

PFA Tips

Neurodiverse Couples: Making Meaningful Moments of Every Day *Having a Good Night*

Every night there are countless opportunities to create small connecting moments to enhance intimacy in a relationship. Especially after a long day, when partners are tired and out of gas, evenings can be a time when it's easy to forget to acknowledge each other. Be intentional about having a good night by communicating clearly, understanding each other's needs, and taking advantage of opportunities to connect about the activities of the night.

When transitioning from day to night, people want to let their guard down, relax, be themselves, and feel comfortable, so make sure you know what that means to each other as you begin your evening activities.

Reuniting and it feels so good

If you have been apart during the day, it is important that there is a reconnection with your partner when you see each other again. At minimum, acknowledge your partner with a greeting, a smile, an affectionate touch, or a connecting gesture when you see them after being apart. If they are busy or in the middle of a task or it is not a good time, still communicate some version of a Hello, it's good to see you, and let them know that you will reconnect with them again a bit later, when you are both able. This communication could be verbal or non-verbal, written or oral, a code word or a gesture,

Recharging first feels so good

For some partners, reconnecting after a long day may require recharging of one's battery. If one or both partners needs downtime as they transition from day to night, try to take a break first to replenish and re-energize in order to be present with your partner. Come up with a solution that works for both partners, such as setting an expectation that you will take a walk or go

into a room alone as soon as you get home, for an agreed upon amount of time, before engaging with each other. Set a certain amount of time for recharging, and don't get lost in downtime for too long and forget about evening obligations. When you are ready to connect, be sure to acknowledge your partner as you see each other for the first time after being separated. The goal is to replenish some energy so that you and your partner have the bandwidth to spend some quality time together as a couple in the evening.

Cooking up a good time at dinner

Depending on your lifestyle and family circumstances, the evening meal can be a time to connect and share about your days or it can be a stressful time full of lots to do at the end of a long day. There are many interactions that happen when preparing dinner and when eating dinner. Take advantage of opportunities to enjoy each other's company. You might like to grocery shop together, but preparation and cleanup tasks are done separately, or vice versa. If one partner chooses to be the chef, they don't have to cook alone - offer to sit near them in the kitchen and enjoy each other's company in a way that's comfortable for you both. This could include light conversation or just quietly keeping each other company while one partner is cooking.



There are many interactions that need to happen to get dinner on the table, so good communication is a key ingredient to making dinnertime successful. Whether you decide to work on tasks together, divide and conquer, or make dinner reservations, make sure you understand each other's skills and challenges when it comes to mealtimes, and divide up the tasks accordingly.

When meal planning, be sensitive to sensitivities or needs and challenges around food so partners understand what they can and cannot eat for dinner. Some partners desire sameness when it comes to a dinner menu. Some partners will eat only certain foods. Sensory issues can make it difficult to be around the noises that happen during meal time, so eating together at the same table can be challenging. Some partners need to eat separately or in silence, as it's challenging to eat and interact. Be aware of each other's challenges around food and eating, and create a mealtime experience that is palatable for both partners and satisfies each of your appetites.

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A Good Evening Leads to a Good Night

The time between dinner and going to bed presents another opportunity to have quality time with your partner. Especially if you haven't yet had a chance to connect during the day, try to carve out some time to do something that is amenable to you both. Take turns if need be, include some things for you, and some things for them, over the course of a week.

Connecting activities can be having a conversation, listening to music, dancing, watching television, taking a walk, working out together, playing a game, even doing chores. Try holding hands, sharing a hug or a connecting glance, or giving a massage. Spend time near each other, but doing your own thing, as long as it works for both of you. Always make sure that what you think is connecting, your partner also experiences as connecting. If circumstances keep you and your partner apart in the evening, you can still check in with them to let them know you are thinking of them. Remember, out of sight doesn't mean out of mind. Let your partner know that they are on your mind and in your heart.

Goodnight, Until Tomorrow

Bedtime routines can vary. Some couples do them together. It can feel bonding to

do the intimate tasks of getting ready for bed, climbing into bed together, kissing goodnight, and spooning each other to sleep. Some couples like to exchange appreciations, have pillow talk, or read to each other before dozing off. For some partners the bedtime routine is not comfortable to do together. They may not be able to multitask, and they may find it challenging to have intimate interactions while doing their bedtime routine. There could be sensory issues, anxiety issues, cognitive inflexibility, and they may need this end of the day time to just relax. Some couples need to have different bedtimes, and even different bedrooms, to be comfortable.

Bedtime is not a good time to talk about difficult or emotional topics, or for some partners it is not a good time to talk at all. Whatever your routine, take the opportunity to acknowledge the end of the day with your partner with an intimate expression of good night. Acknowledging the transition into sleep mode with a simple "sleep well" or "have a good night" is a simple, connecting gesture. By adding your own nicknames for each other, if you have them, partners can have an intimate back and forth of "sleep well, darling" or "goodnight, my love". Exchanging good night wishes as you wind down for sleep feels calming and

comforting. If saying words aloud is not comfortable, figure out a way to express your sentiments that works for both partners, like a goodnight text or a special gesture that signifies good night. This act acknowledges that you are looking forward to seeing your partner in the morning.

Choose to make every night a good night by establishing routines that work for both partners. Be intentional and create moments of togetherness that are comfortable for each of you. Remember that a small gesture makes a big impact, so take time to do something connecting so your partner feels loved.

Any interaction during any part of a day is an opportunity for connection or disconnection, so whether it is morning, afternoon, or night, take the opportunity to make a positive connection with your partner.

Additional Resources

PFA Tips: Neurodiverse Couples: Making Meaningful Moments of Every Day – Having a Good Morning”
<https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/social/pfa-tips-neurodiverse-couples-morning/>

PFA Tips: Neurodiverse Couples: Making Meaningful Moments of Every Day – Having a Good Afternoon”
<https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/social/pfa-tips-neurodiverse-couples-afternoon/>

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