

# EXCITING ACTIVITIES FOR COUPLES

Difficulty: **MODERATE** | Frequency: **1X/WEEK** | Duration: **90 MINUTES**



## WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

In the beginning, relationships feel novel and exciting: We are getting to know a completely new human being and there is so much to learn, share, and do together. But after the novelty of a relationship wears off, you can feel like you're stuck in a rut, wondering where the spark went. In fact, [research](#) suggests that marital satisfaction typically declines after the early years of marriage.

In some ways, this is normal; our brains tend to adapt to good things in life, which can make us feel bored or unfulfilled. Doing exciting activities with your partner can provide a different source of newness and excitement—shaking up your routine and making your relationship feel more satisfying again.

## TIME REQUIRED

Researchers suggest 90 minutes per week for four weeks, but you can figure out what schedule works for your relationship.

## HOW TO DO IT

You may spend a good deal of time with your partner doing routine activities, but what if you tried something new? This practice invites you to do exciting activities together in order to have a more satisfying relationship. Follow the steps below to get started.

**Compile a list of exciting activities:** With your partner, compile a list of 10 potentially exciting or challenging activities. Challenge adds interest and creates the potential for more excitement. It is important to ensure that the chosen activities are realistic and manageable, taking into consideration issues of cost and time.

Here are some tips and examples of activities successfully undertaken by couples to enhance their relationship excitement:

- Explore new activities together: Discover things you both like to do—maybe dancing, taking a class, or playing a new game.
- Be adventurous: This could be an outdoor activity, like swimming or exploring a new neighborhood, or other ways to push yourselves outside of your comfort zone, like cooking a new recipe together.
- Be spontaneous: Surprise your partner and be unpredictable now and again. Unexpectedly pick up your partner from work and take them out to their favorite restaurant or to a movie they have expressed interest in seeing.
- Be playful: Do you remember the times when you and your partner used to enjoy just hanging out and playing

together? Find an activity that the two of you can enjoy. You could try exploring, ice skating, or dancing.

- Be romantic: Send or bring flowers home for no reason. Make your partner's lunch and include a love note. If you don't normally cook, light some candles and prepare your partner's favorite meal. After dinner, snuggle up on the sofa with a romantic movie. Take your partner on a picnic and include their favorite wine and food. While your lover is in the shower or bath, put their towel in the dryer for a few minutes and deliver it warm in person.
- Be passionate: Spend one solid hour exploring various kissing techniques. Make love three nights in a row and in three different places!
- Be intimate: Even if your schedules are busy, set aside time to be intimate with your partner each week and make it a priority. Experiment with new ideas and approaches, and communicate about what you enjoy. Buy books, magazines, or movies with stories that spark your interest; try bubble baths and massages. If possible, turn off your phones to ensure complete privacy with no interruptions.
- Role play: Remember the fun and excitement of dating? Arrange to meet your partner at a bar or restaurant and pretend you have just met or that this is your first date. Dress to impress. Set aside a date night every week and take turns taking each other out.

**Draw up a plan:** When you have jointly chosen different activities, write down the details, setting aside a particular time and place for each. Make sure both of you sign the plan, and try putting it on the refrigerator where you can see it. Do at least one of the activities every week; generating excitement takes a bit of time.

## EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS

Aron, A., Norman, C., Aron, E. N., McKenna, C., and Heyman, R. E. (2000). [Couples' shared participation in novel and arousing activities and experienced relationship quality](#). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(2): 273-84.

In several studies, couples who engaged in more exciting activities together felt less bored in their relationships and in turn rated their relationships as higher-quality, compared to couples who engaged in more mundane activities.

## WHY TO TRY IT

Exciting activities may promote a sense of self-expansion as we take on new experiences, discover new strengths, and confront new challenges. When you do an exciting activity, you often feel a range of good feelings, from interest to enthusiasm to elation.

When you do an exciting activity *with* a partner, you may actually associate those positive emotions with that person—making the relationship itself seem more fun and exhilarating. Since many exciting activities require cooperation, they may also give you a greater feeling of interdependence and connection.

## SOURCES

[Arthur Aron, Ph.D.](#), Stony Brook University

[John Malouff, Ph.D.](#), University of New England

## FOR MORE

Coulter, K., and Malouff, J. (2013). [Effects of an intervention designed to enhance romantic relationship excitement: A randomized-control trial](#). *Journal of Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 2, 34-44.

Muise, A., Harasymchuk, C., Day, L. C., Bacev-Giles, C., Gere, J., and Impett, E. A. (2019). [Broadening your horizons: Self-expanding activities promote desire and satisfaction in established romantic relationships](#). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 116(2): 237-58.

Reissman, C., Aron, A., and Bergen, M. R. (1993). [Shared activities and marital satisfaction: Causal direction and self-expansion versus boredom](#). *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 10(2): 243-54.

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This practice is part of [Greater Good in Action](#), a clearinghouse of the best research-tested methods for increasing happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley and [HopeLab](#).

