



Relationships and Difficult Times

How do you live in a relationship during difficult times?

This is not an easy question to answer. Because for those of you who are married or in long-term partnerships, you probably have a mindset of 'being there for each other for the long term'. And it might come as a surprise to find yourself trying to figure out how to survive these stormy days together.

If you find yourself in this situation, try stepping outside of your situation and look at problems objectively (it's like looking from the outside in). You might not have imagined that there would be times when your relationship is so affected by things not in your control. And as humans, we often want to fix the situation immediately without giving it much thought.

Try asking yourself the following questions such as:

What can I change?

What can I adjust and what can I remedy, or fix?

At times, especially in our current environment, you may feel that you have absolutely no control over the situation. Often, the only recourse you may have is to adjust/realign your attitude to problems – for example, not to make mountains out of molehills. However, if, on the other hand, you have some level of control or influence over the problem, you are in a much better position to fix it.

It's interesting to note, generally, the greater amount of distress generated by difficult situations, the less control you have over the problem. But when plans are drawn up and implemented with a team approach, you will feel a lot less stress about problems. By taking action towards problems, you may feel more motivated and less stressed (Terrill, 2003).

Working it out Together

It may be helpful for couples to identify some specific goals to work toward (Sinclair and Monk, 2004). It is recommended brainstorming possible solutions to the problem and or situation, agree on these solutions, stick to them and practice them. It is also recommended that couples share or work towards finding new avenues or interests to keep the relationship feeling alive (Sinclair and Monk, 2004).

It is also important to ensure that couples are active participants in the relationship - being heard and acknowledged is an important part of this process (Wheeler & Christensen, 2002).

Relationship Matters aims to promote healthy, respectful and fulfilling relationships within the Victorian community.

We recognise relationships in all their diversity and our services are offered to individuals, couples and families regardless of, gender, religious affiliation, race, cultural heritage, sexual orientation or economic circumstance.

If you need support, please contact us on 1300 543 396 or visit relationshipmatters.com.au

J. L. Terrill (2003). Coping with Stress in Difficult Times. NASSP Bulletin, vol. 77, 550: pp. 89-93. , First Published Feb 1,.

Wheeler, J., & Christensen, A. (2002). Creating a context for change: Integrative couple therapy. In A. L. Vangelisti & H. T. Reis(Eds.), Stability and change in relationships: Advances in personal relationships (pp. 285–305). New York: Cambridge University Press.