Self reflection

Facing up to problems in a relationship requires a little ‘inward looking’. Each of us brings past experiences, thoughts & expectations to the relationship. Take time to reflect on whether unrealistic assumptions (e.g., ‘she should be able to know what I want’) or generalizations (e.g., ‘men can never be trusted’) are adding to the tension.

Affection

Human touch is important and you don’t have to have a sexual relationship to show physical affection. Give hugs, hold hands – it keeps you feeling close & cared for.

While every couple knows their sex life may have dry periods, our need for physical affection never changes. Get in touch with your partner’s sexual needs and talk about what pleases you. Many relationships founder because one partner assumes the other knows what s/he likes.

Stress can have a very negative impact on the libido so it is in everyone’s best interests to minimise the effects and provide a safe warm sanctuary for each other. Give each other massages, exercise, do chores together, be aware of his/her mood and generally take care of each other.

Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Student Counsellors are available for individual therapy as well as couples sessions. The service is free and strictly confidential.

How to contact CAPS?

Call us: 662 2002 ext 2491.
Email: counsellor@sta.uwi.edu
Or pop in and see us. We are located in the Health Service Unit (HSU), between Trinity Hall and the Learning Resources Centre (LRC).

Opening hours

CAPS is available throughout the year, from 8:30am to 7pm during term-time. During vacation, we close at 4:30pm.

This leaflet prepared by the Counselling & Psychological Services, UWI, St Augustine.
Some secrets to a healthy relationship

💡 **Love yourself**

Unless your love yourself, it is hard to believe anyone else will. Feeling secure & confident within yourself allows you to enjoy being with your partner for the joy s/he brings into your life, rather than feeling you need the relationship to be okay. It is important to feel good about being yourself, and not who you think your partner wants you to be.

💡 **Communicate**

Open & honest communication is essential. It is how you share with each other who you are, what you think & feel. It is also about listening to your partner even when you do not agree!

Be direct & clear with your partner about what you want or what has upset you. Often our communication is too subtle and we do not get the message across. S/he cannot read your mind, no matter how connected you are.

💡 **Spend quality time**

At the beginning, couples instinctively prioritise the relationship. As time goes by, making time for each other may get difficult. The effort is well worth it. Good relationships don’t ‘just happen’, they need to be looked after.

Make time to have fun together. At least once a month, more if you can manage, try to set aside time for each other. Treat each other to a special date and prepare for it. If you are in a long term relationship this is very important since you may tend to take your love for granted.

Remember all plants need nurturing in order to grow and blossom.

💡 **Time with and without**

Becoming a part of someone else’s world may require you to support your partner in the hobbies & achievements that matter dearly to him/her. Be prepared to be more flexible and open to new experiences.

Strike a healthy balance – a good couple does not spend ALL their time together. While it is exciting to spend time with that someone special, don’t neglect your friends & other loved ones!

💡 **Appreciate the good things**

Pleased about something you partner did or said? Say it out loud. It is all too easy to complain when things are not going well so make sure you mention the good stuff too. Who doesn’t like to feel appreciated? Compliment and support each other openly in the presence of family and friends.

💡 **Talk it out**

If something is bothering you, don’t pretend things are okay. Resentments build up & become harder to manage than the original problems.

Focus on the present – the here and now – avoid harping back to old hurts. Be clear on what is upsetting you & take time to reflect on it before you make time to discuss the issue. Deal with one issue at a time and stay on point. Try to accept each others’ feelings and listen to each other. Be willing to compromise and/or find a workable solution.

💡 **Argue well**

It’s important to accept that arguments are part of a healthy relationship – we each have different ways of looking at things & are bound to disagree sometimes. ‘Arguing well’ gives you both a chance to share your feelings and also to feel closer when you manage to come to a decision you are both happy with.

Beware blaming your partner for problems between the two of you – you both contribute to the relationship! Don’t be afraid to say ‘I’m sorry’ or to admit your mistakes.