

A Proactive Approach to Your Relationship

Written by Michele Owens, LAMFT

In our present culture there is a lot of emphasis put on relationships and there are many relationships that don't last. On average, most couples will wait up to six years from the first signs of difficulty to seek help (Dr. John Gottman, Gottman Institute). There are a multitude of reasons why many of us take a backseat approach to our relationships. However, much like exercise, in order to strengthen relationships we must devote daily attention, modifications, and support to the people in our lives. It's the small, daily practices that can make impactful differences overtime.

Whether you are in a long-term relationship or are just embarking on your journey with a significant other, taking a proactive approach to your relationship can have a positive effect on both of your lives. Every person has unique qualities and this makes each relationship look different, there are, however, some basic principles to taking a proactive approach with your partner that apply to all relationships:

- **Realistic Expectations:** Accepting our significant other for whom they are, not what we want them to be.
- **Communication:** Take the time to talk with one another. This means, setting aside other tasks (cell phones, video games, work, Angry Birds-you know who you are! 😊) and truly listening to the other person, offering insight, asking questions, making eye-contact.
- **Flexibility:** Relationships ebb and flow, so must we.
- **Balanced Lifestyle:** Take care of yourself. Exercise together, get enough sleep, and eat healthily. Happiness is contagious!
- **Be Yourself:** You are unique, wonderful and have amazing qualities to offer to your partner-don't forget it! *

Interested in taking a proactive approach to your relationship? Join Us! Relate Counseling Center is now offering a couple's Prepare/Enrich Workshop. We are thrilled to be part of such a positive component of relationship building. Relationships in any stage of life are welcome-premarital, marital, long-term relationships, etc. If you would like more information please call Relate Counseling Center at 952-932-7277 or visit our website:

[www.relatemn.org/Couples Workshop](http://www.relatemn.org/Couples%20Workshop)

We Hope to See You There!

* (The above list was compiled from an article written by Joyce Woodford, Kansas State University Counseling Services)