



## Building Blocks of Resilience

### Six Ways to Build a More Resilient Couple Relationship

#### MAINTAINING A HEALTHY AND STRONG RELATIONSHIP

As nearly every couple can attest, maintaining a healthy and strong couple relationship can be challenging. Whether from events occurring outside your home or from conflicts inside it, every couple's relationship will experience trials and hardships.

Being able to maintain a healthy and strong couple relationship matters on many levels. Findings from decades of social science research highlight the benefits that a supportive couple relationship can have for each partner's physical and mental health, any children in the home, and the broader community.

Importantly, the challenges that your relationship is facing—and will face in the future—do not have to drive you and your partner apart. **There are things you can start doing now as a couple to build a more resilient relationship.**

#### SIX GREAT WAYS TO BUILD A MORE RESILIENT COUPLES RELATIONSHIP

##### 1. SAY "THANK YOU" (A LOT)

Regularly express a genuine "thank you" to your partner for things they do to support you, your relationship, or your family. From "thanks for working hard to support our family" to "thanks for doing the dishes tonight," **do not underestimate the power of "thank you."**

##### 2. ADOPT A TEAM MENTALITY

Always remember that you and your partner are teammates, not opponents. What does that mean? For one, it means **whatever you are going through, it is about us, not you or me.** It is not my partner who has a problem (or my partner is the problem), but we have a problem that we are working to overcome. Go team.

##### 3. CONTAIN YOUR CONFLICTS

You are going to face conflicts. At some point in your relationship, you will argue. There will be certain topics in your relationship that can quickly trigger arguments. Although disputes are inevitable, conflicts that cause damage to your relationship are not. **You can learn effective ways to communicate, particularly on those topics where conversations seem the hardest.**

##### 4. BUILD POSITIVES INTO YOUR RELATIONSHIP

While you need to be able to manage conflict (see point #3), **do not lose sight of the 'good stuff' in your relationship.** Make a list of things you enjoy doing as a couple— from simple to sophisticated— and start building those positive times and activities into (or back into) your relationship. Fun and friendship matter.

##### 5. CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Having a strong couple relationship is not just about strengthening your interactions together but also bolstering your interactions with your community.



**Connect—together—with your community**, whether it is volunteering at an organization together, joining a kickball league, or getting a small group of couples together for a meal, playing cards, or watching a game. Resilient relationships are often ones embedded in a larger community.

## 6. LEARN

There are a lot of programs, books, and other resources to help relationships just like yours. With time, support, and mutual effort, you can reach the goals you have for your relationship. **Relationships do not magically improve on their own—discover ways to make yours stronger.**

Implementing these six practices into your relationship may seem challenging. There will always be a ‘better time’ to start to do these things. But given that future challenges will inevitably come, today is a great day to start building a more resilient couple relationship.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://www.narme.org> National Association of Relationship and Marriage Education, a national organization designed to educate and build capacity for the best-demonstrated practices and programming for couples, parenting, fatherhood, and youth development.

<http://go.illinois.edu/illinoisstrongcouples> This collaborative project between the University of Illinois Extension and HDFS Department provides Illinois residents the opportunity to participate, for free, in one of the most scientifically-supported online relationship education programs.

<http://slidingvsdeciding.blogspot.com> Website of Dr. Scott Stanley, an internationally recognized scholar on romantic relationships as well as developer of leading relationship education programming.

## EVIDENCE BASE (SELECTED)

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- Ogolsky, B. G., Monk, J. K., Rice, T. M., Theisen, J. C., & Maniotes, C. R. (2017). Relationship maintenance: A review of research on romantic relationships. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 9(3), 275-306.
- Barton, A. W., Futris, T. G., & Nielsen, R. B. (2014). With a little help from our friends: Couple social integration in marriage. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 28(6), 986.

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