

What Makes a **RELATIONSHIP GREAT**

Do happy couples know something the rest of don't?

It is not uncommon to wonder why one couple seems so happy, while you and your partner are experiencing difficulties. Have they discovered the secret to a perfect relationship? There's no secret. They simply share a good number of characteristics that make a relationship successful.

Shared goals & values - Partners in a good relationship not only share a life view but also want similar things out of life. Perhaps opposites do attract, but they rarely have long successful relationships. Eventually, the difference on how they view the world will lead to relationship problems.

Having similar life goals is also crucial. If one partner already has kids and does not want more, and the other wants to start a family, then the relationship is doomed to have problems. The greatest relationships are those where both partners have accepted the fundamental truth about human nature- you can't change other people just because you are in a relationship with them. They may adapt some of their behaviours to accommodate their partner, but fundamentally they remain the same person.

Equal Partnership - No relationship is able to realistically split all tasks, duties and responsibilities 50/50. One partner will inevitably end up shouldering more responsibility in one area than the other. A great relationship acknowledges this, and accepts it. Certainly, there is some manoeuvring, but both partners need to be comfortable in where their responsibilities lie. For example, if one partner does the bulk of the housework (rather than 50/50), the other partner may be responsible for managing all family finances. The only area where both partners need be **EQUALLY** responsible are in the decision-making process and the health of their relationship.

Consideration & Respect- A relationship can be great when both parties consider each other when making decisions and plans. This means considering how your actions would impact your partner **BEFORE** actually engaging in the activity. One partner can still take the lead and make decisions, but in all great relationships, the person deciding always takes into account their partner's needs and wants.



As well, showing your partner proper respect is crucial to having a successful relationship. Familiarity can often lead to lack of basic respect for your partner as an individual. Partners in successful relationships do not correct mundane things or talk down to their partners. It is important to remember that they are not just your partner, but also a regular person worthy of respectful treatment.

Open & Honest Communication- This one is the hardest for couples to figure out as it has so many facets. Open communication does not mean sharing every thought that comes into your head. A great relationship is a well-edited. You should be as open as possible, but be sure that your "honesty" is not hurtful to your partner. Great relationships know how to manage this delicate balance- oversharing can often lead to pettiness.

TIPS THAT HELP MAKE A RELATIONSHIP GREAT

- When you disagree, acknowledge that your partner has a valid point, even if it is different from your own.
- Be forthright with your partner. They cannot understand why you feel a certain way unless you explain why. Don't expect them to read your mind. Being sarcastic or passive aggressive isn't helpful either. If you want your partner to do something, then ask them directly.
- Respect your partner in private and in public. Never talk down to them or speak to them in a condescending fashion. Do not interrupt them when they are speaking to others. It diminishes what they are saying and implies that you feel what you have to say is more important than them.
- If they drop a bombshell, take a few moments before responding. In fact, if the news is particularly upsetting, tell them that you need time to process this, before you are ready to discuss it. Set up a time later on, when you can think more rationally, to discuss it.



Flexibility & Resilience - When unexpected things happen, partners need to be accommodating and able to adapt to the situation. Whether this be simply picking up the kids when it is your partner's turn, or agreeing to move to a different city for a job opportunity, a good relationship means being flexible and responding accordingly to unexpected change.

People in great relationships are always mindful of their partner's position and sacrifices. They do not take their flexibility for granted- it is important to be appreciative and return the favour. A great relationship means ebbs and flows- there should be an equitable distribution of benefits and sacrifices.

Fun Great relationships are ones where partners have fun *together*. They make time to enjoy the things they like to do *together*. They do not make their partner do something in exchange for them doing something. Instead, they do things they both like and enjoy other activities with friends who share that interest.

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