

# New Year's Co-Resolutions for Couples

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By Staff

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One way to ensure that New Year's resolutions last beyond January is to involve a partner. Lifestyle change isn't easy, but making it a team effort can boost enthusiasm and keep motivation from fading. Good for individual goals, but critical when the resolutions are about the partnership, itself.

The new year is an excellent opportunity for refreshing a relationship by creating several couples' resolutions. Then promise together to put them into permanent practice.

Some suggestions:

## **1. Resolve to create a partnership atmosphere.**

Most couples don't realize how often they send each other little messages of rejection, blame or neglect. Every look, tone of voice, and gesture communicates one person's regard for the other in that moment. Of course, when two people spend a lot of time together, there will be plenty of moments of "I'm taking you for granted" or "I'm comfortable showing you my ugly side." But these can become the normal way of relating to each other, which leaves each person craving affection. This leads to resentment and further withdrawal or negativity.

As an exercise, try imagining what theme music would fit each partner interaction. Would it be tense? Melodic? Playful? A death march? Or maybe there would be no music; no real emotion or meaningful conversation, just bland coexistence. Changing the "music" to one befitting partnership requires that both people acknowledge their parts and play together.

Which leads to ...

## **2. Resolve to make more date time.**

Having regular date nights can help keep the romance alive. But there is the risk of prescheduled nights becoming tedious and obligatory. They can also be few and far between. Changing a relationship lifestyle requires daily practice of one's "date face."

Think back to what wooing entailed: showing active interest in the other person, including making his/her enjoyment a top priority; being generous in delivering positive messages and sensitive when delivering negative ones; surprising with gifts and attractive revelations about oneself. That last one helps to excite the falling-in-love process and can equally invigorate older relationships. Because delightful surprises are an energy boost and antidote to boring predictability.

So for couples who think they know everything about each other, bring back the date faces. Frequently, creatively.

**3. Resolve to communicate from the heart.**

Too often couples get trapped in their anger games. They become so well practiced at the give and take of blame and defensiveness, there seems to be no way out. The key is to help each other understand that beneath the anger is almost always an emotion that's more loving and lovable.

But in order to drop defenses and be vulnerable for the sake of heartfelt communication, both people need to feel safe. Once again, a joint effort is required. Rather than getting caught up in the heated conversation topic, focus on how the interaction is going. Move from adversarial, self-centered goals like winning or proving a point, to relationship goals of supporting, protecting and understanding each other.

The common link is cooperation; partnership goals can't be achieved by one person. So plan to change the calendars, and the year, together.

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