



Tending Loves Flame: Keeping the Love Alive Handout

All relationships, even thriving positive relationships are challenged, have conflicts, fall into ruts, or struggle to maintain their connection and their magic. All relationships lose their luster at times, but that doesn't mean you can't get the shine back. You can make positive changes to inspire and reinvigorate the flames of love and attraction that brought you together.

How might you foster the loving connection between you and your partner?

- You may wish to explore individualized solutions by seeking out an objective, helping counselor, minister, or family therapist, to assist you in finding a way forward. Explore if there are marriage enrichment groups or retreats in your community or in your VA as an option available to enhance your connection.
- Intimate relationships are always a dynamic between two people, with each person having their own role in contributing to what goes well and what doesn't. If you want to move forward, be open to exploring what part you may be playing in things not going well, and what part you wish to play in shifting the dynamics in a positive direction. It takes one person to change a dynamic for both.
- Loving someone in reality, beyond the initial falling in love drama, is an act of giving. Any fool can fall in love; it's effortless. Truly loving requires giving, giving when you don't feel like it, patience when its run thin, and acceptance that your partner is the imperfect being they are.
- Keeping or enhancing the sparks of chemistry requires nurturing. If you want to keep it alive, it takes conscious effort and investment.
- Remain curious, your loved one is never fully known. Approach them as an ever-changing mystery. Invite opportunities to explore, listen, learn, and affirm who they are. How do you feel when others pay attention and are interested in who you are? Give this attention to your partner.
- Listening to your partner is another active way to bring a loving attention back to your partnership. Listen without interruption, without preparing a response, or chomping at the bit to get your point across. Listen with the intent of solely focusing on trying to hear, understand, and appreciate what the other person is



experiencing or describing. Make time in your day to check in and make special times to just talk and listen.

- Wholeheartedly pay attention, notice, and focus on, all of the qualities that you love, admire, or find attractive. Make a conscious daily effort to pay attention and communicate appreciation. Not only will it bolster your partner, it will cause you to focus more on what you love and enhance those positives.
- Engage in activities or rituals where you are spending time together. Make a regular date night where you make a conscious effort to spruce yourself up. Have time that you know is devoted to being together as well as supporting each other in having time apart.
- Physical affection and sexual intimacy feeds the overall health and vibrancy of your relationship. Affection is a healing balm, a source of comfort and soothing, a bridge to closeness, and a path that leads to intimacy and sexuality. Reach out with a touch, a kiss, a hug, a massage, and enjoy the pleasure of physical intimacy, both giving and receiving it.
- View your partner not as an extension of yourself, or through the lens of a role, but recognize them as an individual, with the awareness that you want them and don't own them. Desire can falter if you no longer purposely view them as the separate, unique, appealing, sexy, catch that they are.
- See yourself as someone of value, someone who is desirable, and someone who deserves attention. Seeing your own value and respecting yourself is attractive to your partner.
- Take a risk, reach out, make a special effort, or shake up the routine. Treat them to a special love note, a gift out of the blue, or an unexpected surprise. Be spontaneous and playful. Have some fun together!
- Remember that although you may be comforted by the security of your commitment, your relationship is not a given to take for granted. Remember the gift that you have been given, and remember the gift that you are to your partner.

**You can ignite the flames again with your decision to invest your heart,
your attention, and your energy.**

VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274