

Living with a chronic illness

Living with a chronic illness can, at times, be hard. Maintaining strong, positive relationships can be even harder! Being kind to each other during times of high stress takes work.

Guilt, shame, resentment. These emotions are common among all couples and especially of people living with chronic illness. Evidence suggests that these negative emotions can have a negative impact on your health.

Ignoring relationships issues around intimacy and connection is not uncommon among couples, and getting help can be seen as a sign of weakness.

Research suggests that taking a proactive approach to improving relationship health can have positive health outcomes for people living with chronic illness and their loved ones.

The Gottman Institute identifies successful couples as being 'intimately familiar' with each other's world, and understanding each other's goals, worries and hopes. The following tips are designed to help you focus on strengthening and improving your relationship health.

Tips for strengthening and improving your relationship health

- Think of three things that you appreciate about your partner/loved one.
- Tell your loved one what it is that you appreciate about them.
- Make time to connect with your partner; choose a simple activity such as cooking a meal or reading the paper and do it together.
- Consider the things you enjoyed together when you first met and re-create a version of this. Could be as simple as watching a movie together or going out for coffee.
- Consider the top five moments of your day and make time to share these with your partner.
- Show kindness and affection with a hug, caring words or by saying thank you.

If you would like to see a Relationships Counsellor contact **1300 364 277** or visit:

Humankind-relationships.com.au

"What you do everyday matters more than what you do once in a while"

The Gottman Institute

Relationships Australia.

