

## 7 Traits of People Who Are Good at Relationships

By now, I hope that everyone has gotten the message that relationships aren't easy. If you expect that having a close, loving bond with another human being over the span of months or years is going to be all pretty selfies (that's a relationship selfie) and sunshine, you will be hugely disappointed.

But a great romantic relationship, while needing care and feeding (from both parties), should also be fun and joyful — if it's a drag to be with your beloved all the time, something's wrong. Like many other things in life, some people are better at relationships than others. How do they do it? Most of them share a few key traits in common.

1. They love and accept their partners for who they are: Yes, people can change, but not all that much. So if you are constantly trying to motivate your spouse to do something small that they don't want to do, like exercise more, or quit smoking, or be more assertive about their needs at work, that's awesome, because that's the kind of work partners should do for each other. Supporting each other in what we want to do in life is a beautiful thing. But the wholesale changing someone who, say, likes to surf more than she likes to work into a career-focused individual, trying to make a city guy into a country-living fan, or convincing someone who doesn't want kids that they should have them is dangerous, and you're bound to be disappointed when — shocker — they continue to be themselves. You can help your partner change small things about who they are, but if you aren't into a major aspect of someone's personality, you shouldn't try to create a life with them.
2. They don't skimp on the snuggling: Like most mammals, human beings have a strong desire to be held and touched by the people closest to us — regular physical connections are incredibly important, and that's proven by science. According to a Psychology Today essay on the literature about affection and happiness, "There was no connection between the amount of physical affection and amount of conflict [for a couple], but cuddling/holding, kissing on the lips, and hugging were all associated with how easily the couple resolves the conflict they do experience."
3. They really listen: Cultivating good listening skills is good for all kinds of relationships, from those with your siblings and parents to those with your friends. But so many people tune their spouses out — the very people who need and deserve your focused attention. What's a greater act of love than really taking the time to listen to what someone you love has to say?
4. They don't expect their partner to "make them happy": Only you can make yourself happy — that is work you must do from the inside. Of course, you can ask for love and support from your partner to achieve goals that will make you happier, like request daily meditation time, or time off for a retreat, or whatever else you need to get to a happier place, but you are the only one ultimately responsible for your happiness.

5. They are generous: Being giving is a daily way to show love for your partner; that doesn't have to mean buying presents or expensive jewelry — it does mean giving them the bigger slice of pie, bringing them a cup of tea, or rubbing their shoulders when they are stressed. Regular generosity shows your partner they are loved, in a small, quiet ways.
  
6. They talk it out — and keep talking: Everyone always says "honest communication is key" — but few do the work to make that a reality. Having fights or disagreements is natural and healthy. It's what you do after them that matters. Talk it out (this means you will have to say what you really feel) and listen closely. Keep going. Keep listening. Then keep talking, until whatever it is that made you angry or sad is past, and you are actually talking and listening about the deeper issues that got you fired up to begin with. This is real work; it is hard, but it is incredibly rewarding, bringing you closer to your partner and bringing a greater understanding of yourself and them.
  
7. They are genuine: It's easy to start a relationship based on a shiny-happy-perfect version of who you are (who wouldn't be attracted to that?). But it's dishonest, and over the long term, you will have to keep up the facade (not healthy, and exhausting!). Or you will eventually show your true colors and have to renegotiate the relationship from the new perspective. Be yourself from the beginning and everyone will know what they are getting into. Yes, some people might not like you, and that's really OK.