



# SPARKS!

Want more of 'em in your relationship? We give you the Love Hall of Fame: After years of getting the goods from countless experts, studies, and real people (that means you), we've netted the tips that continuously bubble to the top—because they work.

## **5 Everyday Habits That Boost Your Bond**

**1. Hold each other.** No, really. Even a five-minute snug sesh on the couch or in bed at night releases the love hormone, oxytocin.

**2. Make out, man!** The hello-goodbye peck? Lame-o. French kissing—even just for a few seconds—triggers the release of oxytocin (again!) and hormone-regulating proteins in both your bods.

**3. Schedule sex.** The sweet spot for bonding benefits is once a week. One study found a weekly romp generates as much pleasure as a windfall of \$50,000 would!

**4. Double-date with a happy couple.** It's about mirror neurons—that's science jargon for witnessing and internalizing the other couple's romantic energy.

**5. Have a signature ritual.** Experts say that regularly making time for activities exclusive to you two (say, a Sunday morning run) ratchets up feel-good vibes and signals that you're both invested in making your partnership work.

## **3 Shortcuts to Great Communication**

**1. Watch movies. Discuss.** Research shows that chatting about fictional film relationships is as effective as couples counseling (!!)—not to mention way more fun. And way less pricey. Pour vino, hit play.

**2. Say thank you.** He stopped by the drugstore for you or let you choose the restaurant (twice in a row). Be grateful for those not-so-random acts of kindness. Not only does appreciation—a word or a kiss—more than double your chances of future favors, but research shows it pays off long-term when bigger problems arise.

**3. Reach out and text.** Touch base with a simple message or two a day. Think short, sweet, and a statement rather than a question (so there's no pressure to respond). When you do need actual info, add warmth to the ask. I.e., not just "When will you be home?" Tack on a kiss or heart emoji at the end. Small tweak, big difference.

## **3 One-Word Things You Should Do as a Duo**

**1. Meditate.** Your heartbeats and breath will be in sync, making you feel more connected, and meditation is shown to put you in an empathetic, generous state of mind—perfect for sharing a chill evening together. As for its effect on sex, well, just consider where the *Kama Sutra* came from.

**2. Cook.** It's cozy and romantic, and you can eat healthily more easily than you can in a restaurant. As for choice of cuisine, studies show that spicy foods increase blood flow, which can boost arousal—Mexican tonight, anyone?

**3. Vacation.** And make it a beach getaway while you're at it. Taking time off is essential to your mental health, and studies show that being near a body of water has a stress-reducing effect. Plus: Couples who trek together tend to have more sex together.

### BONUS SEX TIP!

Use lube—even if you think you don't need it. A whopping half of all men and women say lube makes it easier for them to orgasm. Enough said.