

*Remember to schedule...*

# Couple Time

Your children will always need your time and attention. It may be hard to find time with your partner, but it's important to make time for each other. Spend some of this time relaxing and talking openly with each other about what makes you happy and what is bothering you.

Here are some suggestions many couples have found useful:

- **Set Up A Date** - Set aside some time (or times) each week when you can be together without interruptions.
- **Use "I" Messages** - Say how you are feeling without blaming someone else. Make sure you put yourself in your communication. Say "I feel..." not "You make me feel..." Avoid using the words "always" and "never." Instead of saying "You always put me down," say "I feel put down when..." By using "I" messages, your partner is less likely to feel blamed or threatened.
- **Be Direct And Specific** - Say what you mean. Don't expect your partner to be able to guess or read your mind about what is bothering you. Instead of saying "The living room has been looking messy lately," say "I feel upset when papers and magazines are left in the living room." Instead of saying "I get tired of always cooking (doing the dishes)," say "It would help me if you could cook (do the dishes) each night."
- **Avoid The Question Trap** - Questions can be accusing. Instead of asking "Why didn't you call to tell me you'd be late?" say "I was worried that something had happened to you when you didn't come home at the usual time. Next time, please call me so I won't worry."
- **Be Sure To Listen** - Look at your partner and really listen to what he/she is saying, even if it's a complaint. Give your partner a chance to air feelings and gripes. Don't interrupt, jump to conclusions, think about what you'll say in response, or preach. Repeat back to your partner what he/she said, to make sure you really understood what they said. You can say, "Let me see if I understand what you said. Are you saying that...?"
- **Compliment Each Other** - End your couple time together on a positive note. Freely and honestly praise each other for things you've done right or that have made each of you happy. Honestly and lovingly praising each other every day will strengthen your relationship and help you through some of those demanding times with your children.

A counselor can help you practice better communication techniques. You don't have to wait for a crisis before seeking help. With the added demands of your children, it may be hard to find time to be with your partner. As difficult as it may be, it's important to make time for each other.

Adapted from "Take Care of Yourself" in the Hawai'i Department of Health's *Keiki 'O Hawai'i* booklet (page 38 at: [www.theparentline.org/keiki.htm](http://www.theparentline.org/keiki.htm)): 11/06.

## Hawai'i Coalition for Dads

Promoting involved, nurturing, responsible fatherhood

*c/o Parents And Children Together, Hana Like Home Visitor Program*

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