

Relationship Tips for Parents



Most couples experience relationship changes when they become parents. You might feel a new and different level of connection between you. But you might also experience some strains even if these weren't part of your relationship before becoming parents. Less sleep, less time to talk, less time to spend together—these things can all take their toll on your relationship while you care for children. Here are some tips for staying connected.

Listen to each other. Good listening is the most important communication skill you have.

- You can show you're really listening by *stopping what you're doing* when your partner wants to talk, and by paying full attention to your partner's words and body language.
- If you're thinking about what to say next, you're not really listening. Instead, try to *focus your attention* on what your partner is saying.

Tell your partner how you feel. Our partner is not a mind reader! When you talk about your frustrations and fears, your happiness and joys, it might make it easier for your partner to know what you're going through.

'I' statements are easier to listen to than 'you' statements, which can seem like criticisms. So when you talk, you could say things like, 'I feel a bit lonely when we spend less time together.' This might be better than, 'You don't make time for us anymore.'

Accept the changes. You can look at your relationship as being in a new phase, rather than off-track, and you can talk about what the new phase means to you both. If you're finding that spending time together is more difficult, try planning time for the two of you.

Managing conflict. Differences in opinion will come up as you go through changes—talking about these can help you both understand each other's perspective. It's okay to disagree. When you're making decisions together, aim for ones that are OK for both of you.

Staying close now that you're parents.

Simple things like asking your partner about the day ('What was good?' 'What wasn't so good?') can help you keep in touch. Small gestures that show your partner that you care can also do the trick. This might be just a cup of tea or allowing your partner to sleep-in when tiredness sets in.

Having a sex life. Believe it or not, most couples do get their sexual relationship back on track. Putting more time into talking and spending time together can make you feel closer, and this helps your sex life. If you're feeling too tired or too distracted to even think about sex, try talking to your partner about how you feel. Just like time together, sex might also need a bit of scheduling.

Taking control of your relationship.

You can do this by talking honestly about the changes taking place in your lives. This might mean talking about how you feel about your new roles, and what you see these roles as being.