Hundred

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Nine things a relationship runs on

Nothing about you is in this file.

NINE PRINCIPLES · 6 PAGES

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Oxygen

A relationship needs new things to talk about, do and look forward to. Some come from time you spend together and some from time you spend apart.

When it's there

You each have a life of your own and bring things back from it to share. You do new things together, and you talk about what's coming up, whether it's dinner tonight or a trip next year. Every now and then, one of you plans a surprise the other will love.

When it isn't

Most conversations are about the shopping, the bills and who's picking up the kids. Nothing is planned beyond next week. When every week feels the same, boredom and routine settle in, and one of you may start looking elsewhere for excitement.

02 Constant care

A relationship needs regular care from both of you, or time slowly wears it down.

When it's there

You both think about what the other might need and do something about it. If your partner has had a stressful week, you suggest something fun. If they mentioned a restaurant they wanted to try, you book it. It doesn't have to be big, as long as it shows you were thinking about them.

When it isn't

The relationship is running on the effort you both put in at the start. Neither of you can remember the last time you did something for the other just because you were thinking of them.

03 Trust

Your partner should always feel safe telling you anything, and you should feel the same way with them.

When it's there	When one of you has something difficult to say, you say it, because you know the other will listen and won't use it against you.
When it isn't	One of you thinks twice before sharing something, or worries about how the other will react. Conversations become arguments about who was right, with sarcasm, snide remarks or judgment. Trying to win leaves both of you hurt and makes the next argument harder.

04 Kindness

You can be angry or disappointed with your partner, but you should never act to hurt, punish or get back at them.

When it's there	When you feel hurt, you tell your partner what happened and what would help. Your partner listens and helps. Arguments are about fixing what went wrong between you, and nobody keeps score.
When it isn't	You raise your voices and blame each other. One of you wants the other to pay for what happened. If you notice you want to hurt your partner, it helps to step back until you feel calmer, and to get support if it keeps happening.

05 Time

A couple needs regular time together, or the relationship slowly loses its strength.

When it's there	You have dinner together, go out, watch a film or just talk, and some of that time has nothing to do with the house, the kids or the calendar. When one of you needs help, the other makes time for it.
When it isn't	You live under the same roof but rarely spend time alone together, and being busy is always the reason. This happens most often to very independent couples and to parents with young children.

06 Consistency

Remaining the person your partner got to know at the start helps them know what to expect from you. You can do the things you did at the start less often, such as planning fewer dates, but stopping them is a problem.

When it's there	You still do the things you did at the start, even if less often, and the views you've shared stay consistent from one week to the next.
When it isn't	One of you has changed since the relationship started, and you haven't talked about it. The other no longer knows what to expect, which slowly wears away trust.

07 Communication

Your partner can't read your mind, so understanding how you feel and what you need depends on you telling them clearly and often.

When it's there	When something bothers you, you say so while it's still small. You both know how the other likes to be supported on a bad day, because you've told each other.
When it isn't	When one of you is unhappy, the other has to guess why, and guessing wrong often makes it worse. You each expect the other to just know what you need.

08 Privacy

Everyone needs some space of their own, and you may need more than your partner does. Wanting privacy doesn't mean you have something to hide.

When it's there	You each have time and space to yourselves, whether it's a hobby, an evening alone or singing in the shower, and neither of you sees that as a threat. You both know how much time alone the other needs.
When it isn't	Asking for an hour on your own leads to questions or an argument. One of you wants a lot of time together and the other wants a lot of time alone, and you've never talked about it.

09 Intimacy

However you like to be intimate, and however often, you need to set aside time for it instead of relying on whatever time is left over.

When it's there	Every now and then, you plan an evening together when you won't be rushed or interrupted.
When it isn't	It only happens when stress and busy schedules allow it, which is rarely. Over time, one of you starts to feel the other has lost interest, or no longer finds them attractive.

AFTERWORD

Small ways to show you care

Most people need to hear “I love you” now and then, but they need to see it in what you do even more. A small, unexpected gesture shows your partner you’re thinking about them: a surprise dinner, a ride home from work, or taking care of an errand they’ve been worried about.

Your partner’s friends matter

The people who were in your partner’s life before you arrived aren’t competition. If they like you and you get along with them, your relationship has a much better chance of lasting.

Your own relationship

You can make your own list of needs at twowholelives.com.

ABOUT THIS

This is a self-help tool, not therapy, counseling or a clinical assessment, and it doesn’t diagnose anything. If you are in distress or at risk, contact a qualified professional or your local emergency service.