

# 5 WAYS TO MAKE LOVE LAST

Steal the secrets of long-term couples who have survived tough times

We've all cooed over cute stories of couples who've spent their whole lives together and are just as in love as when they first met, but for many of us, getting those first-time butterflies back isn't so easy.

Not even celebrities are immune - from Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner calling it quits after more than a decade, to Gigi Hadid and Joe Jonas breaking our hearts, last year a whole host of celebrities headed to Splitsville.

But while many relationships crumble, what helps others withstand the tough times?

Well, the secret is not so much luck as learning what makes your relationship tick, according to Dr Jacqui Gabb, co-author of *Secrets of Enduring Love: How to make relationships last*.

But don't hate the happy couples who've cracked the code - here's how to steal their secrets to keep your relationship - and your pulse - racing...



BY LAYLA HADRANI. PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES

## #1 DATE ALL OVER AGAIN

As the months fly by, it can be easy to ditch the look-at-me LBD and stick with sweatpants. But setting regular date nights can recapture the fun energy you had when you first got together - and no, we don't mean Netflix and the couch.

For Gareth, 24, and his girlfriend Salma, the pair keep some spots just for the two of them. "We have places that we just don't go with other people - that way, they're our secret hideaways."

**SOLUTION:** Psychologist Marianne Vicelich advises couples to do the things you used to do for your partner in the first year of dating. Or better still, experiment with alphabet dating: work your way through the alphabet to plan off-the-beaten-track date nights.

Still not convinced that go-karting can strengthen your bond? Researchers found that the happiest couples can remember events more vividly when they're together than they do separately. Even more reason to book that mini-break!

## #2 SHARE LESS ONLINE

Who can't resist a sneaky #couplesgoals selfie after that weekend away?! But while every #blessed or #bae doesn't necessarily spell trouble, a recent study found that users feeling more insecure about their relationship tended to post more about it online.

Happy couples already know that the real joy of it all is being together so don't need to seek validation from others - online or otherwise.

**SOLUTION:** Hold off on finding the best filter on those veggie meatballs he's just whipped up. After all, Facebook likes don't equal relationship bliss.

## #3 GET INTIMATE

For too many couples, getting cozy with hubby is the only time they stay physically close. Bad idea. Successful partnerships prioritise not

only physical intimacy, but emotional too. "We have a greeting ritual whenever one of us leaves and enters our home and always check in with the other during the day," Sam, 29, says. "Setting up a pattern helps keep our bond strong."

A study even found that couples who had been together for more than 10 years and described themselves as still 'intensely in love' were the ones who showed the most affection towards each other. Who said *The Notebook* was unrealistic?!

**SOLUTION:** Cosy up! Regular hugging and hand-holding can help build feelings of closeness within your marriage.

## #4 COMMUNICATE

It's easy to assume you know your S.O. so well you don't need to ask what they want. But who knew regularly checking in with each other - and not just in a crisis - could be the key to staying together longer? "We spend a few minutes each day talking about anything from work to our goals," says 27-year-old Katherine.

**SOLUTION:** 23 per cent of 18 to 29 year olds in serious relationships resolved an argument using technology that they were having trouble solving face-to-face. Row-proof your relationship with Icebreak For Couples app where you can send each other icebreakers.

## #5 BRIGHTEN EACH OTHER'S DAY

Relationship expert and author of *5 Simple Steps to Take Your Marriage From Good to Great*, Dr. Terri Orbuch found in her 30-year research study that couples who make their spouse feel appreciated were the happiest.

**SOLUTION:** Orbuch advises to do one act of appreciation every single day to make your other half feel valued. The key is to make small gestures that show you're paying attention - making partners more motivated to keep the flames burning. Long-term love just a fairy tale? We think not!

### DESTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP PATTERNS TO AVOID:

TAKE HEED OF LOVE COACH AND COUPLES COUNSELLOR CATE MACKENZIE'S TOP TIPS FOR A LOVE THAT COULD RIVAL A NICHOLAS SPARKS NOVEL

#### Stonewalling

Disconnecting yourself from a tricky situation by refusing to answer questions can sabotage relationships.

#### Character assassination

Make your critiques more "I wish you could have been at my parents on time" rather than "you're always late".

#### Not planning a future

Without commitment to a shared vision, difficulties may arise.

#### Being unaccountable

Making promises you can't keep and habitual lying can be toxic.