

# Renew your relationship in the new year

[the nest].com

These simple things have the power to deliver big benefits to your relationship.

By Lisa Milbrand



Most resolutions are simply made to be broken. But instead of vowing to lose 10 pounds or save more money this year, consider pledging to give your relationship a boost. Read on for expert advice on the little things you can do to live even more happily ever after.

## **Video: Best advice for couples**

**Act happy to be happy.** You don't have to be Meryl Streep to put in a convincing performance -- faking it eventually leads to actually feeling it. "People often think that they act a certain way because of the way they feel, but to a great degree, we feel because of the way we act," says happiness expert Gretchen Rubin, author of *The Happiness Project* and *Happier at Home*. "If you act in a loving, attentive and patient way, you set up habits that are loving, attentive habits."

**Get more sleep.** Being sleep-deprived has become a badge of honor, but not clocking the right amount of sleep can damage your health and your relationships. "This is something that's so basic, but it's really important to get enough sleep," Rubin says. "If you're chronically sleep-deprived, you feel edgy all the time, and that leads to fights at night when you're really tired."

**Video: Is flirting OK after marriage?**

**Solve problems so everyone wins.** “Work together to solve anything that comes up,” says Tina B. Tessina, PhD (aka “Dr. Romance”), a psychotherapist and author of *Money, Sex and Kids: Stop Fighting About the Three Things That Can Ruin Your Marriage*. “Don’t get stuck on who’s right or wrong -- instead focus on what will solve the problem. When each of you feels that the other has your best interests at heart, problems are solved not ‘my way’ or ‘your way’ but so that both are happy with the solution.”

**Give out gold stars.** Odds are, you’re already thinking about how awesome your mate is when he unloads the dishwasher or cooks up a special meal -- but you’re not sharing that positivity. “It’s important to show appreciation, to actually voice it and express it -- even when they’re doing something that’s their job,” Rubin advises. That extra positivity will make your mate feel that all those little things he does matter.

### **Bing: Renew your relationship**

**Argue for the opposition.** Next time you start making a case for how you’ve been wronged in your relationship, try switching sides and defending your mate. “You can always come up with many examples of how your husband never helps you get ready for a trip, for example -- but you need to think about the other side of the argument,” Rubin suggests. “In many cases, you can make an equally compelling counterargument. And when I start thinking about how my husband really does help us get ready for a trip, my anger goes away, and I don’t get dragged down by petty irritations of everyday life.”

**Underreact to problems.** Flipping out over that bill you forgot to pay or that massive red-wine spill your mate made on the (brand-new) white sofa will only add more drama to an already tough situation. “If one person gets very agitated, the other person picks up on that, and the tension rises,” Rubin says. “What’s done is done, and keeping a sense of humor helps make dealing with it more pleasant.”

**Prioritize your relationship.** It can be easy to get wrapped up in your never-ending to-do list, but make sure that you put at least as much time and effort into preserving the most important relationship in your life. “Your relationship is the foundation and support system for everything else,” Tessina says. “No matter what you want to accomplish, you’ll be more likely to succeed if you and your partner are on the same page about it. Learning to work together and not take your love for granted will enhance every day you’re together.”