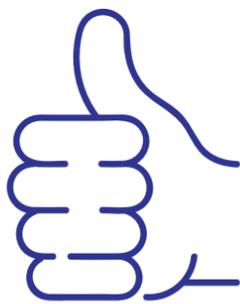


## COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

# Surviving and Thriving during Quarantine



### Accept the new normal

Our routines and schedules are disrupted and we're all stressed out. Crises, by nature, are out of our control. When we realize that, it helps us to deal better with the temporary, new normal and accept it. **Accepting the fact that we are living in close quarters and must cope with each other's idiosyncrasies;** may help us to lower the bar in terms of what we expect of each other and help us to pick and chose our battles.

### Validate one another

When one partner is feeling anxious, it is important for the other partner to listen to their feelings and show support. **Being heard and supported is what your partner needs most.** However, there may be so many practical concerns related to the crisis that partners may be looking for help with problem-solving. It is always best to ask a partner if they need help with problem-solving though, don't assume.

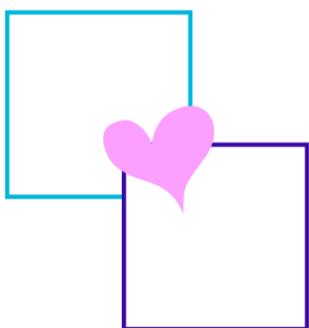


### Use "I" messages

Complain without blaming. Use soft start-ups by using "I" messages. For example, "I feel \_\_\_\_\_ and I need \_\_\_\_\_." When we use "you" statements to describe our feelings and needs, our complaints quickly come off as criticisms, and the other person quickly becomes defensive. **Think about how your tone of voice and body language can show you are not blaming or attacking the other person.**

### Keep the romance alive

Recreate times when early love was blossoming. Set aside time with your spouse on a consistent basis and have weekly dates to talk (but not about the current situation) and reconnect. Making time for each other and spending quality time together are like putting deposits in your relationship bank account. **Remember, couples with at least five positive comments or gestures for every negative interaction tend to be happier.**

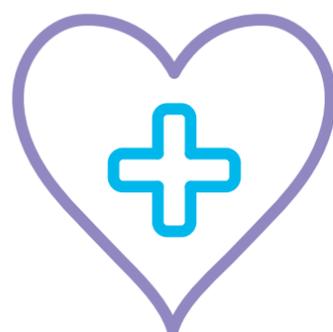


### Give each other space

Being together too much can be exasperating. **Use time-outs to take breaks.** If you (or your partner) feel you are at a breaking point, establish the rule of a time-out. This allows you to have a break from each other and get your body and emotions under control. During that time, try to have positive thoughts about the other person and the good times the two of you have had in the past. It takes about 20 minutes for the body to resume a normal heartbeat and pulse when it has been stressed out.

### Focus on your health and well-being

By reducing your own individual stress, you can lessen the toll on your relationship. **Eat well, get sufficient sleep and be physically active.** Learn formal skills for managing stress, such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation or mindfulness meditation. Take time to do things you enjoy - reading, walking, gardening, scrap-booking, listening to music, etc.



Developed by Rebecca McFarland, District Agent, Family and Child Development

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