Top Vibe Magazine

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How to be a better partner page 9

HAPPY Valentine's DAY



FEBRUARY

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Editors Note

February is the month of love – a time for Valentine's Day and remembering love – emphasizing the importance of love in our lives. It's not very unusual for us to fail to put 2 & 2 together, but love and grief are intimately related. You can't have one without the other.

On Valentine's Day, observed on February 14 each year, lovers spoil each other and express just how much they love and appreciate their better half. ... The day was first associated with romantic love in the circle of Geoffrey Chaucer in the High Middle Ages, when the tradition of courtly love flourished.

There are certain things that mark a year and make each month meaningful for various things. For instance, January reminds us of new beginnings, a chance to start off fresh, but also of snow, cold winter days and lots of comforting food to warm the coldness. February is the month right after it and while nothing in particular changed regarding the weather, people do feel very different about this month. It's still cold but there are numerous events and holidays that warm up your heart and soul and bring you closer to your friends, family and all the others around you.

CELEBRATE

As the month of love, February is the time when we celebrate Valentine's Day and we make time for remembering love, we emphasize on the importance of having someone special in our lives and how they make everything better. While this month is associated primarily with Valentine's Day, the journey of love doesn't stop there. It's the month where the Random Acts of Kindness movement is held where you are encouraged to do something for other people, randomly, and make their winter more bearable. This boosts faith in good deeds, in being humane, helpful and thoughtful. The International Friendship Month is, you guessed it, February, and the love doesn't stop there either.

RELATIONSHIPS

All these days and weeks that celebrate our relationships with the people around us give us the chance to make up for the lost time. To show we care and we remember all the good things they have done for us. And while we should be doing this throughout the year, February is the month when we take a step further and think of appreciation gifts to show this love. It's lovely to see hearts and chocolate everywhere (and heart-shaped chocolate), people planning getaway weekends, special dinners, making restaurant reservations and some marriage proposal here and there. You have to admit it's charming.

ROMANCE

Although this all is a wonderful way to uplift the spirit of the people and make them feel better, we have to remember that romance and to be romantic does not equate to expensive or materialistic items as presents. Tiny, personal gestures such as sending the favorite flowers, or cooking their favorite dish from time to time are as good as (if not better) gifts and presents in showing love. Try gifting outside-of-the-box-presents that will set a different vibe in your relationship. People show you their love in different ways. It is in all those details from knowing your favorite flowers to playing your favorite song. The important thing is that they try and do all those things that give you butterflies. Sometimes simplicity is the key to your partner's heart. Make sure to unlock it this February and relish it all year long.





Editor's picture: Charmaine Britz
Photographer: Charmaine Janse van Rensburg

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Top Vibe Magazine

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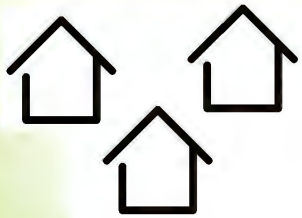


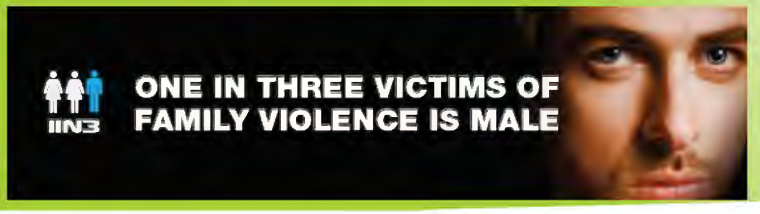
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5 Overlooked Reasons Why You Need Air Conditioning For Your Home

This is how air conditioners help us in everyday life.

Humidity Causes Damage To Your House and Belongings. ...
Humidity Brings Unwanted Guests into Your Home. ...
Humidity Can Cause Toxicity in your Home. ...
Humidity Can Make You Sick. ...
Humidity Can Make You Unhappy. ...
Air Conditioners Are Good For You.

1. Humidity Causes Damage To Your House and Belongings
A few weeks ago, the Telegraph reported that damage had befallen one of Raphael's priceless works of art. The culprit? A faulty air conditioning unit. It's truly a shame that so much damage can be done just because the importance of air conditioning wasn't recognised. Interestingly, it was the popularity of the painting that created the problem, as hundreds of warm and humid bodies crowded around it, something the designer of the air conditioner did not correctly account for.

That's a perfect example of how small deviations in heat and humidity can cause enormous damage to objects. It's for the same reason that guitars and other sensitive items or even your kitchen cabinets must be kept away from high (and low) humidity conditions: certain materials are very sensitive to it. There are many horror stories to point to, but what is clear is that ignoring your humidity levels can put your furniture and belongings in serious danger. If you ever want to move, it can also lower the resale value of your home.

2. Humidity Brings Unwanted Guests into Your Home
Health Canada sees humidity as a major factor in pest control. According to some studies, dust mite infestations are often cured completely simply by reducing the humidity below 50%.

In addition, high humidity levels increase organic decay which bugs and all manner of things love. Think of it this way: by letting humidity levels rise in the summer, you're providing a major food source to the neighbourhood's small animals. They're going to visit, and when they see the humidity levels in your home, they'll want to stay.

3. Humidity Can Cause Toxicity in your Home
It's scary but true: water is going to draw some toxins out of your furniture and home. In fact, higher humidity levels increase the rates at which dangerous chemicals like formaldehyde seep out of things and into the air.

These chemicals are found in many things: couches, lamps, the metal in your stove — it's very difficult to have a modern life without them. So when you live in a home without an air conditioner, you're taking a risk, and likely taking more of these chemicals into your system.

Additionally, many moulds are only found in places with high humidity. Mould needs water to grow, and if a room is humid, you'll usually start seeing mould spores take root pretty quickly. Mould and humans often do not get along, as many moulds

4. Humidity Can Make You Sick
And that brings us to one of the biggest reasons we can think of to have an air conditioner. People have a general sense that low humidity in the winter is bad for your health, but did you know that high humidity can also wreak havoc with your immune system?

In some cases, the health problems are the result of allergies to the increased levels of dirt and pests in the air, but many people may simply be having a normal human reaction to increased levels of mould spores in the air. Many doctors will recommend that their patients who experience respiratory issues minimize the humidity in their home, usually with an air conditioner.

5. Humidity Can Make You Unhappy
For many years, scientists have been suspicious that humidity levels are correlated in some way with mood. In 1975, Persinger et al. showed that there is a significant relationship between high humidity levels and low mood. But let's explore that idea a little more.

It seems likely that, since high humidity causes many negative experiences for many people (see reasons above), people just naturally feel less happy because their lives are that much worse. Plus, how often have you been on a hot bus and just felt miserable?



6 Steps to Creating a Monthly Household Budget



Making a budget is a key piece of a strong financial foundation. Having a budget helps you manage your money, control your spending, save more money, pay off debt, or stay out of debt.

Without an accurate picture of what's coming into and going out of your bank account, you can easily rely on credit cards and loans to pay your bills. If you already have a budget, now's a good time to update it.

Download and Print a Budget Worksheet
Use a worksheet to help get started in order to complete all the steps below. You can also create your budget worksheet using free spreadsheet programs, including the ones offered by Vertex42 and It's Your Money, or even paper and pen.

List Your Income:
Add up all reliable sources of income: wages from a job, alimony, child support, and more. Notice that word reliable. If you sometimes get cash from outside jobs or hobbies, but it's not on a regular basis, don't put the money down as income in your budget. Your budget should be a document you can depend on.

If you're self-employed or have a fluctuating income, use an average monthly income or an estimate of the income you expect to receive in a particular month.

Add up Your Expenses:
Some of your monthly expenses are fixed—mortgage/rent, property taxes, child support, and alimony—while others may vary, such as electricity, water, and groceries. List all the fixed expenses and the amount of the expense.

For your variable expenses, write the maximum amount you plan to spend in that category or the amount you expect your bill to be. For example, you might plan to spend R500 on groceries and R150 on gas.

Use your bank and credit card statements to help you figure out what you typically spend each month and to make sure you're not leaving out spending in any categories.

Some of your expenses don't occur each month. But accounting for those periodic expenses in your monthly budget can make it easier to afford them when they're due. Divide yearly expenses by 12 and semiannual expenses by six to come up with the monthly amount to account for in those categories.

Calculate Your Net Income:
Your net income is what you have left over after all the bills are paid. You want this to be a positive number so you can put it toward your debt. Calculate your net income by subtracting your expenses from your monthly income. Write down the number, even if it's negative.

Adjust your budget:
If your net income is negative, it means you've budgeted to spend more than your income. You'll have to correct this. Otherwise, you'll run into trouble during the month.

Variable expenses are typically the first places you can adjust spending, e.g., eating out, hobbies, and entertainment. Even some of your fixed expenses can be adjusted, e.g., by reducing your cable or phone bill, canceling your gym membership, or not taking a vacation this year.

Evaluate your spending using a "wants vs. needs" analysis. Reduce or eliminate spending in those "want" areas to make more room for the things you "need" to spend money on.

Track Your Spending:

Throughout the month, track your actual spending against what you budgeted. If you go over budget, doing this will help you figure out where you spent more money. In the future, you can take greater care not to overspend in that area. Or you may need to adjust your budget to compensate for the additional spending. If you increase your budget in one area, decrease it in another area to keep your budget balanced.

Do not buy things that you don’t need.



Budget

11 Simple Date Night Ideas That Don't Suck

Are date nights important in marriage?
Date night helps couples remember why they first fell in love, and it lays the foundation for reigniting passion. Regular date nights also help to build resilience to carry your marriage relationship during the challenging times.

For parents in the trenches, it is so easy to forget about taking time to connect with our spouses in the midst of all the things we have going on with school, work, activities, running a busy home, and the sometimes herculean effort of getting all the kids to bed. You're not alone if date night is one of the first things you push to the bottom of the to-do list.

That's a nice pour…
PlanHero™ was created to give parents time for what matters, and whether it's spending time making memories or strengthening bonds, everyone needs a break from the chaos of life to focus on the basics. But how much time are we spending alone with our significant other? Not enough, according to a recent Care.com study. 85% of parents wish they could go on more dates, and 88% of parents report feeling closer to their partner after date night.

This makes so much sense. How likely are you to feel warm and fuzzy toward your husband after climbing Mt. Laundry at 11 PM versus after eating a nice dinner out? Just the idea of wearing something besides yoga pants and eating food someone else cooked for me is swoon-worthy, and apparently date nights are more important for our relationship than we think, which is enough of a reminder for me.
Years ago I hit a point in my motherhood career where I was teetering dangerously toward burnout. I knew it was bad when I saw myself as the perpetual bad cop and enforcer of rules. I felt resentful when the kids would shriek Daddyyyyyyy! as my husband entered the house, so much so I half-expected to see a cape unfurling in the wind behind him, his fists firmly planted on his hips as he announced (in my head) that Super Fun Daddy was home. I started viewing myself as the wizened shrew in the background, shaking my wooden spoon and scolding everyone in sight.

In theory, I have always known we shouldn't take our kids' behavior personally, and being the bad cop sometimes comes with the territory. Of course, in theory I also know it's possible to drop all the baby weight by eating less and doing planks while helping the kids with homework.

I started fantasizing about my husband coming home, presenting me with a gin and tonic, my updated passport, a briefcase of unmarked bills and the instructions to "go get lost for a while." I feel it's imperative to be specific with one's daydreams just in case the whole Secret visualize-it-and-it-will-happen thing is really true. And frankly, this fantasy was an upgrade from the one where I faked my own death and ran away to a tropical island to operate a shrimp shack. It's important to be realistic.
In an effort to stave off my premature demise, my husband arranged for us to go away for the weekend. We found victims good friends to take the kids while we escaped to a resort in the desert. For two blissful days we were a just a couple. Two people dancing under the stars, lingering over an expensive dinner, with no worries over whether or not the bedroom door was locked. I had to be peeled away, my arms wrapped around a palm tree, when the time came to



Our children were not as rejuvenated by our decision to have adult time. "It's not fair! We are a family! You can't go places without us!" Still heady from the alone time, I simply smirked. My ten year-old blinked at me, quiet for a moment.

Free time is one of the first casualties of fatherhood. While this shouldn't come as a surprise, it requires a lot of lifestyle recalibration, particularly when it comes to spending quality time with your spouse. One ritual that's less frequent: date nights. But that doesn't mean they're any less important. In fact, time alone with your partner — and coming up with fun date ideas — becomes even more necessary during parenthood, as it provides you with a one-on-one moment to connect and remind yourselves why you agreed to bring life into the picture in the first place. In short, date nights earn capital for your marriage.

Date nights, however, take on a lot more weight when you have kids because, well, they're more or less your one escape from family routines. So, the fun date ideas or romantic date ideas you concoct better be worth it — or at least have some thought behind them. That's why we spoke to a variety of busy parents about their favorite date ideas and why they found them so entertaining. We hope they give you some inspiration for your next night out — or in.

Try to make a date night once a month.9



How to be a better partner



Romantic relationships are dynamic. They continuously change, reflecting circumstances, stresses, and the everyday ups and downs experienced by both partners. What happens to "me" and to "you" ultimately affects "us." The healthiest relationships have partners who routinely (if subconsciously) check in with themselves, their partner, and their relationship to see how things are going and to make changes as necessary.

How can you respond to relationship changes? A great starting place is to evaluate your own contributions to your relationship. What are you doing that helps—or hurts—your relationship happiness? How are your actions and beliefs influencing the quality of your and your partner's everyday interactions?

Scientific evidence supports the idea that each partner is responsible for the health of his or her relationship. To do your part, consider these simple, empirically-based changes as a guide toward a happier and healthier partnership:

Get more sleep. Taking care of yourself is a win-win for you and your relationship, and sleep is at the top of the list. Not only can sleep deprivation affect your energy, mental alertness, and mood, but it reduces glucose levels, which adversely affects self-control. And self-control plays a big role in relationship success: Those with higher self-control are more able to respond in constructive ways to their partners, and the more self-control couples have, the higher their relationship quality tends.
Take action. Certain behaviors make a difference in relationship happiness. These maintenance behaviors often come naturally, but intentional efforts to engage in them could benefit relationships. Research (Stafford, 2010) underscores the power of these seven behaviors in particular in predicting relationship satisfaction, liking, love, and commitment:
Positivity. Express happiness and pleasure when spending time together.
Understanding. Listen, forgive, apologize, and refrain from judgment.
Giving assurance. Talk about the future; remind your partner what he/she means to you.
Self-disclosing. Share feelings and encourage your partner to do the same.
Openness. Share what you need or want in the relationship.
Sharing tasks. Equitably share responsibilities (e.g., family, household, relationship).
Involve networks. Spend time with your partner's friends and family.
Express your gratitude. Feeling grateful is one thing, but telling your partner is another. Do you express your gratitude? It turns out that sharing your feelings of gratitude is linked to positive partner perceptions and a willingness to voice relationship concerns which helps maintain healthy relationships.
Avoid hunger. New plans for physical health and wellness often involve diet changes (eat more veggies, etc.), but do what you can to avoid hunger. New evidence suggests that restrictive dieting can have a negative effect on relationship quality. When you're hungry, anger and aggression are more likly in relationships, these "hangry" moments do little to promote relationship well-being.
Focus on humility. Help your relationship by keeping a check on your ego. Not only are humble people evaluated more

Positivity. Express happiness and pleasure when spending time together.
Understanding. Listen, forgive, apologize, and refrain from judgment.
Giving assurance. Talk about the future; remind your partner what he/she means to you.
positively as potential relationship partners, but humility seems to be an important ingredient for relationship success (Van Tongeren, Davis, & Hook, 2004). It may improve relationships through its association with forgiveness, a powerful tool for healthy relationships.
Spend quality time together. Much anecdotal evidence suggests that spending more time together increases relationship satisfaction, but only recently has research scrutinized whether time really does increase satisfaction, or whether perhaps relationship satisfaction increases time spent together. Contrary to widespread belief, long-distance relationships are no different in their relationship quality (Gulner & Swensen, 1995), despite the idea that (by definition) couples in long-distance relationships spend less time together. The results suggest we might attend more to the quality of the time spent with our partner, rather than the quantity.
Be kind to yourself. To be the best partner you can be, start by being kind to yourself. Scientific evidence is accumulating in support of the idea that self-compassion is a wonderful foundation for a healthy partnership. Self-compassion is a habit of gentleness towards oneself during times of failure, inadequacy, and imperfection. Evidence shows that self-compassion predicts the types of behaviors that translate into healthier relationships, such as offering care and concern for a partner. Working on ourselves can benefit our relationships.



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GREAT MOMENTS AT THEIR GREATEST

VAALMALL

Movie Review



POPPIE NONGENA

★★★★

★★★★

Poppie Nongena tells the moving story of a South African isiXhosa mother, whose life revolves around finding stability for her family during a period of insufferable upheaval in the country when African women were forced, by arrests, fines and forced removal, to leave their homes and resettle in remote areas designated as black homelands.

When her husband, Stone, became too ill to work, Poppie was deemed by the law to be an "illegal" resident in her own country. She engaged in a desperate struggle, using every means at her disposal to remain with her children.

Don't forget to watch tis movie, and you are going to shed a tear.



GREAT MOMENTS AT THEIR GREATEST

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