



# THE EAP CONNECTION

## RENEWING ROMANCE AND CONNECTION

All relationships experience a natural ebb and flow to romance. Sometimes you are in sync with your partner and other times your connection may be weaker. Lots of different things can impact how closely connected you stay with your spouse. Work responsibilities, children's needs, household chores, and hobbies are just some of the common reasons couples can struggle to keep the romance alive. Often, it's a lack of dedicated time and attention on growing your relationship that is to blame. Like all worthwhile investments in life, it's important to spend time and energy on nurturing your marriage. People are prone to growing apart when they aren't actively engaged in their relationship.

If the bond with your spouse or partner isn't as strong as you would like it to be or you are looking to further strengthen your connection, there are many things you can do. Here are a few ideas:

- **Ask your partner open-ended questions**—Learning new things about your partner and understanding their world helps support a strong bond and increases intimacy. It's one of the secrets to marital success according to Dr. John Gottman, a world-renowned researcher on marriage and divorce. In *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, Dr. Gottman refers to it as building love maps. It involves asking open-ended questions to develop a deep understanding of your partner. Regularly updating your love maps or knowledge of your spouse through conversation is a great way to stay connected to them. If you are having trouble thinking of conversation starters, look around for some resources that can help, such as an online list or book of questions.
- **Experience something new together**—Boredom and monotony are two big offenders for killing romance in any relationship, especially for couples who have been together for many years. In the beginning of a relationship, everything is a new and exciting experience with your partner. With time and familiarity, the newness wears off and excitement can start to fade. Regular routines and predictable activities can distinguish the relationship spark, and things can get a bit boring. One way to spice up your relationship is to try something new together. It could be attending a cooking class, traveling to a new city, going to a ballet or musical, or some other activity that you're excited to try together. The goal is to add some excitement and interest into the time spent with your loved one.
- **Bring back an old tradition or start a new one together**—As times goes on and schedules get busy, couples can slowly stop doing the special things that once made their relationship strong. Maybe it's a note in a lunch box, time spent watching a favorite TV show together, a Saturday morning hike, a nightly conversation about the best part of your day, a weekly trip to your favorite restaurant, or any other thing that is uniquely the two of you. Bringing back these old traditions or starting new special traditions can give you something to share and enjoy with your partner, in turn building a closer connection.
- **Meet with a couples counselor**—Couples working to rekindle romance can also benefit from meeting with a counselor. This may be particularly helpful if you are struggling with deeper issues in your marriage, such as a lack of trust, commitment, or communication, which are impacting the romance. A common misapprehension of marriage counseling is that you need to be in a bad place or even near divorce in order to have a reason to go to counseling. However, that isn't the case. Couples who are looking to enhance or develop their relationship can also find a great deal of value from counseling. A counselor can offer a different perspective or new ideas to help strengthen your marital relationship. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a great resource for marital counseling.

Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (2015). *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. New York: Harmony Books.

## HOW TO USE YOUR EAP BENEFIT:

ERC: Counselors & Consultants is your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. For additional information, visit our website [ERCincorp.com](http://ERCincorp.com) or call 1-800-222-8590.