

## HOW TO NURTURE FRIENDSHIP WITH YOUR SPOUSE

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Did you know research shows that couples who share a deep friendship are often happier in their relationship? Dr. John Gottman considers friendship the foundation of a strong marriage, it makes sense. With friendship comes mutual respect, care, and affection for each other. Although physical intimacy is important in marriage, there are times & circumstances when it will be a lower priority. A strong friendship will help you stay emotionally connected & committed to your relationship. *Here's how you can nurture friendship with your spouse:*

### **Stay curious.**

Think about when you connect with a friend. You ask them questions about their life, either catching up on big stuff or getting updated on day-to-day events. You're interested in their thoughts & opinions. Maintain that same sense of curiosity with your spouse. Sure, you see your spouse more often, but that doesn't mean you always know all about their inner world. So, ask questions & be eager to learn more. What did they think of that movie? How's it going with their manager at work? Asking them questions shows you care about them as a person. Don't take them for granted.

### **Be a good listener.**

There are some situations where we might treat our friends with more courtesy than our spouses. Listening can be one of them. We're around our spouse so often, it's easy to fall into bad listening habits—not giving your full attention, pretending to hear what they said, or not even acknowledging they've spoken. However, you probably don't do this with your friends – it would come across as rude, right? Make the same effort with your spouse. No, you won't be perfect, & that's okay. But feeling heard & listened to is fundamental to any relationship.

### **Have fun together.**

Much about being an adult isn't "fun." Bills, chores, work, & household logistics can seem to take over your life. It's natural to let fun slip lower on the priority list; don't let it! Friends have fun together and keeping a playful aspect to your relationship not only nurtures your friendship but also can be a protective factor during stressful times. Remember, the fun doesn't have to be an entire day at the park; you can have fun together while doing all the mundane things. Be goofy, make bad jokes, laugh too hard at bad jokes. Having a good time together, and enjoying each other's company, helps your friendship to flourish.

### **Have each other's back.**

This is a core component of a strong friendship—being supportive and looking out for each other. Sometimes with our spouse, it's easy to be contrarian—maybe you see things differently or that's just your dynamic. But still they really want/need you to back them up and be on their side. Being on the same team is a friendship necessity.

*Cultivating a deep friendship with your spouse strengthens your relationship in many ways. While it's not a requirement that you call each other "best friends," and it's great and healthy to have close friendships outside of your spouse, the friendship you nurture with each other is a valuable one.*