



Top five things you need to build healthy relationships in the digital age

With the increasing role of technology in our lives, there are new demands on couples that change the ways we relate to our partners. Communication used to just mean face-to-face conversations and phone calls, now there are a myriad of ways people can be in touch with each other, from texting to online chatting, from video calling to public posts on social media. This of course isn't a bad thing - being able to get in touch with your loved ones at the click of a button has aspects of being a dream come true. But it also has some downsides, like a loss of privacy and a feeling of being always in touch and therefore never truly alone. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind and help you adapt to new communication considerations in your relationships.

1. Communicate about communication

Some people love constant texting and instant messaging and have an easy facility for this type of communication. Others find it difficult to integrate into their lives, and would prefer to use it just to make plans and leave the talking for when they're face-to-face with their partner. Sometimes, these differences are left unsaid, and people who love to text feel ignored when the person they're involved with doesn't always respond, and people who like to keep things short end up feeling under pressure to constantly engage and respond. Being up front about what kinds of e-communication expectations you have could save both of you resentment and misunderstanding.

2. Balance screen time with time spent face-to-face

As much fun as it might be to send flirty and romantic messages and pictures, email links to an article you think they might like, or post a cute video on social media, it remains important to spend time together in person. This means setting aside time when you'll go for a walk, cook dinner together, or spend a Sunday morning in bed. Screen-time is great, but for relationships to feel well rounded it needs to be balanced with time spent with your partner in real time and space.

Let us help. Access your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) 24/7 by phone, web or mobile app.
1.800.387.4765 or workhealthlife.com



3. Unplug sometimes

With smartphones as the new norm, we are available at all hours to be in contact with the outside world. This means time with our partner can be disrupted by a work email, a text message from a friend, or event invites on Facebook. There are times when this is completely appropriate - after all, it's the new normal - but it can be great when you're with your partner for both of you to turn off your devices from time to time and just be together without the possibility of interruption.

4. Spend time truly alone

Similar to the suggestion above, it can be important for people to maintain time that is quiet and really alone, independent of their partner or their other friends. With constant reachability, it can be hard for people to ever feel like they have alone time, which is integral to maintaining a healthy sense of self. This means that it can be great to leave your phone at home sometimes, or switch it onto airplane mode for a few hours a day and just be with yourself. When you spend healthy time alone you're actually more available for your partner in the long run.

5. Always respond

As much as people have different relationships to technology or preferences around how much, how, and when to use it, the reality is, these technologies are here to stay. A piece of common sense, bottom line wisdom, is when it comes to your romantic relationship; *always* send a response to your partner. It doesn't need to be immediate, and it can take the form of "I'll get back to you soon", but hearing nothing from someone you're involved with can lead to feelings of anxiety and pain. So, no matter how you do it, ensure you do it.

The dos and don'ts of an office romance

Stolen glances at the coffee machine, knowing smiles during meetings, flirty email exchanges, and sneaking out to share a lunch break – these are some of the many small pleasures of a budding office crush. When people work together, day in day out in close proximity, it's natural for feelings of affection and attraction to develop. Beyond that, it's incredibly common; in fact approximately 56% of business professionals have had office romances. With the rise of social media and texting, it becomes that much easier to begin an office romance, as sending an emoticon or a cute message is as simple as the click of a button. Whether you're participating in innocent office flirtation, or moving towards an ongoing serious relationship, it can be dangerous territory to navigate. Here are some office romance dos and don'ts for you to keep in mind as you dip your toe into the waters of mixing love and work.

Do: Seek and understand your organization's policies

Do your homework; seek out and understand the policy on workplace romance at your organization. Are romantic relationships permitted in your workplace? Are employees obligated to tell their manager(s) about the relationship? If you're unclear about the rules at your company or need advice, speak in confidence to Human Resources.

Let us help. Access your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) 24/7 by phone, web or mobile app.
1.800.387.4765 or workhealthlife.com



Do: Be up front about your expectations

Is this just a casual fling or are you hoping for something more serious? Being honest about what you are looking for can prevent suffering and misunderstandings down the road.

Don't: Engage in public displays of affection

It can be hard to keep your feelings and desires under wraps, but when you're working together it's very important to do so. Seeing people touching or kissing can make your colleagues uncomfortable, and can definitely lead to gossip.

Do: Think about the implications of a break-up

It's no fun to imagine something ending during all the fluttery feelings of excitement that mark the beginning of a relationship. When you work together though, you need to think about this. Will you be able to continue working with your ex? How will bad blood impact your coworkers or your clients? If it ends: remain professional. It will be much harder to go through the painful breakup when you need to see the other person daily, so when you enter into this type of situation, ask yourself if that's something you can handle.

Don't: Talk about it with your colleagues

Even if they're some of your closest friends, especially at the beginning, it is in your best interest not to seek counsel from your coworkers. They may have your best interests at heart and yet still have trouble containing the news when talk over drinks turns to workplace gossip.

Do: Stay focused on your work

Office romances can make the workplace a much more fun and stimulating place to be – you'll definitely look forward to going to work in a whole new way. As much as possible though, try to avoid yielding to the distraction that an office romance provides: focus on your work, and let the relationship happen outside the office as much as possible. This can be good to discuss with your partner, and mutually agree upon a way to keep things under wraps at work.

Work can indeed be a great place to meet people – you already have a lot in common and can likely support each other with your career goals, and the pressure cooker environment of an office can be useful for seeing all the positive and negative character traits in a person. It's a little bit more delicate than other romances of course, so keep your wits about you as you enter into a relationship with a colleague – and have fun!

Let us help. Access your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) 24/7 by phone, web or mobile app.
1.800.387.4765 or workhealthlife.com

