

# Connect with your partner

Dealing with problems would be so easy if our partners simply corrected their imperfections. After all, when we have arguments, it's always the other person's fault, isn't it?

Although that idea looks ridiculous in the cold light of day, in the middle of an argument it makes perfect sense.

In the early days of a relationship, both men and women tend to give more to partners than normal.

For example, a typical bloke will talk more about his feelings and what is important to him, and that's something the average female loves. And because he is making her feel so good, the girl will initiate more sexual contact than might be her normal pattern, so he's a happy chap.

Once the normal pattern of everyday activities takes over - especially if children enter the mix - he drops back to his normal level of emotion and finds watching the footy on TV more stimulating than deep and meaningful chats, while her level of interest and initiating sex drops to what is a normal level for her.

Both partners think that all that is needed for life to be perfect again is for him to talk more (from her point of view) and for her to be more accommodating in the bedroom (his view).

So our dream couple is feeling dissatisfied and the arguments begin. Both feel life isn't as perfect as it used to be, and they look for an argument to clear the air and bring them closer. But unless the real issues are articulated in a calm manner, all the argument does is intensify their communication, but it won't solve anything.

Sometimes couples expect that just by turning up at counselling, the counsellor will wave a magic wand and make things better.

Another mistake is to expect a perfect solution. Perfect solutions are for perfect people, and they don't exist. However, there are many good solutions that can be found, if people are prepared to listen to the issues and genuinely want to connect with their partner.

The truth is that both partners need to clean up their joint act and a good start might be to set some ground rules that allow both partners to give constructive criticism to each other when something bugs them.

## Survival tips

- **Realise that it's normal for the "honeymoon phase" to pass and for every relationship to strike problems.**
- **Try not to get caught up in a blame cycle**
- **Agree to give each other constructive feedback, rather than insults.**