what they do," Alberts said.
- Be positive. "I tell students that we fall in love with our reflection in our lover's eyes. This means that part of the reason we love someone else is how they see us and make us feel. It really helps to have that positive attitude when things are going well, and especially when you fight," she said.
- Don't use your relationship as a source of power. Don't try to control your partner by telling them what they can and cannot do. "Using your relationship as a source of power doesn't work very well," she said. "An argument shouldn't be about winning. It should be about solving a problem. No one is happy in a [relationship](#) where they feel like they have no control and they

lose all of the time."

- Negotiate household tasks and realize that your significant other may have a lower threshold for mess than you do. Things that one person may not even notice can drive another person nuts. Talk about the division of labor in the household and how you'll handle it if you have different thresholds for clutter.
- Don't stew in anger. Talk about things before you explode. But, be sure to pick a time to talk that is as good for your partner as it is for you.

Provided by Arizona State University

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