

Making Date Night Count

Is it date night tonight? Are you excited and ready to head out for a romantic evening of fun and great conversation? Or...uh oh...are things going something like this?

Chinese or Italian? I don't know...what do you want? Maybe we should just order in and watch Netflix.

Hold up! Don't take date night (or date afternoon) for granted. The special, "on purpose" time we spend with our partners, doing the things we enjoy, really matters. And while sometimes just being together after a crazy week is enough, there are definitely ways to make your couple time really count.

Novelty Can Jumpstart Your Romance

For instance, have you considered going outside the box and trying something totally new, different, or exciting on a date? At least one study suggests that this could help your relationship! The research showed that couples who did the same activities all the time and rated their partnership as low on "fun" were less satisfied in their relationships. Meanwhile, people who "mixed it up" with new and different activities with their partners were happier.

Why not try something like this yourself? It might be taking a cooking class, ice skating, zip lining, or learning to use a map and compass. There really are a million possibilities. What matters is that it's something you haven't done before or recently, and it's also great if you're learning together.

Check in With Each Other First

However, don't book that couples' skydiving package without talking to your spouse! Before "jumping in," you'll want to make sure that both of you are on board. Another recent study looking at how couples spent their free time found that this kind of "date" doesn't help so much if one member has been dragged along, or if both people know that an activity is really only "for" one of them.

The relationship will probably benefit most when you're both genuinely excited to do whatever it is, or at least think it will be great for the two of you. Also, remember that if shared activities end up being stressful (like arguing your way through salsa dancing lessons), they're not likely to be a love booster.

Quieter Activities Matter Too

Of course, not everything you do with your spouse, fiancé, boyfriend or girlfriend has to be new, exciting, or amazing. Couples in the second study also mentioned things as simple as watching TV or going for a run together. No-frills activities like these can be really satisfying, especially when we feel close to our loved ones and share meaningful conversation.

This date night, you could try going trampolining or learning to play Dungeons and Dragons, or you could still enjoy that dinner out—but whatever it is, do it with purpose and decision. Make sure you're both excited and interested and that you're ready to connect, have fun, and really be together. (And put away that cell phone!) We think you're likely to see some rewards.

References:

Girme, Y. U., Overall, N. C., & Faingataa, S. (2014). "Date nights" take two: The maintenance function of shared relationship activities. *Personal Relationships* (21), 125-149. DOI: [10.1111/per.12020](https://doi.org/10.1111/per.12020)
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/per.12020/abstract;jsessionid=BCF00FC68A20B37E203759284D8B92>
