

# BREAK THESE HABITS & FEEL MORE CONNECTED

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Do you have any habits that negatively affect your relationship? Maybe leave your wet towel on the bed, while your spouse leaves all the drawers and cabinets open. Sure, some habits get on each other's nerves, but most times, they're surface-level offenses and not actually detrimental to the quality of your relationship.

What's more concerning are habits that seem innocuous, but sneakily steal away moments of connection. Done once or twice, here and there, they're probably not a big deal. But when they become routine, your relationship can suffer. Break these habits before they break your connection.

## **1. Looking at your phone. All. The. Time.**

We all do it, and in moderation, it's probably okay. But for many of us, it's become a habit, a reflex even, that we don't even realize we're succumbing to or how often. Think about the amount of time you and your partner are together, then consider how much of that time is spent **not talking** because you're both looking at your phones. Knowing that there are only 24 hours a day, it's crucial to make the most of that time. If you find yourselves constantly scrolling, start small by designating phone-free times or put it in another room so you're not tempted. Talk to each other, cuddle on the couch, share a meal – just be fully present with each other.

## **2. Not sharing about your day.**

You probably ask your spouse how his/her day was and vice versa, but how often are you really getting the details? We might think, nothing exciting happened today, so it's probably not worth sharing. But the fact is, if there's anyone who's suited to hearing about the mundanities of your day, it's your spouse! No, you don't have to give each other minute-by-minute rundowns but keeping each other in the know helps you maintain what Dr. John Gottman calls "*love maps*" – knowing each other's inner worlds – which is key to a lasting relationship.

## **3. Phasing out affection.**

Some individuals are naturally more physically affectionate than others, but even if you're not the most touch-feely of couples, don't let it fall completely by the wayside. Sit next to each other on the couch instead of on opposite ends, greet each other and part ways with a hug and kiss, hold hands in the car. And don't forget about verbal affection, such as an out-of-the-blue yet sincere, "*I love you.*" These are small gestures, but they are a simple way to feel connected and in tune with each other.

## **4. Letting your to-do list rule.**

Here's the thing: there will always be something on your to-do list that you could be doing instead of spending quality time together. So, you simply need to choose to prioritize your partner and relationship over the satisfaction of marking things done. If your spouse asks you to go on a walk after dinner because it's a beautiful evening, but you'd planned on doing laundry, choose the walk more often than the laundry.

## **5. Making assumptions.**

Over the course of time, we get to know our spouse well enough that it's natural to begin to make assumptions about them – how they'll react, what they'll choose, and what they want or need from us. Resist the urge to go with your assumptions all of the time. Instead, check in with them. Even if they end up confirming what you thought, it's a nice opportunity to connect with your partner on the topic while showing consideration and making sure you're on the same page.

If you find yourself doing these things, it's okay – we're all human. The key is to be mindful of how they affect your level of connection over time and be willing to make adjustments right away. The earlier you notice yourselves falling into these habits, the easier it will be to turn things around for the better.