



52<sup>®</sup> Ways

*to Stay in Love*

Always

*by* Lynn Gordon





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*By* Lynn Gordon

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**52 Ways to Stay in Love Always**

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Get Away!

Every once in a while, plan a weekend away. Whether it's to camp in the great outdoors or stay in a B&B, an escape from your mundane life is healthy, and allows you to be in new and neutral environs. Getting away can be the energy jump start you both need. Also, it gives you time to be together away from every day stresses. Sometimes it's on weekends away that you remember what it was you adored about each other in the first place. As soon as you get back, make reservations for another trip in a couple of months so you can look forward to it.

The background is a light green color with a repeating pattern of white envelopes and cards. Some envelopes are open, showing a red heart inside. Some cards have a small red heart and some have placeholder text. The overall theme is sharing and love.

Share

Chores

The root of many squabbles is that one person feels they do more of the work than the other. Talk openly about what you both perceive and how you would like the work to be redistributed. There may be things you enjoy doing that your partner doesn't, so things don't need to be split exactly down the middle—they just need to feel equitable to you both.

The background is a light pink color with a repeating pattern of hearts and keys. The hearts are in various shades of red, pink, and orange, some with a grid or plaid pattern. Each heart has a black keyhole in the center and a green keyhole-shaped handle at the top. The keys are a solid green color and are scattered horizontally across the page. Two white, slightly tilted rectangular banners are overlaid on the pattern, containing the text.

Become  
Best Friends

People sometimes fall in love very quickly, but it takes more work to become best friends. Be there for each other in times of emotional crisis and celebration. Talk to each other about what else it would take to become each other's best friend. The bond of lovers can be temperamental, but basing a relationship on a solid friendship that continues to grow over time is powerful and almost certain to extend the life of a relationship.

The background is a light green color with a repeating pattern of white speech bubbles. Each bubble contains a red heart. Some hearts are solid red, while others have a red and white checkered pattern. The speech bubbles are scattered across the page, creating a dense, decorative background.

Don't

Mind-Read

**Remember: It is unfair to expect your partner to read your mind and figure out your needs without employing the old-fashioned method of communicating with them directly. It may lose some of the romantic mythical mystique of your lover just intuitively knowing all your needs, but it's better than not getting your needs met at all.**

The background of the image is a repeating pattern of the letters 'X' and 'O' in a light red color, arranged in a grid. Interspersed within this pattern are several solid red hearts. The text is overlaid on this pattern in two white, slightly tilted rectangular boxes.

Tokens

*of* Affection

**Keep a supply of tokens of affection that can be administered to your honey on a moment's notice as the need arises. You might try candy, love notes, poems, or custom IOUs for meaningful treats of your partner's choosing—like massages, a special outing, or their choice of movie or dinner. Take special note of what gives your partner joy, and assemble a suitable collection of tokens of affection for future disbursement.**



Reach Out!

In spite of the all-too-human reflex to withdraw into a defensive posture when hurt or misunderstood, try to stay in contact with your partner enough to share your feelings before nursing your wounds. This at least gives them enough information to know how to reach back out to you. If you can stay in contact long enough to communicate why you feel a need to withdraw, you stand a much better chance of getting the comfort you need from your partner.

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Relationship

Mentors

**Identify people that you both trust and respect as relationship mentors. Whether a therapist, a close friend, or a sage family member, someone (or another couple) whose wisdom on relationships inspires you would make a great choice. Think of these people not as referees or tiebreakers in a conflict but as guides that you can get real with when you need a little help navigating unfamiliar territory or overcoming roadblocks.**



Show Up!

**If your relationship really is important to you, then make room for quality time together, make it a high priority, and show up physically and emotionally. Day in and day out. That commitment and stamina will go far in building a relationship that serves you both.**

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Create Your

Own World

**Create a physical manifestation of your relationship through photos and artifacts that remind you of what you share. Make space emotionally and physically to embrace your partnership, and fill that space with happy memories, adventures, ideas, and hopes for the future together. Enjoy the history of your relationship in your environment. Home is a state of mind and may ultimately come to mean any place where you are together.**



Respect

**An essential attribute of any healthy relationship is mutual respect. Respect each other's emotional needs, interests, and differences, and appreciate what you each bring to the relationship. Find ways to translate that respect into meaningful action.**



Creative

Collaboration

**Undertake a long-term creative project that you can both sink your teeth into, like painting a mural on the bedroom wall or starting a relationship journal where you can each write entries as the mood moves you. From love notes to photos to tales of your joint adventures, the journal will be a wonderful chronicle of your relationship to add to and flip through on a rainy afternoon.**

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Time Out

Knowing when to step back and take a walk or night apart is as important as having good communication skills. If a situation has gotten so volatile that there is no way to have a constructive conversation, then a time-out may be in order. Both of you have the right to decide a time-out is necessary and have your decision respected as a temporary cease-and-desist order. Before you part, agree on a time to reconnect and through what medium you'll communicate.



We've Got

*the* Power

**How is power distributed in your relationship? When does one of you have more of it than the other, and what factors shift that balance? Do you agree on the definition of power and understand how you both characterize your individual relationships to it? More important than how power is divided in your relationship is the awareness you both have of it and how able you are to share it in different situations.**

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Pick *and* Choose

*Your* Battles

**Check in with yourself before you offer a criticism, sarcastic remark, or grievance to your lover. On the wrong day, anything can start a fight, so use a little self-knowledge to recognize your motive, consider the impact of what you're about to say, and decide what's really worth picking on. Fighting isn't a good recreational activity compared to all the other things you could do together. And if you realize that you unconsciously use fighting as a way to take some time apart, see if you can't achieve this through a more constructive, direct, and conscious request.**



Pillow Talk

**Make a date for some pillow talk. Crawl into bed and talk openly. This wonderfully intimate time can inspire the sharing of secrets, fears, feelings of shame, and other hard-to-reveal things. Anything that's revealed during pillow talk is confidential. You can even use the words "pillow talk" as a code for needing intimate conversational time without necessarily having to get into bed—though that's half the fun!**



Surprise!

**Plan little surprises for each other. Whether it's a mystery field trip on a Saturday afternoon that you take turns planning or a spontaneous gift of flowers, nice surprises can evoke warm feelings of appreciation.**

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Make Out

**The longer you've been with your lover, the less you probably remember what make-out sessions were like. Or maybe it was never your style to begin with. It's never too late to start making out, though! Whether it's planned or spontaneous, enjoy it. If you're a bit rusty at first, remember that practice makes perfect.**



Love

Yourself

**If you don't feel lovable, it's going to be hard to accept or give love. Devote some time, either with a friend or yourself, to thinking about the conditions in which you are able to accept and receive love. Explore how to love yourself unconditionally, and make sure to prioritize self-care—whether that means a calming bubble bath and a good book, journaling to reflect, or a night out with friends.**

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Rules

*of the* Game

**You both have unspoken expectations and unexpressed pictures of what a relationship should look like based on your own family, the movies you've seen, and the books you've read. Before you start breaking each other's "rules," you may want to try to express, to the best of your conscious knowledge, what your expectations are and what the picture of a happy relationship looks like. Articulate in as much detail as possible what you imagine. It's helpful to verbalize this, both so your partner knows what you are envisioning and so you can hear when some of your expectations are inflated.**



Variety

Put a little spice and variety into your relationship by changing a routine or two. Institute a morning walk to the coffee shop instead of making coffee at home. Or check out a house-swap or apartment-share abroad. If that's too wild, try cooking in a new way.

Even though you may both love the rhythm of your everyday life, it's still good to shake up your well-honed rituals, even if just for a day. And don't worry, you can always go back to your old routine afterward.



Menu *of*

Aphrodisiacs

**Design and create a menu of affectionate, sensual, and sexual items. If you like, you can even price them according to whatever unit of currency you and your lover want to use. Keep the menu handy to order from should you suddenly feel starved or just in need of a snack.**



Give *and* Take

Not only is it essential to be generous and giving with your partner, it is equally important to know how to receive—something a surprising number of people find difficult to do. Is there a balance in the flow of giving and taking in your relationship? In what ways do you give and receive? What about your partner? “Give and take” refers not only to tangible actions, but also to intangibles, like cutting your partner slack because they’re late to a dinner reservation, knowing they’re stressed out enough without you coming down hard. If the balance is a bit lopsided, see what you can talk about directly before either of you builds up resentment.



Joint

Funny Bone

**Do anything and everything to cultivate your common funny bone. From lowbrow whoopee cushions to highbrow word-play, anything goes as long as you are both laughing. If you aren't the wisecracking kind by nature, make some time to enjoy comedies, stand-up, or animated programs that you both find hilarious. Sharing a good laugh can improve a couple's sense of well-being and is a good prescription for difficult times.**



Playtime

Schedules and moods can get pretty bogged down in this workaday, information-overload world, so balance out your weary workweek with seriously silly playtime together. You both need the opportunity to revive from the burnout that comes from being an adult and regress to childlike playfulness. What activities do you share that could cultivate this atmosphere?



Lots o' Love

**You can skimp on the amount of mayonnaise you put on your sandwich and how much toothpaste you use each night, but don't ever skimp on how much love you express to your partner. It's free and doesn't damage rain forests, so what's keeping you from showing affection on a regular basis in a zillion different ways? Even plain old eye contact, hugs, and kisses never get stale when imbued with real emotion.**



Be Out *of* Sync

**Recognize, stabilize, and don't overreact when you and your partner fall out of sync. Although you will find delightful moments of synchronicity, you will also naturally fall out of them. When you aren't growing or moving through life in parallel, communicate, listen, offer support in whatever way it's needed, and most important, be patient. The more accepting you become of the moments when you find yourselves on different paths, the wider your range of comfort will become and the more freedom you will each have to grow while stretching your relationship foundation.**

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*a* Living

Organism

**A relationship is a living organism with at least two movable parts (that would be you and your love, not to mention the world around you). It is sure to grow, change, and change again. Your ability to understand the relationship as a dynamic organism will make it easier to accept moments when there is more or less intimacy. Sometimes there isn't a lot to actively work on; instead, the challenge is to sit tight, not struggle against the changes, and appreciate yet another metamorphosis.**



Other

Friendships

**Maintaining your individual differences and interests is healthy for you and your relationship. Schedule time to pursue the passions, friendships, and needs you have outside one another, and support each other in building a social community. Feeling connected outside your partnership allows you each to show up in your relationship as your best self, and give each other your deepest love and care.**

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**Be Supportive**

In addition to the goals you create as a couple, encourage your partner's individual dreams and goals. Who is better situated than you to be a loving coach and ongoing source of gentle nudging? Help them experience the exhilaration of undertaking something they've dreamed of but also fear failing. Even if it means your needs may be slightly compromised in the short run, be supportive, since the quality of your partner's—and consequently your—life will be greater in the long run. And expect nothing less from them.



Reflect

Together

**What rituals can you and your partner cultivate that allow you to reflect and contemplate the big picture? It could be a weekly walk through the trees, a shared meditation, or just a moment of silence at the end of the day. Try out different rituals and practices until you find something that suits you both.**



Manage

Stress

One of the nicest things you can do for your lover is to manage your own stress. Even with the best intentions, it is difficult not to take some of your stress out on the person you love, so seek other outlets, such as exercising or meditating. There will be much less wear and tear on each other if you both take responsibility for your own toxic by-products from the day.

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# Lunch

# Buddies

**Make a lunch date every once in a while. It's fun to see each other in the middle of a workday. And because there tend to be certain limits that come with a lunch during the workweek, enjoy the formality and flirtation that comes with these boundaries. Take this opportunity to talk about things you don't usually talk about. Or pretend to be meeting for the first time on a blind date.**



Portraits

Paint, draw, or collage portraits of each other. If you aren't artistically inclined, stretch your creative muscles and see what your muse can inspire—even if that means snapping a photo with your phone. You may be surprised by how much you enjoy seeing yourself through your partner's eyes.

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Learn

Together

**Spend some time learning something that interests both of you. You can simultaneously enjoy being in the student role and getting to be each other's study buddy. Also, with the presence of a course leader or other teacher, you can both relinquish certain amounts of control and enjoy being sponges as you soak up new information. From cooking to flower arranging, there are infinite subjects you can pursue together.**



Sacred

Time

Carve out of your busy schedules time that is devoted solely to the two of you as a couple. Fill this sacred time with something that nurtures a facet of your relationship, such as taking a walk at the break of dawn or perhaps exchanging foot massages on a weekly basis. Make it a ritual, or schedule and commit to this time as far in advance as possible. Appropriately harsh punishment should be dispensed for breaking or forgetting this date, maybe something like having to give the other partner an hour-long massage.



Flexibility

Learning to be flexible will add to the longevity of your life and your relationship. If you don't have rigid images of how things need to unfold, from a day's plans to roles within a relationship, there is less possibility of breakage. No matter how similar you may be, there will still need to be accommodations made from both sides. Are there certain times or activities in which you are hesitant to give up complete control? Try to embrace the notion of compromise, shifting gears, and unexpected outcomes. You are, after all, codirecting this love story.

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Together

*and Apart*

As much as you enjoy spending time together, it is beneficial for both of you to enjoy spending time apart and supporting each other in pursuing individual interests. Although it may feel life-threatening to lose sight of your lover for even a second in the first week of a new relationship, with time, clinging to each other may come to feel a bit claustrophobic and stifling. Keep emotional oxygen circulating by stepping away to enjoy your own friends and interests, secure in the knowledge that you get to come back together again to share the separate adventures you've had.



Be Brave

Relationships are uncharted adventures. This can be particularly hard for people who check maps frequently and like to know where they're going. With the understanding that you have different tolerances for risk-taking, encourage each other to get comfortable taking chances, learning new things, opening up, and admitting fear. Talk about the fears you each have. Take turns being brave about emotional issues. It's easier to be vulnerable when you are in the company of a loving and supportive friend.



# Home Disco

**After a home-cooked dinner or as a sudden burst of playfulness, take turns playing DJ. Invent a new signature move, or make up your own version of the tango. What are all the different ways you can dance together? Spontaneous costuming is never inappropriate.**



Write Now

**Send your love a handwritten letter. Even if you live together, pop it in the mail and rediscover how nice it is to send and receive something tangible and handwritten. Don't work yourself into a writer's block; just put a feeling or two into words and send it off. The fact that you took the time to locate a stamp is at least partial evidence of undying love. Who knows? You might even become pen pals.**



Common

Goals

**Create short- and long-term goals together—things you'd like to do as a couple. Articulate and set some mutual priorities. Your goals could include simple, tangible things, like installing a hummingbird feeder outside the kitchen, physical activities, like exploring a new hiking trail each weekend, or more abstract goals, like making the effort to better listen to one another. Check in periodically to see how you're doing and whether it's time to set new ones.**

The background is a light green textured surface covered with a repeating pattern of white envelopes and cards. Some envelopes are open, showing a red heart or a blue patterned interior. Some cards have a small red heart and lines of placeholder text. Two larger white cards are pasted in the center, one above the other.

Couple

Motto

Create your own “couple motto” that captures the spirit of being together. If copywriting isn’t exactly your thing, adopt a motto that already exists and reword it to suit yourselves. Whether it’s cheesy, silly, or totally sincere, editing your thoughts down to a one-sentence summary can be a creative and revealing exercise.



Share

*Your* Dreams

Encourage each other to visualize and verbalize a wide range of hopes and dreams about your lives, your relationship, the world at large, and anything else you want to dream about. People are often too shy to admit what they really want and hope for, so be sure to offer a nonjudgmental and trusting environment in which to share. It's amazing to discover how optimistic many outwardly cynical and sarcastic people can be. Are there any dreams you both share that you can realistically work toward together? Respect and nurture your lover's dreams.

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Digital

Detox

Allocate a few hours each week (or each day!) for going off the grid. Unplug your devices and just enjoy the present moment together. A constant stream of texts, emails, and notifications may be the reality of modern living, but don't let it distract you from giving your partner your full attention. Disconnect to connect. Make time to give each other undivided focus by scheduling a regular digital detox.



Five *for* Five

**As a spontaneous or regular exercise, take five minutes to remind each other (and sometimes just yourself) of five things you love and appreciate about one another. This is a good way to reconnect after having a fight or any experience that makes you feel a little insecure in the relationship.**



Be Thoughtful

Being thoughtful means being aware of how your habits affect another person and treating that person as you would have them treat you. Idiosyncratic personal habits shouldn't be a burden to either one of you, so sort out early what really bothers you ("Don't ever do that again."), what just mildly annoys you ("OK, if you must—occasionally."), and what is just too ingrained to change at all. Remember that care and affection can have a big impact when communicated through little gestures like replacing the milk if you drink the last drop, or keeping your partner's schedule in mind.



Stay

Positive

Try to help one another maintain a positive outlook. A little optimism goes a long way in fostering the faith that allows a relationship to grow. Communicate challenges or frustrations clearly and directly. And think about keeping a check on your cynicism. After all, can a relationship thrive in an environment of pure negativity? Call each other out on wet-blanket comments, and try to turn grievances into positive action together.



Shades

of Gray

If you or your partner are prone to black-and-white thinking—where issues and experiences are often framed as right or wrong, good or bad—try to expand the gray scale of your perception by seeing things along a continuum. Instead of being at opposite ends of a polarized stance, imagine that you may just hold different positions along a spectrum and that those positions might approach each other with additional explanation and understanding. Rigidity of position often belies fear, which might be something else worth exploring in a gentle manner.

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Hazardous

Waste

Management

**On a regular basis, take time to handle the potentially toxic thoughts you've been storing up about your partner. Prevent future explosive outbursts by coming clean with anything that may be unresolved. Even if there are no simple solutions, issues often become less toxic just through the process of airing them with your partner. At least your issues then stand a chance of becoming a team project.**



Rules

*of the* Fight

If you find yourselves ready to spar, agree on some ground rules. Here are some suggestions:

- No name-calling.
- Focus on one issue at a time.
- Begin sentences with “I feel” instead of “You.”
- Speak from the heart.
- Listen and don’t interrupt.
- Pause if voices and tempers flare.
- Accept your partner’s perception of reality as being as valid as your own.



Staging

*a* Fight

**Fighting, if done fairly, honestly, and occasionally, can be a constructive (albeit impassioned) means of clearing the air.**


**Check what your motives are before jumping in the ring. Do you want to resolve an issue? Are you striking back because you feel defensive, misunderstood, or wrongfully accused? Or are you looking to eviscerate your partner? If so, this is a good moment to just take time apart.**

**In a volatile moment, try to step back and detoxify the situation with a pause, by not reciprocating your partner's fury, and by recognizing when you're both just too tired to make any sense.**

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Give Back

**Engaging in your community is a reward in itself, but it can also strengthen your bond with your partner. Are there causes that you both feel aligned with and committed to? Consider volunteering or donating together, or hosting a regular event with like-minded people. Getting involved with what you both believe in not only sets you toward a common goal, but also helps you feel more connected—as individuals, and as a couple—with your wider community.**



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