

MEDIA RELEASE

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Building Better Relationships this Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is one of those days that can provoke a range of emotions. Some people revel in it, some believe it is an unnecessary and commercial exploitation and others are completely ambivalent to it.

Whatever your feelings may be about the day itself, the fact that it brings relationships into focus can be a good excuse to take stock of your own. Relationships need maintenance like any other facet of your life, and with the current divorce rate in Australia hovering around 35 per cent, they can't be taken for granted.

Thinking of it another way, we go to a mechanic to keep our car running, we exercise to stay healthy, we insure our house and contents, but what do we do to protect our most important asset – our relationships?

Relationships experts agree that acknowledging and celebrating the good things about a partner is important – not just on Valentine's Day, but on every day of the year.

Relationships Australia counsellor Lyn Fletcher says, "While there is no magic formula to making relationships last, there are a few approaches that can help. All relationships need maintenance and balance. There's 'me', there's 'you' and there's 'us' and each of those parts needs attention."

"Like most things in our lives, when things are going really well you don't necessarily feel the need to put a lot of effort in to keep it that way, it's only when things begin to slide that you feel the need to take action, and sometimes this can be too late."

"You can see an example of this in the ABC's new television series *Making Couples Happy* which airs on Valentine's Day, where four couples' relationships are in serious crisis, and the immense amount of work that is needed to see if their relationships can be repaired. That's why days like Valentine's Day can be a good reminder that relationships need to be maintained, nurtured and valued every day." Ms Fletcher said.

Research by Relationships Australia and the Australian National University has shown that couples who participate in relationship education courses are more likely to be happier in their relationships, find it easier to communicate their concerns and deal with conflict.

Relationships Australia conducts relationship programs around the country on building better relationships as well as many other relationship support services. www.relationships.org.au

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