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## **Eight Ingredients for a Lasting Relationship**

Maintaining a good, wholesome relationship can be difficult. The question of how to best understand something as complex as human relationships has long occupied the minds of our greatest poets and philosophers and until now, this quandary has largely gone unanswered. However, like most deep questions, the answer can be describe in a simple analogy – psychology has now determined that the secret to forming a lasting relationship is like baking the perfect loaf of bread.

If you find this comparison odd you have probably never enjoyed the sensual pleasure of baking – of mixing the ingredients and kneading the dough, of forming the loaf, of seeing the bread rise slowly with the yeast, of the warm smell as it bakes to perfection.

Sadly, too many people settle for store bought, mass produced bread. Tragically, even more settle for equally unappetizing relationships. You deserve better on both counts! Bread requires flour, yeast, salt, etc. What does your lasting relationship require?

First and foremost a health relationship requires **enthusiasm**. Relationships are about growing and exploring. Your partner should be someone who embraces life and

you enthusiastically! A thriving relationship is one in which both partners continue to explore the world – and each other. No one is interested in a stale loaf.

**Attractiveness** - yes, it is shallow. No, you don't have to look like a model to be loved. However, your partner must see something special in you. Would you want to bake bread with flour contaminated with dirt and bits of bugs? Of course not. Don't underestimate the natural beauty of a clean face and good grooming. By all means, highlight your qualities but remember, your true partner will want to know you.

Successful relationships also rely on the ability to speak and listen. No relationship can succeed over time without first-rate **communication** skills. Good, bad or indifferent, feelings and concerns have to be shared in an open and accepting way. If you feel that you and your partner can discuss *anything* – your needs, hopes, desires, opinions then you are well on your way to relationship success.

What does it really mean to have good communication skills? The key here is **honesty**. Without honesty, what are you communicating? Nothing of lasting worth, that's certain. And don't just speak. Listen. Listen actively to your partner, hear what he or she has to say! Partners have to trust what you tell them and they have to know you believe what they say. Lying can foul a relationship faster than a rotten egg.

The difference between a successful, loving relationship and a successful business partnership often comes down to one essential ingredient – **affection**. Business partners need not show affection for the partnership to be successful but loving partners sure

better! In a successful loving relationship, each partner must care for one another, physically and emotionally. You must put your partner's needs first.

While there are often things that partners respectfully disagree about, a healthy relationship relies on **compatibility**. Your long-term partner *must* be compatible with you. It does not matter how strong you are with the seven other ingredients, you and your partner must be well-suited for each other. This does not mean you have to be two peas in a pod. You can have very different views and hobbies, but your needs must mesh.

The largest portion of compatibility is **intelligence**. We all want to be challenged from time to time. We want to be the best person we can be. It takes intelligence to revel in the intelligence of your partner. There is no “window dressing” in successful relationships – both partners are wholly engaged and needed.

The final ingredient tends to grow with age and experience. It is a biggie – **acceptance**. Acceptance does not necessarily mean agreement, compliance, or submission. Often it is very different. *Anyone* can accept someone they agree with. Only a loving partner can accept the views of someone they disagree with. Acceptance requires respect and consideration. Now, your partner may hold one or two views that you will never agree with them upon, but if you can recognize and tolerate some differences, your relationship will mature.

Without all of these eight ingredients a relationship will become flat and tasteless. If you sense that you or your partner is running a little low on one or another of these ingredients, talk about it sooner rather than later. These differences do not go away by ignoring them. Like making bread, a relationship also takes thoughtfulness, timing, and hard work. Consider the ideas presented in this recipe and enjoy the earthy delight of needing – and kneading – a wonderful relationship, and having one!

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