

# LONG DISTANCE RELATIONSHIPS

THE HOW TO GUIDE ON SURVIVING  
LONG DISTANCE LOVE

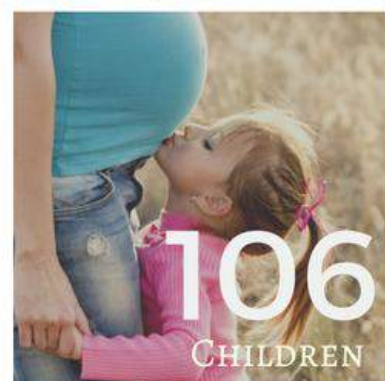


MEGAN & MIKE JERRARD

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# Introduction

Born in a geographically isolated country like Australia, and addicted to travel to the point I was spending more time abroad than in my home country, it only makes sense that long distance would factor into my love life as well. Sure I had relationships with fellow Aussies, but most of those relationships were fleeting. Most would end up lasting an average of two months before I found myself moving on. I continued to search for love throughout university, but I was proving to be more successful with my grades than I was with my personal life. It was only when I stopped looking for love that it found me.

I didn't exactly know when or where I was going to find my forever partner, but I never could have predicted it would involve a man who lived 15,000km away from me. Ironically, I had told my last boyfriend (the one before 'the one') that I didn't want to commit to an interstate relationship (he lived in Sydney, a 3 hour drive from me in the ACT). I wasn't lying to him when I broke it off; I honestly thought that long distance relationships were too difficult and I wasn't sure I wanted to put the effort into such an endeavor.

Flash forward eight years and I still can't quite believe that Mike and I were able to overcome the extreme long distance and now find ourselves living together in Tasmania, having just celebrated our fifth wedding anniversary.

Love and relationships have no set of rules or playbook to go by. What may constitute an ideal bond for one couple may be considered torturous for another. Some of us may never find love, while others may fall for someone new quite regularly. Take it from a girl from Australia who met an American boy in Tanzania, trust me when I say that you really never know where, when, or how you may meet the person you want to spend the rest of your life with.

Relationships can be confusing, difficult at times, and are ever evolving. Traditional relationships are complex enough, but when long distance becomes a factor it presents a whole new set of rules. Having experienced a long distance relationship myself, I don't know if I would say it was more difficult than relationships I had with partners that lived in the same city as me, it was just

different. There are obvious disadvantages to a long distance relationship, but there are also wonderful benefits that come with being in one as well.

Love is defined as an intense feeling of affection. This is not to be confused with that crush you have on your co-worker or casual acquaintance; that is lust. Love is much stronger than being attracted to someone or simply having the desire to be around them. Love takes time and a lot of effort. And for that reason, I don't believe in love at first sight. Even though Mike and I only had 12 hours together and committed to a long distance relationship before we met in person again, my opinion is that love at first sight is simply not possible. Initial attraction can form the foundation for a long lasting relationship, but ultimately feeling of deep love requires a long list of other ingredients before it occurs.

Because love and developing a fulfilling relationship takes so much effort and nurturing to grow, it's completely understandable if you think that long distance couples have the odds stacked against them. The truth however may be just the opposite.

This book takes a deep look into the subject of long distance relationships and aims to help those who may find themselves in such a situation. This is by no means a guide filled with scientific facts, statistics, or studies by Harvard professors, rather it is a collection of authentic real life experiences and observations from a couple who has gone through the process of a long distance relationship. Ultimately we succeeded in closing the distance gap and were able to live our lives together.

Each chapter will explore a different aspect of how a relationship can be affected by long distance and includes topics such as marriage, sex, having children, meeting family and friends, and immigration issues. Mike and I will both give our insights into our experience dealing with a long distance relationship as we take turns tackling each chapter.

Meeting my husband was a chance encounter that could have very easily never occurred. From a single meeting, we would be catapulted into the lengthy road of a long distance relationship that saw us quite literally on opposite ends of the world. Whether it was through sheer determination, luck, or simply fate, we somehow managed to make it through the seemingly never ending long distance tunnel.

Whether you're young or old, male or female, gay or straight, this book looks at the situations and emotions you may face should you decide to commit to a long distance relationship yourself. It will explore long distance love from your first contact to the moment you are together for good and find that distance is no longer an issue. It will discuss some of the common ingredients of a traditional relationship such as communication, trust, fighting, sex, marriage, and children, but will focus on each from a unique long distance perspective.

Any relationship will have its obstacles, and long distance relationships are no exception. Long distance doesn't necessarily equate to more difficult obstacles, rather you will simply be faced with a different set of circumstances. We aim to share our story along with the experiences of other long distance couples we have met along the way in order to offer insight into the world of long distance relationships.

For anyone facing a long distance relationship, or even if you're simply interested in the concept, it is our sincere hope that this book offers practical and realistic insight into what you might expect. Let this book offer you hope that your long distance relationship can be just as successful as our own.

***-Megan Jerrard-***

# **Our Story**

*-Mike-*

The story of my wife and I began at the base of Tanzania's mighty Kilimanjaro, a mountain we both managed to summit before we embarked on our life together. At 5,895 meters (19,341 ft), Kilimanjaro is famed for being the highest free standing mountain the world. Little did we know, however, that the most arduous climb was the one we still had in front of us. Megan lived in Australia and I resided in the U.S. Separated by over 15,000km, we could not possibly live further apart. Our relationship journey would end up making our trek up Kilimanjaro seem as though it were a leisurely stroll.

I don't know if anyone sets out to be part of a long distance relationship. Most often it is one of those things that just happens. For some, long distance becomes a factor in the relationship after you have already developed a bond. In our case, Megan and I had never spoken or even laid eyes on one another before that August day in Africa. Our first meeting would last just a few hours but that encounter would set off a chain of events that would change both our lives forever. Now married and living happily together, the days of communicating with each other from the U.S. to Australia seems like a lifetime ago. I think we are both somewhat amazed when we look back on our own journey and how we were able to make our long distance relationship work.

## **From the Beginning**

My motivation for travelling to Africa was to climb Tanzania's Kilimanjaro, the tallest free-standing mountain in the world. I was an avid wildlife photographer, so having the opportunity to photograph the wildlife rich Serengeti in addition to climbing Kilimanjaro would come as a major bonus. I had seen a documentary about a team that climbed Kilimanjaro to raise awareness about the global clean-water crisis and it motivated me to challenge my body and mind to see what I was truly made of.

I had a real love for the outdoors. Being from Florida, I wasn't afraid to swim with alligators and loved searching the Everglades for bears and panthers. I had always been largely independent but wasn't quite ready to travel to Africa alone. I convinced a girl I was interested in to accompany me on the journey and we both trained and got ourselves ready for the challenge we had in front of us.

Meanwhile, Megan was in Australia preparing for a trip to Africa herself. She was headed to Kenya to take part in the World Scout Moot, an event organized by the World Organization of the Scout Movement that is held every four years. The event sees some 5,000 Rover Scouts aged between 18 - 26 gather together to volunteer in local communities and participate in cultural exchange. The goal is to improve their international understanding as citizens of the world.

While most Scouts flew back to Australia after the Moot was done, Megan decided to stay longer and tackle Kilimanjaro. She has always been one to capitalize on a travel opportunity and had recently read that Therese Rein, the wife of the then Australian Prime Minister, had managed to summit the mountain. This inspired her to tackle the challenge herself. Not exactly a mountain climber, and told by many members of her family that she didn't have the physical ability to make it to the top, she was more motivated than ever by the idea of proving those who doubted her wrong.

Just as I had planned to travel to Tanzania with a girlfriend, Megan had also planned for a friend to tag along. For anyone who believes in fate, Megan's partner pulled out of the trip at the last minute and mine too would decide to not make the trip just days before our plane was due to take off. Megan and I both stayed committed to our individual African trips and made the decision to travel solo to a continent neither one of us had stepped foot on.

Megan had a lot more international travel experience than I had and had already been to numerous countries. This would be only my second time needing to use my passport. The first few days in Tanzania proved to be difficult for me in terms of feeling homesick and a bit like I was all alone. I was also trying to get over my jetlag after 30 hours of combined flights. Megan fared far better as her outgoing personality saw her make new friends quite easily.

I was eventually introduced to my climbing guides and two older wealthy businessmen who would make up our expedition group. After nearly a week of climbing, I was fortunate to have reached Kili's summit along with both my travel companions. Megan was still in Kenya attending the World Moot as I made my way back down the mountain.

As Megan made her way to Tanzania on what she recounts as the bus trip from hell, I headed off into the Serengeti with two young Australians from a separate climbing group I met on the mountain. To see the exotic landscape and get up close and personal with iconic wildlife such as lions and elephants was the experience of a lifetime. My new Aussie "mates" would introduce me to Vegemite and cricket. As our safari was coming to an end, Megan was attempting to summit Kilimanjaro herself. I returned to our base hotel that I would stay at before getting on a plane to head home. Little did I know that Megan was headed to the same hotel after managing to also reach the top of the mountain.

Megan and I found ourselves in the same hotel courtyard that night but had still not managed to meet. The following day my Aussie friends were due to take off for Sydney while I would remain in Tanzania for an additional day. My thinking was to give myself an extra day in case of travel delays. Megan was also planning a Serengeti safari similar to the one I had experienced and had given herself a day at the hotel to recover from the mountain climb.

As I made my way out of my room to say goodbye to my Aussie friends whose taxi had just arrived, they would introduce me to the girl seated beside them whom they had met at the hotel's communal dinner the previous night. Her name was Megan and her accent told me she was also Australian. Little did I know that this woman with sunburnt shoulders and aching climbing legs would end up becoming my wife.

## **Our Long Distance Relationship Journey Together**

After returning from Africa, Megan and I continued to keep in contact. We had spent less than 12 hours together, yet somehow managed to create a connection that followed us each home. I returned to work at a Southern Florida golf course



while Megan worked the front desk of a hotel in Australia while chasing her double degree in both journalism and law. The time difference meant I would be wishing her a good night just as my day was beginning.

I don't think either of us ever imagined the path we were headed down, but we just found ourselves walking towards each other from opposite sides of the earth. A simple text from Megan saying the single word "hi" would set into motion our long distance romance, and from that there was no looking back.

Over the next few months we exchanged phone calls, emails, handwritten letters, postcards, and small gifts. Mailed letters and packages would of course take a couple of weeks to arrive due to the long distance but they were always a welcome sight. I would find ways around the distance by being imaginative. I would have fresh flowers sent to Megan's work using Australian florists and place online pizza orders to be sent to her using Australian pizza companies but ordered from the U.S.

Gradually our phone calls and letters became longer and more frequent. Skype video chats became part of our weekly communication as well. I don't know if I could tell you what it was about her that I found so intriguing, nor do I think she could explain her attraction for me. When we met that single day in Africa, we weren't exactly looking our best. Climbing Kilimanjaro had taking its toll on both of us and we both looked a bit rough from it. Short cold showers, no remaining shaving cream, and broken hotel bathroom mirrors with lighting that only occasionally worked, didn't exactly make it easy to look well groomed let alone glamorous. But for some reason we managed to fall for each other anyway.

Maybe it was the fact that we weren't expecting anything from each other or maybe fate really does exist. Whatever the reason was, our relationship began and continued to develop. Roughly 3 months after our chance encounter and the daily communication that had ensued, Megan sent a text which simply asked if we should make our relationship official. We had met in August and by late October were locked in a long distance relationship that would take years before we were able to put an end to the separation.

We met for the second time nearly 5 months after our first meeting. We planned to do a small tour of Scotland and to make things extra romantic our first night, decided to book a room in a real life castle.

A major snowstorm was sweeping through Europe at the time which threatened to almost keep us from meeting. Thankfully both our planes were able to land despite the heavy snowfall and high winds and we were once again united halfway between our home countries. We spent the next week touring the Scottish Highlands, gagging at the thought of eating haggis, searching for the Loch Ness monster, and attending the Hogmanay New Year's celebration.

From there we decided to extend our time together by spending time in London, Paris, and finally Amsterdam. Eventually we had to put an end to our brief fairytale to face our real lives and our long distance relationship.

Nearly nine months after our long distance relationship began I made plans to meet Megan and her family in Canberra, Australia. In-between my introduction to her family and first experience with kangaroos, I somehow managed to find the time and the courage to drop to one knee and propose. I am not sure what drove me to make such a brazen decision, as this was only the third time we had met face to face. I was even more shocked when she said yes, especially since I hadn't even proposed with a ring.

The ring would eventually come later when I proposed for the second time, ring in hand, inside England's Westminster Abbey, where Prince William and Kate Middleton were wed. Luckily I received the same response she gave the first time and we continued on with our engagement.

It made sense to meet up in countries located in-between the U.S. and Australia as it was cheaper and gave us a lovely holiday which always helped to spark romance. Eventually Megan would meet me in Florida where she would meet my parents as well. I was glad she was able to meet my father before he passed away the following year from cancer, far too young.

Engaged for over a year but still living 15,000km apart, I decided the distance was too much to bear and therefore quit my job, sold my car, and headed to Australia on a twelve month working visa. This would allow me to make some

money while in Australia while also being able to live with my fiancé, even if it was in her parent's garage.

Thankfully, living together did not change our relationship. Our time together only helped to strengthen our bond. We made plans for our wedding, travelled around Australia, and had the opportunity to enjoy life as a normal couple for once. We would be married roughly a year later on Valentine's Day in Hawaii, a decision that would allow members from each of our families to attend. From there we decided to move to my home state of Florida as I still owned a home that was left vacant while I was away in Australia.

I think we both knew that living in Florida would only be temporary. We believed Australia would be a better fit for our lives as she had a much larger family and it seemed like a better option for raising children if we decided to start a family of our own down the road.

Living in the U.S. allowed Megan to get a taste for what America had to offer and we managed to travel across the majority of the states by way of several road trips. Our travels around the world also continued as we found ourselves in the places like the Galapagos, Easter Island, the Amazon, and Iceland. The travel that had brought us together was now deeply rooted in our blood.

After living in the states for a year, we finally made plans to head back to Australia permanently which meant facing a long process of immigration. It seemed as though we had only just finished the process of allowing Megan to live and work in the United States and were now beginning the whole process again, for me to do the same in Australia. This step once again involved an incredible amount of paperwork, background checks, health checks, and many months of waiting for the approval of my spousal visa to enter and remain in Australia permanently.

Five years had passed since we had met first met that night in Africa, but we somehow managed to finally find ourselves hand in hand on a plane to Australia. Australia would be our home, a place where the next chapter of our lives could begin and signalled that we had finally overcome the extreme long distance and constant moving from place to place. I had thought leaving the U.S. would be difficult or seem strange, but as I looked into my partner's eyes I knew everything

was going to be just fine. It was no longer a leap of faith I was taking, it was a leap of love.

## **Present Day**

Today we find ourselves living in rural Tasmania. Having just celebrated our fifth wedding anniversary, we have now settled into our first purchased home together. Although we haven't added to our family yet, we look to do so now that we have finally been able to call somewhere permanently our home.

I have become a permanent resident of Australia and look forward to becoming an Australian citizen in the near future. Although I may drive on the opposite side of the road now and follow cricket as opposed to baseball, it truly feels like home. It is said that home is where the heart is and there may be a great deal of truth to that. I could not imagine my life without Megan and it is becoming hard to recall my life before her.

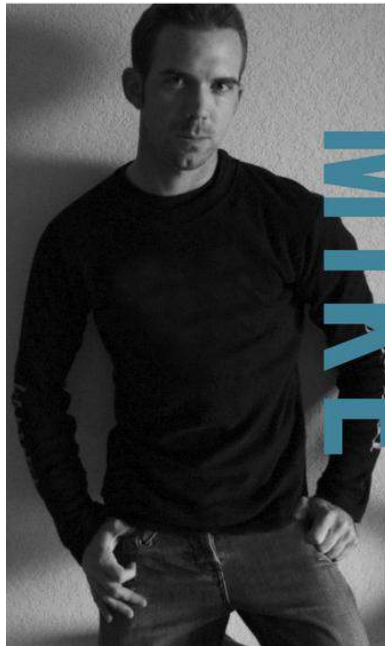
Through all the struggles, difficult decisions, and changes that we experienced in our long distance relationship, it has without a doubt been well worth it. Don't get me wrong, there were many occasions where I was very doubtful our relationship would last. It wasn't that our love for each other ever changed or faltered, but the realities of life and logistics of such an undertaking can be quite challenging. A successful long distance relationship requires a lot of patience, effort, and probably a bit of luck as well. Then again, what relationship doesn't require these things?

Every long distance relationship will involve a different set of circumstances and each will have its difficulties. The key is to just take things one day at a time. Finding love is the easy part, not letting the person we want to spend the rest of our life with slip through our hands is where it can prove to be difficult. Couples in long distance relationships must remember that conquering the distance will be just one of many hurdles they will face in their life together. The relationship will continue to require the utmost commitment, love, and ability to communicate long after the issues of distance are solved.

## MEGAN JERRARD

"I WAS BORN IN TASMANIA-AUSTRALIA AND BEGAN TRAVELING THE WORLD AT AGE 15. AFTER MEETING MIKE IN AFRICA AT AGE 22, WE WENT ON TO TRAVELING TO OVER 50+ COUNTRIES TOGETHER. WE NOW RESIDE TOGETHER IN AUSTRALIA."

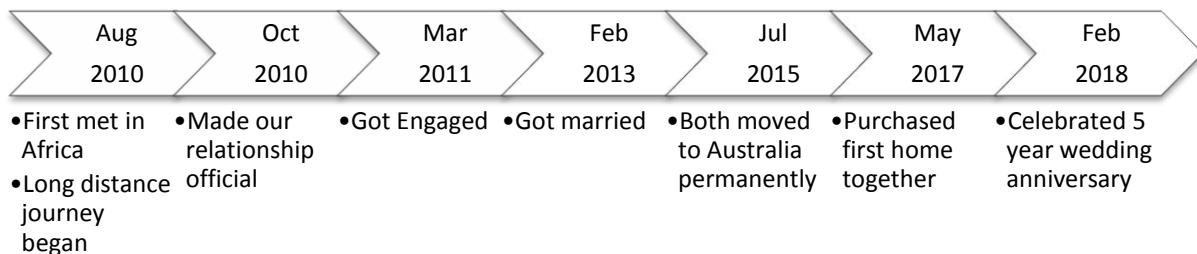
MEGAN



## MIKE JERRARD

"I SPENT MOST OF MY YEARS IN FLORIDA-U.S.A. BEFORE MEETING MEGAN AT AGE 27. THE DAY WE MET IN AFRICA WOULD FOREVER CHANGE BOTH OUR LIVES AS WE EMBARKED ON OUR LONG DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP JOURNEY TOGETHER."

## Our Long Distance Relationship Timeline



# **Beginning a Long Distance Relationship**

*-Mike-*

Today's potential dating pool offers us many more choices when it comes to finding a partner. No longer are we restricted to finding someone in our own neighbourhood as was the case in the not so distant past. Our world is filled with over seven and a half billion people and with today's online technology and ability to travel almost anywhere in the world, we can easily interact and meet up with almost anyone around the globe.

Along with global social media platforms, there are countless online dating websites where we may find our next love interest. No longer are we forced to meet our future partner on the street, in a bar, or via an introduction from a friend. We no longer even have to come face to face with another person in order to start up a relationship anymore.

## **How a Long Distance Relationship is Born**

Having unlimited global choices when it comes to finding a partner sounds great at first, but it brings about a new obstacle when it comes to relationships. More people than ever before are finding themselves faced with the scenario of a long distance relationship.

Our jobs, schooling, and daily activities can take up a great deal of our time which can leave us with little free time to date. This has made it quite common and effective to search for dating partners online. We can easily find time to browse different dating sites, communicate via email, and use things like Skype to engage with potential partners without having to rearrange our schedules. This ease of instant communication means we can easily strike up a conversation with others from another state or even another country.

The world has become a much smaller place with the evolution of technology, and this has led to an increase in long distance relationships worldwide. But no long distance relationship is the same and each one can come about through a

different set of circumstances, whether it be meeting someone while travelling, accepting an out of state or international job offer, or simply meeting someone online that lives in a different locale.

Many people truly want to be in a relationship, but the realities of our daily schedules just don't permit us the time to search for and often maintain one which is long lasting. From this perspective, online connections and long distance relationships can prove far easier to manage in that they have little to no impact on our daily schedules but still provide the emotional support and social interaction of a partner.

An increase in both business and leisure travel has also led to an increase in long distance relationships. Travel offers the opportunity to cross paths with more people than ever before and often creates an atmosphere for finding love. Travelling for the most part is romantic and exciting. We escape our monotonous everyday lives to head somewhere new. We're overwhelmed with new sights, sounds, and culinary delights. We become open to new experiences and usually let our guard down a bit. It's very easy to fall in love in this type of setting and many people end up doing just that.

For most of us, travel romances are short-lived in the physical sense as most people return home, happy to write them off as a fling. But what if you find a connection so incredible it changes your life? Once we return to our normal lives, the reality is that the relationship is reduced to interaction over the internet and phone. This is where you must decide if you're satisfied with a long distance relationship where you may be forced to maintain your connection with each other through periods of minimal physical contact. A couple may decide that occasionally meeting up works perfectly for their individual lives or they may decide to work towards ultimately being

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*Even a relationship that doesn't start off as being long distance can turn into one.*



together full time. It's in this moment that a long distance relationship is born.

Even a relationship that doesn't start off as being a long distance one can turn into one. You can be in a relationship with your high school sweetheart, living near each other or together for years only to find yourself suddenly split by long distance. This can come about by military deployment, college acceptance, or job offers. No relationship is ever immune to the potential for long distance to become a factor. Even couples that have been married for years have the potential of their relationship becoming long distance.

## **What Do You Want Out of Your Long Distance Relationship?**

However a long distance relationship is born, it's important that each person realizes the dynamics of the situation and decides if they are willing to accept the fact that their relationship involves not regularly seeing each other. Such relationships often require a lot of time and effort and both parties must be willing to nurture the relationship until the long distance hurdle has been overcome. If you find yourself in a long distance relationship, you need to ask yourself if your current set of circumstances allows for you to make the commitment to such an important decision. Long distance relationships can be successful, but only if both people in the relationship are fully committed and you're both on the same page about what you want out of it. If you are currently consumed by work or are planning on undertaking a college degree, you may want to focus on that for the time being. You can still continue with your long distance relationship so long as both sides understand each other's motives or current priorities.

So often people think there is only one person out there that is destined to be their soul mate. The truth, however, is that there are many people out there whom we could easily create a long lasting loving relationship with. More often than not, it is timing that dictates who we will ultimately choose for our partner that we wish to spend the rest of our lives with.

Timing has a profound impact on whether two people will be compatible long term. You can easily experience lust for another person, but if the timing isn't right



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you will find it difficult for the lust to develop into a deeper love. Because it takes two for a relationship to work, timing must be right for both parties.

It is important to note that just because a relationship with someone may not blossom at the present time doesn't mean it cannot lead to a successful one later down the road with that same individual. That is not to say that one sided or unrequited love has a chance. There needs to be a mutual attraction between two people for it to work. Don't be discouraged though if you and your partner, although in love, cannot commit to the relationship fully right now. People are all different and therefore will need to decide on their own when they are ready for such a decision.

## **Young Love and Long Distance Relationships**

For younger adults, it's important to be really careful about committing to such an important life decision. This is not to say that young teenagers in love cannot end up married happily ever after, but you want to make sure you have the ability to grow into the individual person you have the potential to become. We are constantly evolving as an individual, but much more so when we are entering adulthood. You want to make certain you truly know yourself and what you want out of life before you try to mesh that with someone else's vision for their life.

Long distance relationships can be extremely difficult for younger individuals as you may not have access to transportation or the funds to meet with your boyfriend

or girlfriend on a regular basis. You are also most likely not able to make certain decisions when it comes to things like where you want to live or other freedoms that are laid out by your parents. This is not to say that it's impossible to make a long distance relationship work as a young teenager, but you may find you have a seemingly more difficult road ahead of you. You may need to be extra flexible and patient to allow the relationship to mature over time as you and your partner do as well.

As hard as it is to admit, we haven't had a great deal of life experience as a teenager or young adult in their early 20s. Many of us can be quite naive when it comes to understanding love and relationships. Even adults struggle with it. This naivety has the potential to open our younger selves up to some ugly truths that can be present with romantic relationships. This is especially true when it comes to the online world.

Teens and those in their early 20s have to be extremely careful when it comes to meeting up with people they have met online. We have all heard nightmare stories that may involve catfishing (someone pretending to be a different person), paedophilia, and possible sexual assault. Although relationships created online can lead to negative outcomes for any age group, younger adults are more susceptible to being duped or coerced into things they did not expect or want. As difficult as it may be, if you are young and do decide to start an online relationship with someone, it is best to make your parents or other family members aware of the relationship. They can often distinguish warning signs you may not see, as it's very easy to ignore red flags when we're jaded by the prospect of falling in love.





## Young Love Stats

### RECENT SURVEYS HAVE SHOWN THE FOLLOWING WHEN IT COMES TO YOUNG ADULTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

- 40% of teens do not tell their parents about their relationships
- 60% of teens say they plan to break-up with their current boyfriends or girlfriends before attending college
- 90% of teens hope to one day get married
- 60% of teens will be involved in a relationship and 70% will have their heart broken
- 95% of teens believe in true love while 50% believe in love at first sight
- 1.5 million high school students experience physical abuse from their partners
- 43% of dating college women experience violent and abusive behaviors
- only 33% of people will notify others about the abuse they experience

# Meeting Each Other in Person

*-Megan-*

It seems like meeting one another in person would be a prerequisite for beginning a relationship but as we have learned, this is not the case in today's society. Many long distance relationships begin from two people meeting online that may live thousands of miles apart, making actually meeting up a difficult task.

However this doesn't mean that you will necessarily avoid a long distance scenario if you meet in a traditional way such as during a night out on the town. With international travel being as widespread as it is, you can easily meet someone who is just passing through or you may be the one who is travelling. Even if neither of you are travelling, you may find that one of you has future plans that will involve relocating from the current city you're both based in.

Whether you meet someone before you begin a relationship, or after in the case of meeting an online connection, long distance can always become a factor. It's important to know that there is no right or wrong way to begin a long distance relationship. These days it doesn't matter whether you meet first online or more traditionally in a face to face manner. Neither scenario will put you at an advantage for a more successful relationship.

## Meeting Before Beginning Your Long Distance Relationship

Meeting someone in person generally offers us insight into whether we are attracted to someone or not. We can see what someone looks like, hear their voice, and get an idea of what kind of person they are. The old romantic notion of "love at first sight" comes about from first meetings. Although you can feel a strong overwhelming attraction towards someone the instant you meet them, when it comes to relationships, love takes time to develop. Initial attraction is definitely helpful and can make for a solid foundation when it comes to falling in love with someone, but it's also important to make sure the person you are fond of has the right materials and tools to build a meaningful relationship. You may have found

the most beautiful parcel of land, but you can't build a house without durable nails and a quality hammer so to speak.

Even though initially meeting someone in person will not equate to a higher chance of relationship success, it does rule out the chance of being catfished, at least from a physical standpoint. Meeting someone in person doesn't always mean you get what you see though. Even when you have been acquainted with someone for some time, you may find they have been hiding their true self. People can very easily be hiding skeletons in their closet or may already be in a relationship and possibly married.

Relationships that arise from a close friendship or with someone that you have known for a good deal of time have the benefit of usually having a better sense of who someone really is. Although people can harbor secrets, it is generally difficult to keep the truth from escaping the longer time passes. Knowing someone over the span of weeks, months, or even years allows time to really learn who they are and allows the lust stage to wear off. This allows us to see more clearly through sober eyes.

Once a relationship has begun, having met in person can enhance the bond you share. This often makes it easier to tackle long distance, whether it is currently an issue or if it becomes one down the road. The more time you have invested in each other will most likely make you both more willing to endure the hardships of long distance.

Couples that have lived together for years and even married couples with children may have to face long distance down the road whether it is caused by a work opportunity, military, or something else. Having a house or children together are huge motivating factors to getting through any struggles with long

*Once a relationship has begun, having met in person can enhance the bond you share making it easier to tackle long distance.*



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distance, where most couples will find a way to ultimately be together full time.

## **Long Distance Relationships Where You Have Not Yet Met**

Relationships that begin online have advantages and disadvantages to meeting someone in person first. A whole new set of rules are brought to the table of dating and relationships when it comes to the internet. While video apps like FaceTime and Skype make it possible to physically see each other when you communicate, it's still difficult to pick up on physical cues that someone is into you such as engaging eye contact, inward leaning, mirroring actions, and touching. And it's important to keep in mind that an initial attraction you feel for a photograph or through a webcam may not be the same in person. It is also important to note that the giddiness and nervousness that often comes about when you are around someone you like is hard to replicate that of true physical presence.

Online dating often involves trying to decipher emails and texts to get a sense of the tone or feeling that was implied. Words can easily be taken the wrong way and not clarified as quickly or easily as when engaging face to face.

You also have the problem of an actual physical connection. Physical touch has the ability to communicate a range of feelings such as love, compassion, anger, happiness, sadness, and fear. Touch can be extremely important for a relationship to succeed and we're not necessarily referring to sex. Physical connections such as hugging, kissing, holding hands, caressing, and cuddling can more often than not strengthen a couple's bond more than sex can. Sex of course can also help to strengthen your bond so long as it is done in a healthy way where the desire is mutual between both parties.

Although physical connection is extremely important for a relationship and may ultimately be needed for a relationship to become long lasting, it is not necessarily compulsory in the beginning stages of a relationship. Some people struggle with meeting others face to face or may have issues when it comes to physical contact. For them, meeting people via avenues such as the internet is a much more comfortable way to get to know someone.

*A definite advantage of an online relationship is that people tend to find it easier to be themselves and are more relaxed.*



*One must be careful with online relationships as it is very easy for a person to create a social media account using a false name where they then take on a sort of alter ego. They can post photos stolen from other people's real profiles or may use stock images.*



A definite advantage of an online relationship is that people tend to find it easier to be themselves and are more relaxed. Some people can be extremely shy when first meeting someone, but they are completely open with close friends. This type of person may find it much easier to begin a relationship with someone online before actually meeting them.

Some find it difficult to say the right words when confronted with someone in person, even confident people can struggle with conversation during a first date. Communicating online or over a phone, however, can give you that little extra time to come up with the perfect words to say via text, message, or email. You can easily delete a sentence or a thought, whereas it is impossible to do so in a face to face situation.

Searching for a partner online also gives you the ability to do a bit of research or innocent stalking to find someone who has the qualities you are looking for. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter can allow us to get a pretty good insight into what a person's personality is like, while also discovering what interests them. You get to see how they interact with their friends and family, at least in terms of how they communicate with them over social media.

When it comes to online relationships, you have to ask yourself what you are looking to get out of the relationship. Are you content with a relationship that lacks a physical connection or is the ultimate goal to come together as a more traditional couple? It should clearly be communicated by both sides what each other's motives are for the relationship. Some people may be solely looking for a sort of virtual companionship where

they simply want to feel support from another individual and may not be looking for anything more serious.

It's also important to be wary of meeting individuals online who aren't who they say they are. Catfishing is the term used for when someone lures another individual into a relationship by adopting a fictional online persona. The internet world makes it much easier for a person to make a fictitious profile that may be more appealing for attracting the person they desire.

A person can quite easily create a social media account using a false name where they then take on a sort of alter ego. They can post photos stolen from other people's real profiles or may use stock images. Others may use their true identity but may use photos taken years ago so as to appear younger. There are countless stories of people believing they were communicating with one person only to realize their true identity was completely different. You may for instance fall for a 20 year old single male that has an athletic build which may in truth be a 50 year old overweight married man or even a woman.

Although catfishing is probably not as common as certain T.V. shows or horror stories would like you to believe, it is definitely something you need to be aware of. Our biggest piece of advice would be not to ignore red flags or warning signs. More often than not, there will be many signs you can look for to avoid this type of unfortunate scenario.

## **Signs Your Online Relationship May be Fake**

When you've committed to an online relationship without having physically met, it is important to be aware of signs which may signal that your relationship is not genuine. It would be wonderful to be able to trust that everyone's intentions are genuine but this of course is not always the case. It is important to make sure the person you are talking to is in fact the person they say they are long before you decide to meet up with them. Don't feel in a rush to meet until you feel confident the person is genuine and safe to meet. If you feel as though you are being pressured into meeting too quickly, this can be a red flag and you may want to take a step back.



As we have already stated, an online profile may not always portray the real person that created it. For new online relationships, you can always try doing a Google reverse image search to see if the images of the person you are interested in are simply stock images or are attached to profiles containing another name. Profiles containing a small number of photos or photos lacking interaction with other people are also a sign that things may not be quite right.

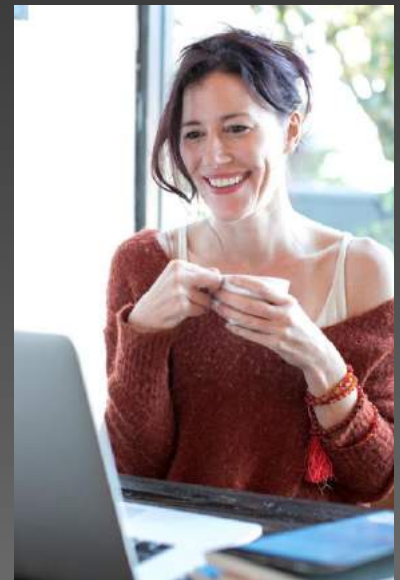
Genuine profiles generally have a long profile history along with evidence of interaction with other people. They shouldn't be cryptic in terms of describing who the person is. Don't be afraid to ask questions in the beginning. If the person says they live in a certain city, quiz them about it by asking what their favorite restaurant or place to hang out is. They should be able to quickly provide you with answers which you can then easily validate by quickly researching online.

It may seem a bit overkill to fully research people you meet online, but you should always take precautions when you don't know the history of a person you are pursuing. Even if a person's profile checks out and they are in fact the person depicted, you still need to make sure they are of good character and someone who has the qualities you are looking for.

Take the time to see what kind of photos they are posting, what things they are liking on Facebook and Instagram, and what kind of language they are using. Offensive content may show their true character and will help you avoid wasting your time by pursuing the relationship any further.

It is also important to understand that while a person may be genuine, that doesn't mean they're the right person for you. Really try to find out what they are into or how they like spending their time. You want to make sure your personalities match, so if they are clearly into video games and you are into

*Genuine profiles generally have a long profile history along with evidence of interaction with other people. They shouldn't be cryptic in terms of describing who the person is.*



*You want to be sure you are both on the same page when it comes to knowing if the relationship is just a friendship or something more.*



fitness and sports, you may want to move on. Sometimes people looking for love online can be too eager for a relationship and therefore overlook the fact that they are starting an online relationship that is doomed to last in the real world. You can of course keep the online relationship for companionship and someone to talk to, but you want to be sure both parties are on the same page when it comes to knowing if the relationship is just a friendship or something more. You have an equal responsibility to be honest and not waste someone else's time.

If you find that your online interest is constantly bringing up topics of a sexual nature or is too eager to meet up, it could be as sign their intentions aren't innocent. You should never feel pressured to send any explicit or compromising photos of yourself. This rings true even when you really know someone or even when you are in a long standing relationship with a person.

Similarly, you should be very wary if your new partner suddenly asks you for large sums of money, especially if you haven't yet met them. A common internet scam is for thieves to start an online relationship with someone and then request a loan from that person once they have gained their trust. They may request money from you for reasons such as having to care for a loved one, that they are experiencing financial difficulty, or saying they wish to buy a plane ticket to come and see you. If you experience this in your relationship, it usually means you are the target of a long con. Once you've transferred the money, you most likely will never hear from them again.

It is easy to think you wouldn't be so ignorant or naive when it comes to scams such as these, but the truth is love or the desire for love can place blinders on us all. If you wish to meet your long distance partner and find yourself more financially well-off than they are, it is fine to purchase flights to see them or for them to see you. The key is to book everything yourself. Never give someone your credit card details or transfer cash unless you can be 100% certain that you're not being taken advantage of.

Always stay true to your convictions and trust your intuition. If your instincts are telling you that something doesn't feel right, don't brush it off or ignore it. If you don't feel comfortable with certain types of behaviour, don't put up with it online. That's not to say that you should actively start looking for red flags where

*Young adults should stick with developing healthy relationships with peers they know from school, their neighbourhood, or after school activities rather than looking to the internet.*



*It is so important to be yourself whether you are in the everyday world or the online world.*



there are none, as this could potentially sabotage your relationship by being overly paranoid and untrusting,. There should be a balance of being able to recognize if you're being lead on, while still being able to invest time into developing your relationship.

It pays to have close friends or family members offer their opinions on an individual you met online before you decide to meet with them in person. They may be able to see things with a clearer set of eyes and pick up on red flags you overlooked. While this is a really good idea at any age, it is especially important advice if you are a young adult.

Personally, we would recommend young adults avoid starting online relationships and should instead stick with developing healthy relationships with peers they know from school, their neighbourhood, or after school activities. At this point in your life you should be focused on your own personal growth and future. As we mentioned previously, younger people are much more prone to being lured into a fake or harmful relationship. The younger we are, the less life experience we have to be able to identify whether or not a person is truly genuine or not.

## **Meeting for the First Time**

Taking an online connection to the next level by meeting in person can be a make or break for the relationship. In a perfect world, the bonds we make online would be guaranteed to carry over to the face to face world. Sadly this is not always the case. People have a tendency to glorify their lives online and the identity that is depicted via a Facebook or Instagram

account can be vastly different than who a person truly is.

This is why it is so important to be yourself whether you are in the everyday world or the online world. Falsely advertising who you truly are will only make it more difficult to find a match that is truly right for you. You can't blame someone for changing their opinion of you if their original opinion was based on a false misrepresentation of who you really are. By creating a false or glorified depiction of yourself online, you run the risk of your online relationship quickly turning sour when you meet in person.

By portraying your life as always glamorous or adventurous via your social media profiles, your online partner may only see you in this light and could be in for a bit of a shock or letdown when they realize your authentic life isn't always perfect. Although most people realize that life isn't perfect, an online relationship can make us immune to this truth as we may get used to the idea of perfection.

When we take our online relationships to physical meetings, we can easily feel immediate disappointment based on unrealistic beliefs. This disappointment combined with a long distance factor can give us the all the excuse we need to prematurely end a possible quality relationship. We can easily talk ourselves into thinking there are many more fish in the sea and return to our online world where perfect relationships still exist, albeit falsely.

Meeting someone in person that you initially met online will always carry a certain degree of risk in terms of safety; it is therefore advised that you choose a public location which has at least moderate traffic. Although most online relationships will involve genuine individuals who are truly seeking love or companionship, others could result in a dangerous situation.

It is advised that younger individuals, and by that we mean non-adults, refrain from meeting a person they met online or at the very least request that the meeting be chaperoned to avoid the possibility of sexual assault or kidnapping. Similarly, single adults who have children must be careful they are not being used by their online partner simply as a means to reach their kids.

Even strong adults with a good head on their shoulders can easily be caught up in an online romance where they become immune to red flag warnings. An

individual can present themselves online as prince charming or the sweet girl next door when in fact their intentions are far from innocent. Meeting in a public space and letting friends or family know the details of your date are precautions you can take to avoid becoming a victim. You could always do a background check on someone before physically meeting but if this is genuinely needed to put your mind at ease then you should probably rethink whether you should really meet up with them at all.



## The Future: Meeting via Virtual Reality

A new form of meeting each other could be in the near future with the advent of virtual reality. Soon online dating websites and social media could allow us to spend time with another person in the same virtual space without having to physically be there. This means we may be able to go on a date to a fancy restaurant or walk in the park with our online love via a virtual reality experience.

This virtual experience may allow us to meet someone in a similar way to a face to face meeting, where we may be able to see how they act in person. Depending

on how advanced the technology becomes, you may be able to see someone's mannerisms and emotions via a virtual date. The technology already exists where we can experience a sexual experience without needing another actual person present. There is a wide range of virtual reality / interactive sex toys for both men and women which your partner can control via an app, enabling you to enjoy a level of intimacy irrespective of physical location. This may lead to where two people in an online relationship can engage in a virtual sexual experience where they feel as though they are really making love to each other.

Although this may seem a bit too far out of the comfort zone for some people, it could be a safer means of releasing sexual tension before an online couple fully gains each other's trust. You also have the added bonus of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases not being an issue.

Studies have shown that people in online relationships who choose to meet for the first time quickly after having met online may not always have a favorable result. Attraction was shown to decrease as quickly as the first initial date or meeting, especially when it came to newly developed online relationships. Online relationships which have a longer history and a more solid foundation of friendship will generally have a more positive outcome as both parties will be more invested. The more time you take to discover who each other is, the better chance you have to create a deeper bond before meeting in person.

Virtual reality dating could act as a sort of "try before you buy" way of deciding whether a real life meeting would be a next positive step or if the relationship isn't what you expected. This could allow you to not waste your time with relationships you don't see progressing very far. It's important to be careful, however, not to become too caught up with virtual reality. Ultimately, no amount of technology will ever replace the feeling of truly connecting with another person physically and emotionally in the real world.

## **After You Meet**

When you're meeting someone for the first time you should always go in with

an open mind. First meetings are almost always a little bit awkward and you may not get a clear picture of who someone truly is. In cases where an online relationship is genuine where both parties have presented an honest picture of themselves, it is important to remember each other's online personality during your first physical meeting. Nerves can easily cause us to lose our confidence to the point we may not even seem like the same person. It is therefore important to be somewhat forgiving towards each other when you first meet in person.

If, however, your online partner behaves drastically different in person, engages in abusive behaviour, or makes unwanted sexual advances, it may be a sign to move on from the relationship. This is why meeting in a public place with moderate traffic is important so you have a quick exit if you need one and can access outside help if it's warranted.

If all went well during the first meeting, it is important to express to each other that you are still interested. Feel free to acknowledge that you enjoyed the meeting. Look for signs that you both feel the same way and wish to continue the relationship. As tempting as it may be, don't be in too much of a hurry to plan another meeting. This of course may not even be an option right away in cases of extreme long distance where it is quite difficult to meet regularly.

The initial meeting should act simply as the next step to strengthening your bond together. When it comes to online long distance relationships, you have to realize that things progress slowly and you cannot expect someone to give up a career, quit school, or uproot their life to be closer to you right away. In time if the relationship is strong and genuine, there will be more face to face contact where ultimately you may find yourselves living in the same place.

*Virtual reality dating could act as a sort of "try before you buy" way of deciding whether a real life meeting would be a next positive step.*



*Future online couples may be able to engage in a virtual sexual experience where they feel as though they are really making love to each other.*



# Long Distance Dating

*-Mike-*

It goes without saying that long distance relationships make it difficult to stay in touch with your partner. Because you find yourselves separated by distance, you are not afforded the luxury of being able to easily and frequently go on dates together, greet each other with a kiss, or spend quality face to face time. So how exactly do you keep the romance and the relationship alive?

Frequent communication with each other goes a long way in feeding the relationship but you may be surprised just how many creative ways there are to express your feelings towards your partner besides simply resorting to phone calls, texts, and emails. Exchanging words is of course one of the best ways you can learn and grow as a couple, but there are plenty of actions and gestures you can implement in place of going on dates.

Of course there are times when you will want to actually meet up to keep your bond strong. Because actually meeting your long distance partner may happen rather infrequently, it is important to make the most of your short time together. When you are in a long distance relationship, you are forced to focus on quality time rather than quantity. By making sure your short time together is extra special, the memories will stick with you longer and hopefully aid you in getting through the difficult times you both are apart.

## **Creative Ways to Get Around the Long Distance**

Although frequently dating your new long distance partner may be off the cards, you can easily replace traditional dating with other gestures that can be equally as enjoyable. Your options are as limited as your imagination when it comes to finding ways to combat the distance.

You may not be able to go to the movies together but you can always stream a movie together at the same time. The internet also makes it easy to have food delivered to your partner as a surprise. For instance, I was actually able to have a



*Even though sending texts and emails may be quicker, it is important to remember just how special and personal a handwritten letter or postcard can be.*



*Living in different time zones can make things a bit tricky, especially when this means a 12 hour or more time difference.*



Domino's pizza delivered to Megan at her job in Australia by ordering it online all the way from America. In doing so, I got the seal of approval from her colleagues who said I was welcome to send pizza to the office any time!

Interstate or international relationships can make use of drop shipping options to save costs on sending gifts to each other and you can also easily order flowers online and have them sent to your partner wherever they may live.

Even though sending texts and emails may be quicker, it is important to remember just how special and personal a handwritten letter or postcard can be. We tend to not get much in the way of quality physical mail these days, so actually receiving a letter from someone we care about has become somewhat of a rare treat. To save on the cost of postage, send numerous letters at the same time and date them as to when they are to be opened. This allows for a continuous flow of personal messages your partner can read.

For instance, at the beginning of our long distance relationship we were both counting down the days until we could meet again. We had planned to meet in Scotland for Christmas, but two months out from that date I forwarded a parcel to Australia which contained 60 handwritten letters for 60 days. The letters came with the instruction to open one letter per day for every day until we met. Romantic gestures like this keep the romance alive even when you can't go on physical dates. If you're short on creativity, classic romantic comedies are a great place to steal ideas from.

Living in different time zones can make things a bit tricky, especially when this means a 12 hour or more time difference. You will get used to the time difference and will get in the habit of remembering when to wish your partner a good morning or goodnight on a daily basis. When it comes to long distance, it isn't so much how much you spend on gifts or how grand you make your gestures, rather it is about maintaining continual interaction with each other no matter how insignificant it may seem. The goal is making sure that the other person knows you're thinking about them

## **How Often Should You Meet Up With Your Long Distance Partner?**

When it comes to how often you should see your long distance partner, there isn't an ideal frequency that you should strive for and there is certainly no normal standard in terms of the amount of time long distance couples spend apart. Every relationship is different and it's very rare that a couple will find themselves with identical circumstances to others. It's important not to fall into the trap of thinking you have to see each other every so many days or else your relationship is destined to fail. Some people in long distance relationships are fortunate enough to be in a position where they can see each other often while others may only be able to see each other once or twice a year depending on family and work commitments or financial constraints. Each relationship will also be unique in that it will involve partners who have different needs when it comes to physical contact.

You will probably always have somewhat of an urge to want to be with your partner, especially in the beginning of a relationship. However, it is important to acknowledge that just because you have the desire to always want be together doesn't mean it is always a good idea to over-exhaust the relationship. We have all heard the saying "absence makes the heart grow fonder" and there really is some truth to it. It is a human trait to want to play with the shiny new toy but sometimes it is best to not overindulge yourself in regards to your new relationship.

Long distance relationships force you to take things slowly which can prove to be very beneficial for the longevity of your relationship. It allows you to really get

to know each other and you can therefore make an informed decision on whether the relationship is something you really want to pursue. When it comes to long distance relationships, the stakes can be high in terms of needing to make major life changing decisions in order to keep the relationship going. You want to be sure you are well aware of the impacts that your long distance relationship will have down the road when you both try to make distance no longer an issue.

You must realize that meeting each other may not always be easy, especially when the distance between you both is severe. You need to be willing to compromise your needs with what works best for your partner. Each person will differ when it comes to having the available free time, having the means to travel, or being able to accommodate having a partner visit depending on their individual schedule and circumstances. So when deciding on how frequently you and your partner should meet, it needs to be an arrangement that works uniquely for you.

## **Where, When, and How to Meet Up With Your Long Distance Partner**

When it comes to the specifics of meeting up in regards to a long distance relationship, your individual situation will determine where, when, and how you will be able to meet up. Describing your relationship can be somewhat subjective. One couple may see being separated by a few hours' drive constitutes a long distance relationship while another couple may find themselves separated by a long haul flight.

When it comes to choosing a place to meet up, living arrangements may dictate whose home will make for a better fit. One partner may be living with roommates while another owns a home all to his or herself. This may work better for privacy, especially when you are looking to physically and sexually reconnect after being separated for a long period of time.

In cases where children from a previous relationship are involved, a person may not be ready to introduce their partner to their kids and may wish to travel somewhere where they can be alone with their long distance partner. So long as the children are of age to look after themselves or are left with a responsible caretaker

*Choose periods to meet which will allow you both to maximize your time together where you won't need to worry about important work or school related issues.*



*If you can strategically plan your meet-ups to coincide with special occasions such as birthdays or holidays, this can make your meetings extra special.*



such as a family member, you should not feel guilty for leaving your kids for short periods of time to pursue a promising relationship. However, it may be a good idea to explain the situation to your children so that they understand what is going on and make an effort to answer any questions they may have.

If the distance is quite large between you as it was in our U.S.-Australia relationship, it may be more economical and quicker to pick a destination in-between where you both live. We found ourselves meeting up a lot in European countries like France, England, and Scotland. Not only were flights quicker and cheaper, but it added a sense of adventure and excitement to our get-togethers. Choosing a city, state, or country in the middle of the distance that separates you not only provides a neutral zone where neither partner has a home field advantage so to speak, but can also fuel the romance. If you find your employment leave is somewhat restrictive, this can also be a good way to kill two birds with one stone, where you can enjoy a vacation while also meeting your long distance partner.

Wherever you decide to meet up, it is important to choose a time which works best for both of you. Choosing to meet up at an inopportune time can easily cause stress which could prove to be more damaging than beneficial to your long distance relationship. Examples of inopportune times may be a family event you would have to miss in order to meet up or you may have major university papers due. Choose a period which will allow you to maximize your time together where you won't need to worry about important work or school related issues. If you can strategically plan your meet-ups to coincide with special occasions such as

birthdays or holidays, this can make your meetings extra special. You should not, however, feel disappointment or resentment towards your partner if they cannot make such a meeting possible. Long distance relationships are a lot less flexible meaning you both need to be more understanding and forgiving.

While meeting each other in neutral destinations can add to the romance and excitement, it is important at some point to visit each other in your respective home towns so you can see how each other acts in their everyday environment. Some people may find it intimidating or a bit uncomfortable to travel to where their partner lives and therefore should be given an equal chance to be the one that feels at home. Always meeting up in an exotic destination can be romantic and exciting but you have to realize that this isn't real life. Seeing each other in your real life worlds will allow you to see what each other's lives are really like.

## **Ways to Make the Most of the Time You Do Have Together**

When you're in a long distance relationship, the time you spend together is often quite short. It is therefore essential to make the most of your meetings and really focus on making sure that the time you do spend together is quality. The more quality time you spend together will go a long way to building intimacy, opening communication, and strengthening your bond.

One of the secrets to spending quality time together is by scheduling time alone together. If your partner is flying over to visit you at home, you can of course introduce them to your family and friends, but make sure you have time together outside of group situations. Consider eating in instead of going out for dinner with a group of friends or look at booking a local hotel instead of staying at home in cases where you may be living with parents or roommates. Make sure you really make your time together count.

The next secret to spending quality time together is turning off your devices. Nothing ruins the romance more than one or both of you constantly distracted by your phone. Distractions like this often have a way of interrupting your conversations and hindering your ability to communicate. If you're constantly

checking your phone, it can make the other person feel as though you're not interested in seeing or spending time with them. Limit the amount of time you spend checking up on social media updates while you are both spending time together. There is rarely a case where something is so urgent that it can't wait.

Durex condoms ran an interesting campaign recently where they flew ten couples out to Sri Lanka for a luxury vacation. Five couples had all electronic devices taken off them and were forced to disconnect. The other five couples got to keep their electronics. The couples were analyzed during their trip and it was found that the couples who had surrendered their devices were happier with their vacation, felt more connected at the end of it, and were found to have more sex!



# Making the Relationship Official

*-Megan-*

Knowing when the right time is to make your relationship official, or at least bring up the discussion with your partner, can be a daunting task. You don't want to potentially scare them away, but at the same time it's often important to find out where you both stand.

For many, knowing when to make things official just comes naturally. Without even discussing the matter, a couple may find themselves already fully committed to the relationship without really needing to put a label on it. For others, insecurities, past relationships, and future plans may lead them to seek confirmation that the relationship is headed for the next phase. We may not wish to waste time if it is looking like the relationship may not have a future.

When it comes to long distance relationships, making them official can be somewhat tricky. There are of course long distance relationships that exist where the couples are already committed, engaged, or married before the long distance begins. For these couples, making the relationship official has already been dealt with and this step is therefore not needed. For those just beginning a long distance relationship, making it official calls for a great deal of trust and patience.

Long distance relationships don't normally progress in the same way as traditional relationships do. Because there is distance, your relationship is built more around communication and establishing an emotional connection rather than physical interaction. Things that lead to more commitment, or "making it official", in a traditional relationship include dating or attending events together, meeting each other's friends and family, and spending the night at each other's place. However, with a long distance relationship, it is a lot more difficult for these types of things to happen within a short amount of time. Therefore, such relationships may require patience from both sides in order for your relationship to develop more fully before you call yourselves an official couple. You can of course both fully commit to the relationship, but you both must realize that it may be taking more of a leap of faith as you haven't really seen each other in a typical day to day life setting.

*Trust is key when it comes to online relationships or where couples are separated by distance.*



*Long distance relationships are built more around communication and establishing an emotional connection rather than physical interaction.*



Even without physical interaction, there are signs you can look for that may point to it being time to make your long distance relationship official. Trust is key when it comes to online relationships or where couples are separated by distance. As long as you're both on the same page and both understand what the other person expects, you can enjoy a rewarding and successful relationship. It comes down to how much you are willing to commit to the relationship even if it lacks the traditional amount of quality time together and physical connection that couples enjoy when distance isn't an issue.

## **Signs You Should Make Your Long Distance Relationship Official**

As we have discussed, long distance relationships don't always follow the same pattern that leads to making them official. For people in traditional relationships, there are signs that can make it quite obvious that the relationship has become serious and that you're ready to make it official. You begin to go on dates more frequently, may have dinner with each other's friends, meet each other's parents, or may begin packing a bigger and bigger overnight bag where you eventually begin to just leave some of your belongings at each other's place on a permanent basis.

With long distance relationships your bond strengthens based on the discussions you have with each other as you continue to share more and more about your personal lives. Unless you have a private jet or unlimited funds, you don't always have the luxury of spending your free time or weekends with each other.



It's much harder to show your affection by holding hands or kissing and it can be hard to know how the other person is truly feeling about the relationship when you lack the actions to back up the words that are spoken.

Thankfully, there are signs that you can look for that signal a long distance relationship is headed towards becoming official. Emails, texts, and phone calls will become more frequent as you long to hear from each other. While you can't attend events together or head out on dates, you will find yourself eager to share your daily happenings with each other as the relationship progresses. You may not meet each other's friends and family, but you might find that you get friend requests from people associated with your long distance partner which shows your partner has brought your name up with their friends and family. Sleeping in the same bed each night is impossible when it comes to long distance relationships, but you can easily wish each other a good night and say good morning on a daily basis. If you find you are both very sexual, you can of course engage in phone sex, Facetime sex, or Skype sex to feel closer to each other.

When it becomes apparent that you are both in contact with each other quite regularly, it signals that you are both becoming invested in the relationship. You may find that you are both making your relationship more apparent on social media outlets by tagging each other or posting photos of the times you were able to meet up. As the relationship becomes more visible in the public eye, it may be time to discuss if you are both ready to take the next step and make it official.

Because communication is so vital with long distance relationships, your words will go a long way in determining if your relationship is official. When you begin giving each other pet names or expressing that you love each other, you can be willing to bet your relationship has become official without it even having been discussed. If you wish to confirm that your

*If you find the relationship has continued to grow stronger but one of you is not willing to commit to making it official, you may want to ask what it is that is holding the relationship back.*



*Making a relationship official doesn't require a ring, a label, or any other token, rather it is simply two people realizing they are on the same page when it comes to where they want the relationship to go.*



relationship is indeed official you should not fear bringing it up to your partner as it is always a good idea to express where you are at in the relationship. If your partner is genuinely interested in the relationship progressing, they will either express they feel the same way or will discuss why they may need more time. Either way, you should get a clear picture of where the relationship stands.

If you find the relationship has continued to grow stronger but one of you is not willing to commit to making it official, you may want to ask what it is that is holding the relationship back. It may simply be timing, demands of a career, children being involved, or for other personal reasons. By identifying what it is that is inhibiting the relationship from becoming official and determining if it is simply temporary or something more permanent, you can decide whether it is worth working through or whether you wish to not waste your time if you don't see the relationship ever progressing past the present stage.

It's important to note that making a relationship official will be different for every couple. It isn't simply a matter of changing your social media status, rather it is a trusted commitment you both decide you want to share. It doesn't require a ring, a label, or any other token. It is simply two people realizing they are on the same page when it comes to where they want the relationship to go. By discussing your relationship together and deciding that you are both committed to making it continue, it can give you the motivation needed to develop a plan where you can overcome the distance so you can be together in the future.

## **What are the Terms of Your Long Distance Relationship?**

Because couples will have a different interpretation of what their relationship being "official" truly means, it is important to discuss what this means for your own unique relationship. You want to be sure you are both clear on what the rules are in regards to your relationship so as to not be caught off guard.

Does being official mean you are no longer dating or sleeping with other people? For many this will be a strict requirement of the relationship. For others who are more polyamorous, this may not be the case. Not to be confused with polygamy, polyamory does not involve being married to multiple wives or

husbands, nor is it tied to any religious faith. Polyamory involves having more than one loving relationship where everyone involved is aware of and understands the situation. A polyamorous relationship doesn't necessarily mean you are having sex with multiple partners, but it does usually consist of treating all relationships involved with an equal share of commitment where open communication and a tendency to not become jealous becomes vital.

After committing to the relationship by making it official, you should both discuss a rough timeline in regards to how you each see the relationship developing from here. It should be made clear how long the long distance is expected to last whatever the reasons may be. You want to make sure you both are content with the amount of physical contact you expect your long distance relationship will have until the distance is no longer an issue.

## **Staying Committed to a Long Distance Relationship**

Once you have made your relationship official and are clear on the relationship terms, the job is then to stay committed to the relationship. Staying committed to a long distance relationship can prove to be more difficult since you don't have that continual physical contact. There are often long periods where you may not know what your partner is up to and trusting each other becomes paramount to making the relationship survive.

If the relationship involves being committed solely to each other, it is now time to remove your profile from any dating websites. You should also make it clear in your day to day happenings that you are unavailable should you get the feeling someone else is pursuing you.

It is easy to feel as though you should keep your options open, especially with a long distance relationship where you are lacking constant face to face companionship. It is, however, important to understand that in order to make a long distance relationship work, you must treat it as you would any other relationship.

Should you have any second thoughts regarding the relationship or if anything is bothering you, it is important to discuss these things with your partner as soon as

they come up. Constant communication in which you are fully transparent with each other will help ease any feelings of stress, jealousy, or loneliness the long distance relationship may bring about.

Because trust is one of the biggest keys to succeeding in a long distance relationship, don't give your partner a reason not to trust you. Consider their feelings when you post things online and think about things like how a photo without context could be misconstrued. For instance, if you are constantly posting photos of lunch dates or nights out drinking with members or the opposite sex, this may cause problems with your long distance relationship. This can make your partner question your commitment, which in turn may make them question their commitment as well.



# Sex

*-Megan-*

Sex inevitably becomes a part of every relationship. Each relationship will of course be different when it comes to the role that sex will play. Do you both wish to wait for marriage or is that not important to you? Have you agreed to be monogamous in your long distance relationship or are you happy for it to be more open? It is important to discuss how important having sex is to both of you and how you plan to work around the long distance where you aren't physically together for long periods.

There are many questions that you need to not only ask yourself when it comes to sex, but having a discussion about it with your partner is equally important. Talking about sex is not exactly romantic and may not set the mood, but it is very important with any relationship. We tend to take sex very lightly in today's society, but there are real consequences that can impact the rest of your life. This becomes even more apparent when it comes to long distance relationships.

When it comes to sex, there are no set rules you need to follow so long as you are both considered adults in the eyes of the law, both parties are consenting, and both parties are honest with each other. Each person will have a different set of beliefs when it comes to sex and you should both be able to express yourself and your views freely. You do, however, need to make sure your views on sex are known by your partner so as you can decide if this will be an issue that needs to be addressed in your relationship.

## **Safety and Being Responsible**

Safe sex should be practiced with any partner whether they live next door or halfway around the world. Until you can be certain your partner does not have an STI and is not sleeping with other partners, using a condom should be a requirement for having sex. This is true whether you are engaging in vaginal, oral,

or anal sex. An STI can affect your health in many ways which may include chronic severe pain and even death. It may also affect your ability to reproduce or cause birth defects in any children you may have in the future.

You have a moral responsibility to let your partner know if you have ever been exposed to an STI before performing any sexual acts with them. Do not feel it is wrong to ask that your partner get tested for an STI. Anyone that truly has respect for you will agree to your request. You should rethink any relationship where one person doesn't believe practicing safe sex is important or makes excuses as to why they would prefer not to use protection such as condoms.

When it comes to condoms, it is important to check that they haven't expired and using a water based lubricant will help prevent the condom from breaking or tearing. Women should feel comfortable carrying condoms themselves in case their male partner doesn't have one and it is more than acceptable to demand he wear one.

In addition to aiding in the prevention of STIs, condoms along with the use of birth control can help stop unwanted pregnancies. Unplanned pregnancies can bring hardship to any relationship but especially so with long distance relationships. For many, an unplanned pregnancy may force a relationship to progress more quickly or create a stronger bond. If you live near each other, moving in together or going through the pregnancy and raising the child together is much easier than if you were separated by long distance. When you are separated by long distance, being together may require great sacrifice or may not even be an option. You may be forced to quit a career or schooling to move closer to your long distance partner. In cases of international long distance relationships, you may find that immigration issues could

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prevent you from permanently relocating to where your partner is.

When it comes to travelling internationally, it is extremely important to be aware that different countries have different laws about matters of sex and sexuality. If you are both young or you are dating someone who is on the cusp of adulthood, it is important to understand the relevant age of consent laws which dictate when a person is legally allowed to agree to sex. A minor may be defined by different ages depending on what state or country you are in. You need to be aware that engaging in a sexual act with a minor could have severe consequences for both parties.

If travelling to strict Muslim countries like the United Arab Emirates, it's important to note there may be different laws regarding how couples are expected to act. Public displays of affection like holding hands or kissing are considered an offence to public decency. Along with prohibiting public displays of affection, dancing in public may also be considered indecent, especially if it is deemed to be sexually inappropriate. Unmarried couples may not be permitted to live together or share a hotel room. The code of conduct also sets out styles of dress that are deemed acceptable. In public places such as streets, shopping malls, and restaurants, shorts and skirts need to be of appropriate length and clothing shall not indecently expose parts of the body. It is very important to always make sure your behavior is always culturally sensitive.

Same-sex couples must realize that not all countries have LGBT rights and having sex with a person of the same sex may be labelled as illegal depending on where you are. Likewise, sex outside of marriage and adultery may be punishable by law in certain countries, so you must research the relevant laws regarding sex and relationships if your long distance relationship involves dating someone from a different country or if you are travelling with your partner to a different country with strict laws.

## **Sexting, Phone Sex, and Computer Sex**

There was a time when long distance relationships had to resort to sending erotic

*Not all long distance relationships will need to engage in phone or internet sex for the relationship to be successful.*



*Revenge porn can sadly be used as a way of trying to “get back” at a partner when a relationship ends or may be used to blackmail a partner into staying in a relationship*



letters or phone sex if they wanted to achieve some form of sexual intimacy while apart. Today, however, we have all sorts of way we can quickly and easily communicate our sexual thoughts and fantasies with our long distance partners. Video calling allows us to connect visually and offers an obvious advantage when it comes to “having sex” with your partner when you are apart.

It should be noted that not all long distance relationships will need to engage in phone or internet sex for the relationship to be successful. You should never compare your relationship to anyone else’s and you should feel comfortable if sex isn’t as much of an important issue as it may be for others.

Although things like sexting and internet sex don’t carry the risks of STIs or pregnancy, there are still risks involved. Whenever you send sexually explicit messages and photos or even talk dirty, you open yourself up to having that information made public. Messages can be shared with friends, photos can be saved and stored, and phone calls can be recorded. We would like to think we will always be able to trust our partners but the fact is relationships do break down and sadly things can turn sour. By sending nude photos to a partner, you have to realize that they could one day be made public.

Revenge porn can sadly be used as a way of trying to “get back” at a partner when a relationship ends or may be used to blackmail a partner into staying in a relationship. It would be wonderful to say that internet sex is all just a bit of innocent fun, and for most it will be just that, but you do need to outweigh whether the risks are worth it and whether you fully trust your



partner enough to keep sexually explicit exchanges private. Couples in a long distance relationship who are either married or have been together for quite some time may have to worry less about revenge porn than couples just beginning a long distance relationship, but it can occur with any relationship despite how much history you have.

If you fully feel you can trust your partner or don't mind the risk, you will find there are many ways to stay sexually connected even when distance separates you both. There is no shortage of technology and products which have been created specifically for couples who find themselves frequently apart. It is important for couples to feel out each other's comfort level when it comes to engaging in phone or internet sex and you should never feel pressured into something you are uncomfortable with. From an emotional aspect, sex is sex whether it involves physical contact, the use of a laptop, or a phone.

As for some of the ways you can spice things up, sex toys can now be synced so that you can get an almost virtual sexual encounter with each other over the web. You can even make a replica of each other's private parts complete with electronic vibration inserts for a more personalized touch. For those feeling shy to flash their bits over a webcam or phone camera, you can use your way with words to keep the sexual passion alive. Sending sexual texts or writing sexual emails can express your sexual desire for your partner without having to send explicit visuals.

For those that have more traditional or conservative views regarding sex, you may simply wish to wait until you actually meet up to do the deed. Many couples find that waiting to enjoy the real thing is far more enjoyable and makes for a more memorable experience when they actually have sex together. Sex becomes more of a big event rather than a habit, and although you would think that couples in long distance relationships have less sex, they may actually have the same if not more sex than traditional couples. The fact is that absence tends to make the longing for each other stronger. Couples in long distance relationships often find they look forward to sex to a larger degree than couples who might see each other constantly. When you meet up with your long distance partner you may also have a tendency to make up for lost time so to speak. Sex simply becomes more condensed instead of spaced out evenly. Think of it in terms of if we were to celebrate Valentine's Day every few weeks as opposed to once a year, the holiday would become more

habitual and lose a bit of its flare. Sex for long distance partners becomes somewhat of a special occasion or holiday to look forward to and therefore can become more passionate and special.

## Feeding Your Urge for Sex

So just how long can we go without having sex? We of course need sex for the survival of the human species, but on an individual basis it isn't so much a necessity on the same level as needing air or water. That is not to say that sex isn't important, as it has many benefits for retaining a healthy body and mind. Like most things, it is important to adopt a moderate and balanced approach, as going overboard has the potential to harm your relationship.

While there will always be exceptions, studies have shown that on average males have a stronger sex drive than females. On average, men tend to think about sex more often, masturbate more, and seek out sex much more than women do. Women have been found to be able to put sex on the back burner whereas men tend to not last very long (no pun intended) when it comes to not needing sexual gratification or committing to chastity.

So what are the benefits of sex? It has been shown that your immune system is boosted by having regular sex, although this may be due to the fact that when you are having sex you tend to be more active, eat better, are happier, and get more quality sleep. For women, sex can improve bladder control as orgasms strengthen the pelvic floor muscles. Sex is exercise and therefore good for your heart as well as a good way to keep estrogen and testosterone levels in check. Sex can also act as a kind of aspirin which may ease aches and pains including headaches. Both sex and simply cuddling without actual sexual acts has been proven to minimize stress and anxiety.

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*There isn't really a definitive amount of sex that is considered to be unhealthy so long as it doesn't negatively impact your day to day life.*



*Masturbation is healthy and normal with few if any harmful side effects so long as it doesn't become a chronic activity which significantly alters your schedule.*



*Masturbating can be a way to explore your own body and find out what actions sexually please you which you can then communicate to your partner for a more satisfying sex life.*



So how much sex should you be having and how much sex is too much? There isn't really a definitive amount of sex that is considered to be unhealthy so long as it doesn't negatively impact your day to day life. If sex begins to consume your every thought, you notice adverse health side effects, or it begins to interfere with your job or hobbies, then it may be time to see if you have reached the level of addiction. This goes for long distance couples as much as it does for traditional relationships, as even phone or internet sex can become an addiction.

Masturbating in-between the time you and your long distance partner meet up can be a healthy way for you both to get your sex fix. Masturbation is both healthy and normal and something that is quite common in the animal world. Many people either for religious reasons or other outside teachings may feel a sense of guilt for masturbating, but it is not immoral and should not be viewed as a shameful act. There are very few if any harmful side effects to masturbating, so long as it doesn't become a chronic activity which keeps you from completing important tasks or significantly alters your schedule.

Masturbation can provide healthy side effects such as lowering men's risk for prostate cancer and can help prevent cervical infections as well as relieve urinary tract infections in women. In addition to the physical health benefits, masturbating can be a way to explore your own body and find out what actions sexually please you which you can then communicate to your partner for a more satisfying sex life. Couples may find that masturbating also has the benefit of increasing their sex drive and might prove to be an ideal way for couples

in a long distance relationship to stay faithful to each other while acknowledging their urges

## **Use of Pornography in a Long Distance Relationship**

Although masturbation may be healthy, keep in mind that viewing pornography may have the potential to damage your relationship. While some couples find it may spice up their love life, others find it has just the opposite effect, especially when the use of pornography becomes excessive or does not align with your partner's moral values.

The biggest problem with pornography is that it is not a real depiction of what sex between a loving couple truly is. Most often, highly attractive female and male models are shown engaging in numerous uncommon sexual acts in a glorified setting. Watching sexual acts such as this can give couples an unrealistic idea of what sex is supposed to be like. It takes a team of people to create just the right lighting and multiple takes along with hours of editing to create a short pornography clip.

And it's important to remember that the porn stars used in films are simply playing up for the camera and don't have intimate feelings towards the person they are having sex with. You often find that women are forced to perform degrading acts in pornography and sex can be more forceful than it should ever be. You can find every sexual position and fantasy readily available for your viewing, but you must remember that the majority of people will not be comfortable with most of what is shown in pornographic material.

You may find that the more you use pornography as a tool to become aroused, the less aroused you will become simply from being with your partner beneath the sheets. Seeing models with flawless bodies and perfectly groomed genitals will give us the false impression that our partners too should be flawless all the time. You may begin to see sex as less of a loving bonding exercise between you and your partner and more of a selfish way to experience something you have seen while viewing pornography. You may find that your partner will begin to develop

self esteem issues from feeling inadequate to living up to your unrealistic sexual desires caused from pornographic viewing.

If couples do use pornography as a tool to enhance their love life, it should be something they do together so as they can get an idea of how each other feels about certain sexual acts. You will quickly learn what each other's comfort level is so you can enjoy a healthy sex life together. If your partner finds something is demeaning or a bit too much, you will know that this should not be an expectation and will save you both from an awkward or unsafe situation.

## FUN FACTS ABOUT SEX

- A female orgasm is designed to induce pregnancy.
- 2/3 of partners fantasize about other people while having sex.



- Shaving your bits makes you more likely to spread and catch a sexually transmitted infection.
- The best time for sex is after a workout.
- A part of the female brain switches off during sex. ( a man's brain switches off before, just kidding of course)
- Heavier set men last longer in bed.
- The average person has sex 103 times per year.



# Communication and Trust

*-Mike-*

Good communication is a vital part of nearly every aspect of our lives. Communication allows us to express our feelings and gain a clearer picture of issues whether they relate to our careers, education, or relationships. Pretty much everything requires at least some kind of communication in order to function or achieve tasks. Even inanimate objects such as your computer or phone require its internal parts to communicate and work together so as to allow them to run properly.

Relationships can be quite complex systems, especially when you figure it brings together two people that literally have a mind of their own and see the world and issues in different lights. Couples must constantly communicate in order to see and understand what each other's feelings are towards issues or ideas.

Try to think of a relationship like it is a phone. Most of the time it works in harmony and accomplishes what it was designed to do. When you purchase a new phone, it starts out as a blank slate. Over time you begin to add apps and fill up your phone's memory with images, videos, and songs. For most, navigating a new phone and learning how to use apps takes a bit of time.

Similarly, your relationship starts from scratch and you begin to collect memories together along with adding components such as cars, jobs, houses, and children. Each one of these components takes a bit of time to understand how they work between you both, but eventually you become somewhat of a pro at them and they become second nature.

Much like a relationship, your phone needs continual updates in order for its system and apps to continue to run effectively. Your relationship requires similar updates in the form of good communication, which allows you to continually address issues that involve you and your partner. You discuss topics such as getting married, making large purchases, or having children. With all these topics, you must gather each other's input so as to see if you are both on the same page or whether you need to find a compromise to move forward.

Sadly, much like a phone, your relationship can be infected by a virus. Although this can sometimes cause irreversible harm, it many times simply involves a bit of effort to remove the virus in order to restore the relationship. In terms of relationships, a virus can take the form of a betrayal such as cheating or lying. It can also be the loss of a job which may cause financial hardship. This may prove to be too much for some relationships to survive but many times it simply requires communication to solve the issues so you can repair your relationship and move on from the setback. Resorting to taking a hammer to your phone will always prove to be an ineffective way to solve a problem much like yelling at or insulting your partner will be.

It may seem easier for some people to simply purchase a new phone (find a new partner), but that can prove to be a costly decision and involves learning a whole new system from scratch again. Eventually your new phone will lose its shine and will be susceptible to the same problems that affected your previous model.

As much as relationships may be similar to a phone, they thankfully are also very different. People are not bound by the same restrictions that phones have. People have no set data allowance, meaning you can accumulate an infinite number of memories and experiences. People also have feelings and can recognize those of others. Our ability to more easily adapt and think for ourselves allows our relationships to be far more durable and flexible than our phones could ever hope to be.

Also, unlike old phones that may become obsolete after a period of time, relationships tend to only become more rewarding and valuable as they age. The best part is that relationships only need a few key parts to keep running, those being communication, trust, and of course love.

## **Ways of Communicating**

It's important not to confuse talking with communicating. Communication involves both people in a relationship actively expressing their honest opinions while also taking the time to listen to each other. Both verbal and visual cues help us gain insight into what our partner is trying to express.

When it comes to long distance relationships, it can be more difficult to pick up on visual cues on what our partner is feeling since you are not physically with them. Our body postures, the tone with which we speak, and our facial expressions can give words a completely different meaning. This is why things like texts or emails can easily be misconstrued. Long distance relationships require you to be much clearer with your communication as well as feeling free to ask for clarity when you are unsure of what your partner intend to convey.

It is important to remove all distractions when it comes to having important conversations with your long distance partner. This means turning off the T.V. or music when you speak to each other and not multitasking while you juggle your phone during your chats. Make sure you have a clear signal that isn't cutting in and out and don't start an important conversation when one of you may be busy at work or involved with an important activity. Choose an appropriate time for your more serious talks and give your partner a bit of a heads-up that you want to talk about something that may be concerning you. This will allow your partner to pick a time where they can truly focus on you and the discussion at hand.

Communication allows us to share with our long distance partner our daily experiences, values, viewpoints, and future plans. Although the distance may take away our ability to read verbal cues, there is a benefit to long distance. Because we rely more on texts and emails, we have more time to think about what we want to say and can really think twice before deciding to express something. People are often more comfortable writing about their true feelings as opposed to expressing them in a face to face manner. This can really help you and your partner get a true sense of what each other's thoughts are or what you each may be going through.

*Choose an appropriate time for you and your partner to have serious talks and give your partner a bit of a heads-up that you want to talk about something that may be concerning you.*



*People are often more comfortable writing about their true feelings as opposed to expressing them in a face to face manner.*





*Although it is important to take both your relationship and your life seriously, you want to avoid making your long distance relationship too heavy and drama filled early on.*



*Before you can trust your partner, you have to ask yourself whether you can trust yourself. You must really decide if you are ready to commit to a relationship and realize what impacts that will have on your life.*



The more we share our daily experiences and interests with our long distance partner, the more the bond is strengthened. Long distance may allow you to more easily explore important topics with your partner such as views on sex, children, religion, and family. These can often be far more awkward to bring up in person and are therefore many times swept under the rug to be dealt with at a later time.

In the beginning of our long distance relationship, Megan and I would send each other fun “20 question lists” from time to time which we both would answer. The questions would not only allow us to ask each other insignificant things like what our favorite color or favorite food was, but also covered more important topics like whether we believed in marriage or how many kids we wanted to have. It was an effective and simple way to gain a better picture of who the other person was.

Because long distance relationships can be stressful and may require drastic changes in your life for you both to eventually live together, there can be a tendency to always want to discuss important topics or get reassurance that your partner is in the relationship for the long haul. Although it is important to take both your relationship and your life seriously, you want to avoid making your long distance relationship too heavy and drama filled early on. You want the relationship to be fun and not feel like the distance is a heavy burden you need to solve quickly or have all the answers to right away. In time the relationship will continue to grow and things will begin to fall into place.

## **Building Trust**

Trusting your partner is the key to any relationship whether it is long distance or not. I don't think long distance makes trusting your partner any more difficult to be honest. It is just as easy for someone to be dishonest with their partner or to the relationship they share despite how far apart they are.

Before you can trust your partner, you have to ask yourself whether you can trust yourself. It's the same concept of loving yourself before you can love someone else. You must really decide if you are ready to commit to a relationship and realize what impacts that will have on your life. You need to be open to the fact that many aspects of your life might change from the way you lived when you were single.

Being truthful to yourself is so important when it comes to finding the partner that is right for you. Trying to be someone else or trying to fit the mold of what you believe your partner wants will only result in an unhappy relationship. You can only pretend to be someone you are not for so long before either you or your partner realizes the relationship isn't genuine.

Be open to sharing your interests and hobbies and don't be afraid if they differ from your partner's. Many times it is the differences which intrigue us and ultimately attract us to our partners. You have a responsibility to yourself and your partner to provide an accurate depiction of the person you truly are.

Many people fear fully opening themselves up, as they don't want to feel rejected or hurt should the relationship come to an end down the line. Unfortunately, you kind of need to go into relationships without any walls up to give you the best chance of success. Eventually you will have to share intimate details of who you are anyway, so it is far better to get everything out in the open early so you can find out if your partner will accept you for who you are. If being yourself proves to be detrimental to the relationship, then the relationship wasn't real nor was it worth the effort to keep it alive. It is better to find out this truth sooner rather than later so as to not waste your time which could be better spent on finding a partner that will be a more suitable match for your authentic self.

Couples who are committed to their bond should treat the relationship as if they are married in terms of being honest and committed to each other, even if the topic of marriage hasn't been discussed yet. Trust should be fully built long before you ever discuss committing forever. You can only really build trust by fully respecting each other and laying everything out in the open. Every issue that comes up, whether it is small or large, should be discussed so you can both grow together as a couple.

Trust involves expressing your honest thoughts and opinions while asking for input from your partner. By opening yourself up and showing compassion for what your partner feels, they in turn will be more open to reciprocating those actions. As you share more and more of yourself to each other, you begin to rely on each other for support and your trust in each other continues to grow. And the old saying that actions speak louder than words will go a long way to building trust more quickly.

## **Signs Your Long Distance Relationship May be Breaking Down**

Not all relationships will have the right tools or ingredients to last. Failed relationships, however, can be just as important or beneficial to your life as successful ones. With each failed relationship you have, you learn more about yourself and get a better picture of what kind of person you are truly looking for.

You would think it would be easy to identify all the signs that a relationship may not be going smoothly, but we can sometimes be blinded from the truth. This may be caused by wanting to be in a relationship so badly or our partners not wanting to hurt our feelings. This is why it is so important to get the input of close friends and family that can give us an outsider's glimpse on our relationship.

With traditional relationships where distance is not an issue, it may be easier to see that your partner may be detaching from the relationship since you can pick up on visual cues. You may notice they stop holding your hand or become less affectionate. They may begin to lose eye contact or their body language may take on a standoffish look. They may stop planning dates or might not accept your invitations to do things.

*Phone calls, texts, or emails becoming less frequent may be a sign your relationship is breaking down.*



*It is important to note that as a relationship grows, it can be difficult to keep up the same level of enthusiasm you once had for the relationship or your partner.*



With long distance relationship you can only pick up on these visuals when you are together which may not occur very frequently. You therefore must resort to relying on the conversations you share with your partner to pick up on signs your relationship may be headed south. You may notice your partner closing down in terms of expressing themselves or avoiding conversations concerning the future. Phone calls, texts, or emails may become less frequent. Where once they may have been sending gifts or hand written letters, they may now not be making as much of an effort.

That being said, it is important to note that as a relationship grows, it can be difficult to keep up the same level of enthusiasm you once had for the relationship or your partner. This original period of enthusiasm is known as the honeymoon period; the period where you get butterflies every time you see or talk to your new partner. You both tend to go out of your way to showering each other with love. As the relationship moves past this phase and the butterflies migrate, you may get the impression that you or your partner is losing interest. This may not be the case at all, rather your relationship is simply evolving into something new. This is when communication is important to find out what the truth may be.

Arguing or fighting may not signal that your relationship is faltering, rather it may show that you simply need to work on your communication. By working through arguments, you can get to the root of the problem to see if it was simply a misunderstanding or something which can easily be fixed. All relationships are guaranteed to have arguments but it is

how you both deal with them which will dictate whether your relationship can last.

Along with looking for signs that your partner may be looking for an out from the relationship, you have to notice if you yourself are having any doubts. If you find that the relationship is causing you too much stress or is having a negative impact on your daily life, it is a good time to discuss this with your partner to decide if it something that can be fixed or if it may be better to end the relationship.

If you find yourself showing interest in other potential partners or have the urge to date other people, then it probably means you are not ready for a serious relationship. There is nothing wrong with wanting to date or not wanting to be in a relationship, but it is your responsibility to be honest with your partner if that is the case.



#### **TIPS FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION & TRUST WITH YOUR PARTNER**

- Hold eye contact while talking.
- Always be open to answer your partner's questions.
- Stay focused on the present & future—avoid bringing up the past during an argument.
- Avoid telling white lies as they can lead to more serious ones.
- Be upfront and honest with your partner—no secrets.
- Avoid raising your voice or expressing anger in unhealthy ways.
- Remember your partner cannot read your mind.
- Avoid distractions such as phones or T.V. when talking with your partner.
- Pay attention to your partner's nonverbal cues.
- Make use of "I" statements.
- Remember that actions speak louder than words when it comes to gaining trust.
- If trust is broken, discuss ways how it can be restored.

# Fighting and Jealousy

*-Megan-*

All relationships will experience disagreements from time to time but it is how you both handle them which will prove just how strong your bond is. Conflict may not be the most enjoyable part of a relationship, but it can sometimes actually prove to be beneficial. Conflict allows both sides to bring up issues that may be interfering with the relationship so that changes can be made in order to solve the issues.

A relationship brings independent minds together which means you most certainly won't agree on everything, and in fact it isn't exactly healthy to always agree with each other. There are many times when we may be in the wrong and having a partner that is willing to challenge us and correct our way of thinking can help us grow as a person.

Sometimes neither of you will be right or wrong. There will be many times where there isn't a clear correct answer. There are often many ways to do things and you and your partner must decide if arguing about an issue will really accomplish anything. If you both have differing ideas on how to tackle a task or situation and both ways lead to the same result, then it doesn't really matter which partner's option is chosen.

Overcoming obstacles is what makes a relationship stronger. Think of it like your body and exercise. Heading to the gym or keeping fit may not always be easy or fun, but it allows your muscles to grow stronger and keeps your body healthy. Without conflict or disagreements, our relationships would become stale. There is also a sense of accomplishment when you both manage conflict and it gives you the confidence that you will both be able to successfully work through the next problem that arises in your relationship.

Whenever an issue arises which you would like to discuss with your partner, it is important to give them some kind of notice that you want to talk about it. Your partner will most likely not react positively to a surprise attack and will more often than not feel they are forced into taking a defensive stance. By giving them

advance notice you want to talk, it allows them to think about the issue with a clear mind where you can both then tackle the issue more effectively.

It is also important to keep in mind that neither you nor your partner is perfect, and you both will make mistakes along the way. A long distance relationship is often completely new territory for most people, so you're both likely learning as you go. It is essential to the success of your relationship that you are both forgiving and don't set your expectations for your partner at a level that is unrealistic or unachievable for most people.

You have to take the good with the bad with anything in life, and relationships are no exception. You can't enjoy the sunshine without the occasional sunburn, but you can minimize the occurrences of pain by simply applying sunscreen, or in terms of a relationship, by continuing to communicate effectively. Nobody can be expected to be a mind reader, so communication is the only tool we have to gain insight into what our partner is feeling so we may be able to solve conflicts that may arise.

## **How to Deal with Fights**

It's easy to say that fighting never solves anything, but you and your partner will most certainly find yourselves in the middle of fights from time to time. It's not always easy to control our emotions and things like being overstressed, hungry, or tired can all hinder our ability to think clearly. It is therefore important to make sure that when you do talk or communicate your feelings, you're not in an emotional state. If fights do arise, it is important to remember that you are both on the same team, and your conflict with one another should not become a competition to see who can win. If you do this, you may find that you will both walk away having lost out in terms of harming your relationship.

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Clear communication will allow you to avoid fights and help solve issues of conflict before they escalate into a full scale argument. It is important to bring up issues straight away so they don't become worse or turn into resentment for your partner. With long distance relationships, it may be more difficult to find the right time to talk about issues, especially when you may be in completely different time zones. You will need to make an effort to let your partner know there is an issue you'd like to deal with and you can both decide on a time that works for you both.

The worst thing you can possibly do in any relationship is to give the other person the silent treatment. This is especially true for long distance relationships where verbal communication is often your only avenue. Silence only prolongs the conflict and it will only grow into more of a monster that will make solutions harder to reach. There is nothing wrong with taking some time to cool off a bit, but agree to revisit the disagreement or argument at a later time when you have both had a chance to think things over. You may in that time realize that you were indeed in the wrong, or you both may decide that the issue was silly to fight over in the first place.

Solving conflict in a long distance relationship can be a bit trickier in that it is much more difficult to know if your partner is really listening to you. Unless you've chosen to video chat, usual indicators like eye contact or seeing that your partner is not distracted aren't always there to assure you that your partner is truly listening to what you have to say. Phone calls, texts, and emails don't allow you to make eye contact with your partner nor can you see that their body language tells



you they are ready to listen. It is so much easier to disengage from a conversation by simply pulling the phone away from your ear or walking away from your computer during a discussion with your long distance partner, whereas you can't do that as easy when you're fighting face to face.

When it comes to long distance relationships, it becomes more crucial to select the right words to convey the message you are trying to get across. The old rule of using "I" statements such as "I feel" and "I would like" as opposed to "you" statements will avoid you coming off as confrontational. Be aware of your tone of voice when talking on the phone and use punctuation and adverbs in your writings to each other to try and express your feelings as accurately as possible.

Sometimes sending an email may be an easier way to bring up a topic of concern with your partner, as you can get your point across without interruption and can carefully think about what you want to say and make edits before sending. Drafting up a letter and then sitting on it overnight is a wonderful idea in that it allows fresh emotions to settle down a bit. You have a chance to reread your email to see if it is rational and still accurately conveys what you want it to.

Whichever way you decide works best to discuss an argument with your partner, it is important for both parties to take responsibility for their actions and be open to changing their behavior or way of thinking. During a dispute with your partner, it is important to never attack them personally. Remember that this is the person you fell in love with and hopefully have true feelings for. That person still exists and it is good to remember that it is his or her actions that are to blame, not they themselves. If a person is genuinely an evil person or truly deserving of an obscene name, that may be difficult to change. If it is simply someone's actions which are distasteful from time to time, this can be worked on.

Remember to stay on topic when engaging in an argument and refrain from bringing up past quarrels or history. This only adds unnecessary fuel to the fire and these issues should have been addressed and solved earlier. If you find that you are bringing up the past in present arguments, this is a sign that you both need to work on the way you solve your problems, as your current way is not proving to be effective. By staying away from using the past tense and focusing on the present

and future, it shows you both want to solve the issue at hand and look towards your future together.

## **Fighting and Make-Up Sex**

It is often said that fighting can lead to great make-up sex and for some couples this may indeed be a great way to celebrate overcoming a disagreement or argument. The problem arises when you don't really confront and solve an argument and resort to make-up sex thinking it will somehow magically make you both forget about the problem you were having. Jumping into sex to avoid fully discussing a disagreement or thinking that a passionate love session is a satisfying replacement for apologizing to your partner can prove to be an unhealthy way to end fights.

The intense nature of make-up sex can often be misinterpreted as your partner being extra passionate or loving towards you when in fact it may be a way of expressing their fervent anger towards you. In extreme cases this can actually lead to overly rough or abusive sex that can be very damaging to your relationship. This is especially true when you haven't really come to an agreement or solution and rush into sex with pent up aggression.

Even if the sex isn't abusive and instead feels incredibly great and extra fanatical, it often doesn't strengthen your bond with your partner and may actually leave you feeling a bit hollow or used. As the pleasure of the sex subsides, you realize you and your partner are still not seeing eye to eye, as you haven't really tackled the issue that was plaguing your relationship.

Although sex definitely has the ability to blow your mind, what it can't do is make you forget things that were done or said. If harsh words or actions occurred during an argument and they were neither addressed nor apologized for, they will most likely repeat themselves when your next conflict arises. In addition, resorting to sex to end an argument can become an addictive habit whereby you and your partner may simply get in heated debates simply for the sexual gratification that follows. Although this may sound like bliss to some, overtime it can lead to a

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breakdown in your relationship from continually being locked in combat with each other.

The other thing to keep in mind is that not all your make-up sex sessions are guaranteed to be hot and heavy. If things don't go so well under the sheets after an argument, the added disappointment may prove to only add more fuel to your existing fight.

## **When to Seek Professional Help**

If you find you are both really struggling with an issue or argument, you can always look into professional counselling if you really want your relationship to survive and you believe you cannot do it alone. Counsellors are very well trained at both identifying and treating relationship problems and can offer a solution that quickly gets you both back on track. Long distance relationships may make it more difficult or inconvenient to meet with a counsellor face to face, but there are now a number of professionals who offer online assistance that can be just as effective.

If fighting ever escalates into physical abuse or severe emotional abuse, it is time to seek help immediately. You first need to remove yourself from the harmful situation and this is where long distance relationships can actually come in handy. If you experience any form of abuse, you should return home or insist your partner returns to their home. Separation will give you both time to seek the appropriate help or treatment needed to make sure the abuse does not happen again. Abusing your partner may very easily bring an end to your long distance relationship. If you have acted inappropriately or behaved in a disrespectful

manner, you must be ready for your partner to call it quits and should respect their decision should they decide to do so.

While a pattern of abuse is something that requires immediate intervention, even a single incident of abuse should not be ignored. If you start ignoring abuse, whether emotional or physical, and don't make it clear that certain behavior is unacceptable, it can lead to your partner believing the way they are treating you is acceptable. You yourself may begin to accept that it is normal or even think that you are deserving of the abuse. Abuse is often progressive, which means that it usually only becomes worse if not treated correctly. Abuse can be a major setback to your relationship but doesn't necessarily have to mean your relationship is over. The key is for the abusive behavior to be addressed and treated along with the victim getting help and advice so they can decide if it would be a healthy or wise decision to remain in the relationship.

## **Battling Jealousy**

Jealousy can come in many forms when it comes to relationships. When we talk relationships, we often associate jealousy with the feeling or suspicion that your partner is attracted to or involved with another person. Although this may be the most common form of jealousy in a relationship, it can also define itself as feeling resentment for your partner's achievements or opportunities that they are presented with.

Just as we may feel threatened by another person stealing our partner away from us, we too can feel threatened that opportunities presented to our long distance partner may threaten the relationship. A promotion, assignment, or travel opportunity awarded or offered to your partner may mean that they become more preoccupied and may not write or call as often. You may begin to feel a false sense that you are putting more effort into the relationship than your partner is, which could cause you to develop resentment towards him or her.

You must remember that your partner is an individual and you should not wish they limit their growth or success simply in fear of losing the relationship. You often see this happening when one person in a relationship becomes famous or

achieves a higher status. You may begin to feel as though you are unworthy of your partner's love or that they are the star of the relationship and therefore the one that is in control. Although success has been known to change people, for most people it won't actually change how they feel about their relationship. Many times people look to be successful in order to please their partners more than themselves. And it's important to remember that a relationship will see times where both individuals will experience achievement highs at different points in their life. Very seldom will they coincide with one another, therefore it is important to be supportive of your partner in times of their success and they will hopefully return the gesture when it's your turn. Remember that a relationship consists of two individuals, each who will have their own strengths and bring something special to the relationship.

It is very easy for couples in a long distance relationship to experience jealousy in the form of suspecting infidelity. Because we are almost programmed to think long distance relationships are too difficult or seldom work out, we have the tendency to sometimes overthink things and may seek out signs that our partner is being unfaithful when the signs aren't actually there. Being separated by a great distance from your partner can make it easy for you to believe they would be more willing to cheat as it would be harder for them to get caught. This kind of negative thinking can be quite toxic to your relationship because you almost expect to find out your partner was cheating. You may actively search their profiles and overanalyze their every word or action in order to find proof that will confirm your suspicions. In short, your lack of trust can sabotage any hope you had of building a close connection with your partner.

The reality is that partners involved in long distance relationships are no more likely to be unfaithful than in any other relationship. It is important to never jump to conclusions until you know for sure that your partner has strayed from the relationship. Don't be afraid to confront your partner if you believe they have been unfaithful, but make certain your mind isn't just playing tricks on you. We can quite easily create a false story in our minds by having a wild imagination along with filling in gaps where information doesn't exist. A simple catch-up dinner between our long distance partner and an old friend can easily be misconstrued as them having an affair. We have been subjected to far too many movies and books which place wild and crazy ideas in our heads. If you are finding that this is a

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constant problem with your relationship, it may be time to reassess whether you can work through your trust issues or if it's worth moving on.

If you decide that your partner is cheating without discussing your concerns with them first, you begin to resent them and may pull away from the relationship when they in fact might not have been unfaithful. In extreme cases you may even try to get revenge by deciding to cheat on your partner in retaliation. You may find out that your contaminated thoughts and incorrect accusations for your partner have led you to be the one that destroys your relationship.

It is important to remember that your partner likely had previous relationships and friends long before you came into the picture. It is not reasonable for you to expect them to cease all innocent relationships once you become involved with them. Many couples realize they are better off being just friends and have amicable breakups in which they develop a long lasting plutonic relationship. It is important for your partner to have these kind of relationships as it gives them close friends which whom they can confide in aside from you to discuss issues. You and your partner need others outside of your relationship that you can talk to. It is often our friends and family who give us the advice we need to maintain a healthy relationship and lifestyle.

That being said, it is also important for people to sympathize with partners who may seem to be a little overjealous, as they may have a history of unfaithful partners in the past which has led them to be overly suspicious or untrusting. Have a discussion with your partner to see if there is something about their past experiences that is creating the jealousy and mistrust.

By talking with them, you may be able to alleviate their worries and help them overcome their jealousy.

We must realize that most people in relationships are genuine and have every intention of remaining faithful to their partners. By openly communicating and building trust, jealousy will hopefully not play an active role in your relationship. You must always be aware, however, that cheating can happen and you want to be aware of common signs that may signal your partner is being unfaithful, especially if you are sexually active with your partner as you don't want to risk catching an STI.

## **Signs Your Long Distance Partner May be Cheating**

So how can you tell if your long distance partner is straying from your relationship and seeing someone else? When it comes to long distance relationships, you can't exactly snoop through your partner's computer or phone to find evidence of disloyalty. However, this isn't necessarily a drawback. Even if you are in a relationship where you do have the ability to spy on your partner's personal devices, that doesn't mean you should actually resort to such measures.

If you find yourself not being able to trust your partner, it may be a sign that your relationship wasn't exactly healthy to begin with. When your relationship evolves to the point where you have decided to make your bond official or monogamous, you should have already developed a high degree of trust with your partner. If you are having trust issues, it may mean you may have rushed into things too quickly. It could also mean you may need to have a deep discussion with your partner to find out why you are having trust issues and whether they are warranted or if it may be a personal issue you need to explore.

There are of course cases where your partner will in fact be cheating on you and it is good to know what to look for. But first you and your partner need to decide what constitutes cheating and what will and will not be tolerated in your relationship. Will your relationship define cheating as kissing or sleeping with another person or will it include a larger list of actions and behaviours you deem inappropriate? People have different opinions on what constitutes cheating and it

can include both physical and emotional actions. You and your partner need to be on the same page when it comes to what is allowed in the relationship when it comes to interaction with others. If you can't come to agreement on the terms of your relationship, then you might want to take a step back until you are both willing to agree to the same level of commitment. Alternatively, you may wish to look for a different partner who will be more in line with your level of thinking.

As for the classic forms of cheating where your partner is exploring a deep emotional or physical relationship with someone other than yourself, you may come across concrete evidence yourself or may be tipped off by someone else. Having someone inform you of your partner's infidelity may be rarer in a long distance relationship unless you happened to have met or made close friendships with the friends or family of your long distance partner. If they don't really know you or have no way of contacting you, they won't be able to share any information about your partner should they discover anything you should know.

If your partner always insists that they be the one to visit you, it could mean they are simply embarrassed of where they live or it may mean that they are hiding something. Having you visit may make it more difficult for them to juggle multiple relationships or they may even have someone living with them.

It doesn't necessarily mean your partner is cheating if they always seem busy, isn't able to take your calls, or doesn't respond to texts and emails. Some people are workaholics and may genuinely have a lot on their plate. The key is to look for sudden or drastic changes to your partner's behavior. If you both used to talk on a nightly basis or your partner normally showers you with tokens of their admiration and those things suddenly become infrequent or stop altogether, you may need to have a discussion with them to find out the reason for the change.

If you notice your partner posting pictures of themselves spending time with other people, don't immediately assume that they may be exploring other options. The explanation could be as simple as the other person being a family member you are unaware of or an old school/work friend. You must be really careful to not jump to conclusions and be very practical when you approach them about it. However, if they are posting pictures where it clearly shows there may be something more or if there seems to be continual engagement or risqué comments shared between your



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partner and another person, then it may be time to rethink the status of your relationship. You would hope your partner would not be so blatant about their disregard for the relationship you share together.

Another sign your partner may be hiding something is catching them telling small lies. If they cannot talk because they say they are tired and heading to bed but you see evidence they instead attended an event or had a night on the town, it could mean something isn't quite right. Lies don't necessarily equate to cheating but they may signal there are other problems with the relationship. As we have discussed, communication and trust are vital to a long distance relationship. If either begins to break down, you then have some serious repair work to do if you want your relationship to last.

Just as some people are not comfortable with public displays of affection such as kissing or holding hands, so too is the case with people's online life. Don't feel hurt if your partner isn't comfortable posting pictures publicly on their social media accounts of the two of you together or doesn't comment with love hearts and "I love you" on your posts. Some people really like to keep their private life exactly that, private. If they have trouble expressing their love for you privately or if their eagerness to share their love for you changes suddenly, then it may be a signal that your relationship has hit a snag or they may have another love interest.

The biggest red flag of all that your partner may be cheating is if they are unwilling or refuse to talk about the issue when you bring it up to them. If your partner is truly committed to your relationship and cares about you, they will take the time to try and ease your worries by being open to any questions or concerns you have.

Redirecting or refusing to answer questions is the most common way to avoid facing an issue. If your partner wishes to avoid an issue, that most likely means they are hiding something.

People need to realize that it is alright to feel that their relationship may not be what they were looking for. People and circumstances change and if you are certain you don't want to continue the relationship or don't wish to make an effort to solve any issues, it's important to be honest with yourself and your partner. The solution to ending a relationship you don't want to be in isn't to go and begin a new relationship behind your partner's back. It is your responsibility to have a discussion with your partner that expresses your decision to end the relationship. Whatever your reasons may be, make sure you give your partner the respect they deserve by giving them the honest reason you are choosing to break up.

Ending a relationship is never easy, but you may be able to avoid a massive fight with your partner and may even be able to salvage a long lasting friendship out of the deal by coming to them before you decide to look elsewhere. Only after you end a relationship should you explore other more suitable partners. This allows you to come away from the relationship without being labelled a cheater and will give your next relationship a much better chance of success since you'll be starting off on the right foot.

By ending a relationship respectfully, your partner will hopefully respect your decision and may even be happy for you when you find someone that is a better fit for you. They may of course be hurt and could easily take it personally, but you have to be honest to yourself and your partner or it will only prolong the inevitable and make ending the relationship exponentially harder down the road. If your partner responds to your decision harshly, then that's on them, but at least you can walk away knowing you did the right thing. More often than not, they will eventually realize they were in the wrong.

It's very important to realize when your relationship needs to end and accept when it's time to move on. There is nothing wrong with trying to make relationship work, but sometimes there comes a point where it has simply run its natural course. Please don't fall into silly traps like hiring "spell casters" who promise to cast spells to get the love of your life back. This con along with many others are

designed to take money from desperate people and they have been making their rounds on the internet lately.

## THE RIGHT WAY TO FIGHT WITH YOUR PARTNER



- Never fight when hungry or tired.
- Stay focused on a single issue
- Avoid overgeneralized statements such as "you never" or "you always"
- Avoid using profanity and name calling.
- Truly listen and be honest.
- There should be no winner or loser.
- If your heart rate or anger becomes too high, take a time out from the argument.
- Attempt to constructively communicate with your partner until issues are resolved.
- Discuss relationship issues with your partner, not with friends or over social media.
- Fight in person, not over the phone, by text, or by email.



# Meeting Family and Friends

*-Megan-*

At some point in your relationship, you will be required to meet up with your partner's friends and family. Beginning a relationship with someone doesn't simply mean you are adding one person to your life; you are essentially adopting another family and group of friends as well.

Meeting your partner's family and friends is a pretty clear sign that your relationship is quite serious. How your partner introduces you to their friends and family, including what label they use for you, can give you better insight into how your partner sees the relationship.

When it comes to long distance relationships, meeting your partner's family and friends can prove to be a bigger task since you live far apart. You are more likely to first meet your partner's friends and family online in this instance. When it comes to friends, it's not so much important to meet your partner's in person, but simply knowing your partner does in fact have friends can put your mind at ease for many reasons. Having a good group of friends generally shows you that your partner is generally liked and you may get a better picture of who your partner is by the people they associate with.

Meeting your partner's parents usually comes a bit later in any relationship, once things have become a little more serious. Upon learning of any new relationship, many families can be a bit suspicious of an outsider being welcomed in. This is especially true with long distance relationships and relationships that began online due to the stigma surrounding both. Your family may prove to be cynical and may give you advice to be cautious, at least until they have a chance to meet your partner.

Upon learning I had entered into a long distance relationship with an American that I had only spent 12 hours with, a number of my family and friends were certain I was going to end up murdered, chopped up into pieces, and thrown in a garbage bin. Their concern and overactive imagination came from a place of not having met Mike and not knowing anything about him. You must remember that your family and friends genuinely care about you and are most likely looking out

for your best interests. While it may be difficult for them to fully understand your long distance relationship at first, it is always good to initially get their input on things.

If the input from your family and friends is unreasonably negative, which may often be the case, it's important to keep in mind that it is hopefully coming from a place of not completely understanding your unique situation and not yet having seen the type of relationship you and your long distance partner have together.

It is important to keep in mind that you shouldn't sacrifice one relationship for another, meaning you don't want to gain a partner but lose a friendship or connection with a family member. Your new partner shouldn't consume your life rather they should enhance it. Likewise, your family should show signs of happiness for you rather than jealousy or disdain for your decision. If either side shows signs of being unreasonable, feel free to put them in their place. You should be open to the opinions offered by your friends and family but it's equally important to stay true to what you and your partner share.

## **Dealing With Negativity from Family and Friends**

It's unfortunate when your friends and family choose not to support your decision to be in a long distance relationship, but it's an unavoidable reality for many couples. Generally, experiencing negativity will be more prevalent at the beginning of your relationship, though you may discover that your friends and family will ease up on their negative attitudes over time and eventually come around when they realize the relationship is legitimate and proving to be long lasting. This is something that will be especially difficult for young adults who still attend school and live with their parents as you may actually be bound by the rules your parents set for you since you're living under their roof. You may begin to lack the confidence to proceed with a relationship when you don't have their approval.

While it is important to consult your friends and family and let them know what's going on in your life, you don't have to constantly put up with negative attitudes. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but that doesn't mean that you have to take their advice. As mentioned above, you don't want to lose family and

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friends by making them feel as though you have disrespected their input. Be open to listening to their concerns and let them know that you appreciate their advice. If you chose to pursue the relationship despite their objection, take the time to explain to them why and they hopefully should respect that. If they don't respect your choice and continue to put your relationship down or attempt to sabotage it, you need to make it clear that you're not willing to continue to discuss your relationship. At this point you have given them every chance to respect your decision and if the negativity continues it may be time to put some temporary distance between you and your negative friends or family until their attitudes change.

Sadly, the majority of people who jump to offer their advice are generally people who haven't been in a long distance relationship themselves and may not know what they're talking about. If negativity from family members and friends is starting to get to you, you should remove yourself from the situation and discuss the problem with your partner. Your partner may be the only one who can relate to what you're going through. Stay strong in your convictions if this is something that you truly want to pursue and don't let negativity or snide remarks from people who are outside the situation affect the way you view your relationship. My friends would often tell me, "He's probably cheating on you". I had to remind myself that these were people who had never been in a long distance relationship before. I was confident enough in my connection with Mike that I didn't let the negative noise affect me.

If you're living with your parents or a roommate and their attitudes are having a toxic affect on your

relationship, it may be time to consider whether you need to move out. More often than not, once your friends and family meet your long distance partner and spend time with them, you'll usually find that their doubts or negativity stops. They will begin to see how good you are together and how you behave around each other. If they are really concerned about the relationship and haven't yet met your long distance partner, perhaps you could introduce them to your partner via video chat to ease their concerns. Show them photos of you both together or bring them into discussions on social media. Being able to put a face to the name and visualizing you both together can often go a long way in your family and friends being able to accept your relationship.

If the constant barrage of negativity towards your relationship is bringing you down, it can be very helpful to seek support and advice from people who have been in your situation. In this sense, online groups and communities can offer a fabulous network of support and is a great way to connect with people who know exactly what you're going through. You are welcome to join our Facebook community "[Long Distance Relationships: Advice & Support Group](#)" if you would like to chat with other long distance couples for positive support or have Mike and I personally offer advice on your situation.

## **Introduction to Friends**

If you and your partner live in the same general area, meeting each other's friends isn't usually very difficult. You may even find you both share the same social circles or it's quite possible you were matched up by a common friend. With long distance relationships, however, sharing friends in common becomes quite rare and meeting each other's friends becomes a bit more difficult.

Because couples in long distance relationships often see each other rather infrequently, they may find themselves wanting to make the most of their time together and may not be willing to waste time with introductions to friends. It's also important to keep in mind that just because you may have met your partner's friends doesn't mean that you have to introduce them to yours. While you should never be embarrassed to introduce your friends to your partner or your partner to your friends, you may wish to keep the two relationships separate until you feel the

timing is right. Many people wish to hold off on introductions to family and friends until their relationship is more serious especially with long distance relationships. Many find it difficult or embarrassing to tell their friends about a failed relationship and therefore wait until things become more solid or official. Also, the stigma around being in a long distance or online relationship may make you want to put introductions on hold for a bit.

It is important to accept your partner's choice of friends so long as they are respectful people and not involved with anything illegal or immoral. It will often be difficult to understand how your partner's friendships developed and how long their histories are, so you don't want to intervene too much in these relationships.

It can be easy when you're in a long distance relationship to become jealous of how much time your partner spends with their friends, especially since you may be spending far less time being physically present with your partner. You shouldn't make your partner feel guilty for going out with their friends and you shouldn't worry how your long distance partner will feel about you spending time with your friends. It is important to have real life social interaction and not lock yourself in your long distance relationship bubble.

Often a person's choice of friends can give a clearer picture of what their values or interests are and may showcase things that they are hiding from you. For instance if your partner seems straight laced but has a group of friends that seem a bit dodgy or are clearly drug users, this may be a red flag that your partner is holding back on sharing everything about themselves with you.

You should take notice of how your partner interacts with their friends via social media. Look for signs that their

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*It is important to have real life social interaction with friends and not lock yourself in your long distance relationship bubble.*





personality is similar when engaging with them as it is when they engage with you. If their communication with their friends is drastically different to how they communicate with you, it may be a sign that something isn't quite right.

People can often act a bit differently with their friends than when they are with their partner, but there shouldn't be huge discrepancies. For instance, if your partner is usually well spoken and respectful when speaking to you but regularly chooses to use profane language and discriminatory comments with their friends, you have to find out what version is the true personality of your partner.

## **Introduction to Family**

Love them or hate them, your family and your in-laws are there to stay. With long distance relationships, you usually get a free pass from meeting your partner's parents and family for awhile anyway. When you eventually do meet your partner's family, they have most likely already heard a lot about you, which will hopefully make the first meeting a little less daunting. It pays to tell your partner a little about each of your family members so they can prepare conversation starters and know how to act around them.

Mike didn't meet my family in person until almost nine months into our relationship, but by that time I had pretty much filled him in on the personalities and life stories of just about everyone related to me. He has said that he had already felt like he knew them when he met them for the first time and that made the introductions a lot more comfortable. He was able to read up on popular Australian sports that my father and brother were interested in and even brought small thoughtful gifts for my mother and sisters based on their interests.

Depending on how serious your long distance relationship is, it may be beneficial to spend a bit of alone time with individuals from your partner's family. This will allow them to get to know you a lot better and may help to appease any worries or doubts they may have. It also gives you a chance to find out secrets about your partner including how they truly feel about you and your relationship together.

# Marriage

*-Mike-*

There will come a time in every relationship where at least the discussion of marriage will come up. Whether you and your partner decide to take that step is a personal one that only you both can decide. Marriage by no means assures a stronger bond for your relationship. After all, data shows that in many countries marriages are more likely to end in divorce than stand the test of time. However, it is important to note that in the case of an international relationship, marriage often offers one of the best ways to obtain a visa to be able to immigrate to a foreign country so you both can live together permanently.

Many people view marriage today as a symbol of a couple's love for each other, but love and companionship is not always the motivating factors which lead to people wanting to get married. For some, getting married may be a chance to elevate their status or they may seek it for financial reasons. Others may think it is their duty to get married based on their religious beliefs or they may simply be a single parent wanting extra support to raise their child or children.

The fact is, throughout history marriage has continually evolved and taken on different meanings to different cultures. This is something to keep in mind if you are dating someone with different cultural values to your own. The one thing marriage has always had in common, however, is that it signifies some sort of commitment. Whether you marry for love, find it arranged by your family, or seek some sort of security that marriage often provides, a marriage is generally supposed to last forever. Although eternal marriage may be the ultimate goal, that sadly is not always the reality. This causes some people to not believe in marriage and instead they may seek out a domestic partnership instead.

While many people look forward to marriage as an ultimate life objective, you can't take it for granted these days that it is something every person is going to want. Just because you would love nothing more than to marry your partner, this doesn't mean they will have the same thoughts regarding marriage. It may not be that they don't love you, rather they simply may not be comfortable with the idea of marriage. If you strongly support the idea marriage and it is a non-negotiable

*It's important not to use your partner's unwillingness to get married as a gauge of whether they are truly committed to a relationship.*



*Just because your partner may not be ready for marriage now doesn't mean they will never want to get married in the future. This is of course unless they explicitly make that clear, in which case you need to decide whether you are happy to continue with the relationship.*



requirement for you to remain in the relationship, then you need to express this to your partner. You don't want to waste your time on a relationship where you strongly desire marriage and your partner does not.

When it comes to long distance relationships and marriage, most cases will involve a couple who generally love each other. While there are cases of marrying simply to gain citizenship in another country, many nations have now made this a very long and difficult process which has begun to deter the practice. Keeping a long distance relationship is often challenging and bringing marriage into the equation can make things all that more complicated, especially when a couple finds themselves being citizens of two different countries. For couples in international relationships, marriage is often the only way to make living together indefinitely a possibility.

You may arrive at wanting to get married long before your partner does. If this happens, it's important not to use your partner's unwillingness to get married as a gauge of whether they are truly committed to a relationship. Some people may have very strong feelings when it comes to their desire or lack thereof to get married and you need to respect those feelings. A person's reluctance to get married may be a result of their previous marriage history or could have come about through observing their parents' relationship. Just because your partner may not be ready for marriage now doesn't mean they will never want to get married in the future. This is of course unless they explicitly make that clear, in which case you need to decide whether you are happy to continue with the relationship.

While it may be just a formality in the form of a slip of paper, marriage can have a huge psychological impact for many people and can easily cause a big rift in the relationship if one person wants to get married and the other does not.

## **Getting Engaged**

When it comes to long distance relationships and engagement, things aren't all that different from traditional relationships. After all, an engagement is simply a formal agreement to get married that doesn't require any permits or paperwork. Getting engaged is simply a way to show each other that you are both truly committed to making your long distance relationship work.

I proposed to Megan literally the third time we met in person during my first visit to meet her family in Australia. From my point of view, I didn't want to waste my time or emotions on something that wasn't serious. By this time we had been an official couple for roughly six months and I already knew our long distance relationship would be a long difficult one. I wanted to be sure we were both on the same page before I committed to the arduous journey.

Most people envision purchasing or receiving a big fancy ring when they think of the word engagement but this shouldn't be what getting engaged is about. I proposed to Megan without a ring and received a "yes", proving a ring isn't a strict requirement. A ring was eventually purchased, but Megan's lack of needing one really spoke volumes on her true feelings for me and our relationship.

Planning a wedding can of course be a large undertaking, but dealing with the issue of relocation for couples in a long distance relationship can be equally trying. Relocation becomes an even bigger issue for those in an international relationship. Gone are the days when you could simply marry someone and then move to their country with ease. Nowadays many countries like the United States and Australia make the process of immigration very difficult and expensive. It is for this reason that I recommend discussing with your partner the logistics involved with immigration issues before focusing on and planning your wedding.

Megan and I on the other hand didn't really talk about immigration after we became engaged nor did we discuss where or when we would get married. We

didn't really know how we were going to make our long distance relationship work at the time; we simply knew we were committed to eventually finding a way. That is what our engagement meant to us. It didn't so much give us excitement for a wedding, rather it was simply the first official step to finding a way to be together forever.

## Getting Married

The definition of marriage is continually being debated around the world and the fact is there will never be a universal definition that is accepted by all people. Many people and cultures believe marriage should be solely defined as a union between a single man and single woman. This sadly often makes it very difficult for same-sex couples to obtain things like spousal visas depending on which country they come from or which country they are applying for. How marriage became defined as something that should only be available to heterosexual couples and how this became such a strong belief shared by so many is quite odd when you consider just how much marriage and the ideas surrounding it have changed over the years.

For instance, there have been numerous cultures around the world where polygamy was and still is considered normal and acceptable. It is common for some cultures for high status men to have quite a number of wives and there are instances in some cultures where it was or still is equally acceptable for a woman to have several husbands. Even marrying someone within your own family can be accepted and even encouraged within some cultures. For instance, marrying your cousin in Middle Eastern countries accounts for over half of all marriages and you are still allowed to marry your first cousin in more than half of the states in the U.S. Such practice is

*It is very important to realize that marriage is defined differently in different parts of the world.*



*Today, men in many cultures share an equal amount of responsibility when it comes to raising kids and performing household chores.*



viewed as incestuous and deemed illegal in other countries such as China.

Historically, marriage was also often viewed as a way to guarantee that a man's children were truly his biological heirs. Women were treated more like property where they would be gifted to a man simply to produce heirs. If they were unable to do so, they could be given back to their families much like taking a broken item back to a store.

As time progressed, thankfully many cultures began to realize the importance of educating men to be respectful of their wives and remain sexually faithful to them. Where once a woman's role in a marriage was simply to produce and care for children as well as tend to the household, women began to gain more equal rights. Today, men in many cultures share an equal amount of responsibility when it comes to raising kids and performing household chores. We still may have a long way to go in terms of gender equality, but hopefully one day we will find gender discrimination a thing of the distant past.

Many cultures practice endogamy which requires marriages to be between two people that come from the same social group, ethnic group, family, or tribe. People outside of the group are seen as unsuitable for marriage or getting involved with. Those who marry outsiders may be cut off from society. Long distance relationships are quite the opposite of this and are known as exogamous relationships. This involves marrying someone outside of your geographical region or social group.

It is very important to realize that marriage is defined differently in different parts of the world. This realization becomes important should you fall in love or begin a relationship with someone from another state or country. You have to be aware that the love you share for each other may not be accepted by each other's family or the countries you each reside in. As tragic or wrong as this may be, it is unlikely you will be able to easily change laws or ingrained cultural beliefs.

If you find you and your long distance partner come from different religious backgrounds, you may face backlash from your families. When it comes to marriage and raising children, you and your partner's own differing beliefs could prove to be a problem you both need to overcome as well. That's not to say that

you cannot overcome any of these obstacles, but you should be aware that they may become obstacles nonetheless.

When it comes to long distance relationships, solidifying your bond through marriage may not always be easy or possible. You have to closely analyze your own situation and ask yourselves how much you both are willing to sacrifice or struggle to succeed in becoming an officially married couple. Same-sex couples may find themselves no alternative to living in a country where same-sex marriage is not legal. You may also fall in love with someone from a country where it is impossible for you or them to obtain a visa to move to each other's country. Sadly, the fact is that love is often simply not enough to sway governments to allow you to be together.

For some long distance couples, getting married will prove to be quite an easy process. Other couples will be faced with an excruciatingly difficult process that may take a huge emotional toll on both of you and your relationship together. It would be wonderful if love and determination were the only ingredients you needed for a long distance relationship to work, but the reality is that many relationships break apart under the strain of legalities or social prejudices. It is important for loving couples to be able to express their love, and therefore having the ability to marry is often a large part of that. When laws tell you that you cannot marry the love of your life, it can have a detrimental impact.

## **Our Personal Path to Marriage**

My engagement to Megan would last over two years before we eventually tied the knot. Only after we finally researched what would be required of us for immigration purposes did we start planning a wedding. Immigration and visas can cost thousands of dollars, so it is wise to budget for that first before deciding how much money you will have for your wedding. In addition to cost, waiting for immigration visas or permits which allow you to live in your partner's country can take a long time to process. You are often not given a clear timeframe or exact date of when your paperwork will be completed. This is why it is so important to pick a date for your wedding after your immigration issues are settled.

Megan and I learned this lesson the hard way. We made plans to get married in Hawaii since we thought it was a perfect location that was roughly halfway between Australia and the U.S. This would give each of our families a somewhat equal chance to attend the wedding if they wished. After we would get married, we planned to then live in the U.S. together. This meant Megan would need a special type of visa to be allowed to stay as a permanent resident. It was known as a fiancé visa and she needed to be granted this before any official wedding could take place.

We went ahead and planned our wedding before actually receiving Megan's fiancé visa for the U.S. We had thought we had given ourselves enough of a buffer between when we thought the visa would be granted and when our wedding date was. Unfortunately this would prove to not be the case. Based on timelines we were given, Megan's visa should have been granted in November 2012, so we planned the wedding for February 14, 2013 in case of delays. The delays would prove to be extreme and our final interview date for obtaining Megan's visa was scheduled for February 19 in Australia, some five days past our planned wedding date in Hawaii.

We had already paid for the wedding ceremony in Hawaii and over 40 members of our family and friends had already booked their flights. Cancelling or postponing our wedding was simply not an option. In the end, we flew to Hawaii and had a non-official ceremony on February 14. Three days later we had to fly back to Australia, cutting our planned Hawaiian honeymoon short. We attended Megan's visa interview in Sydney and remained in the country another week until the visa was finally granted. Thankfully I still had a few months left on my Australian working holiday visa so I could return to Australia with Megan.

Prior to our wedding, Megan and I had been living together in Australia for around 9 months as I had been issued a working holiday visa that allowed me to live and work in Australia for up to a year. I had quit my job and sold my car before heading down under but still had a home in Florida that I had left vacant until our return. Our time in Australia together allowed us the chance to live as a couple before we got married.



Visa finally in hand, we were finally allowed to fly to the U.S. to get married legally. After settling in the U.S. for a month, we applied for our Florida marriage license and were officially wed in the beautiful Lee County Clerk of Court Recording Office. It may not have been as romantic or memorable as our unofficial Hawaiian ceremony, but our finances had been ravaged by this point and we still regarded our Hawaiian wedding as our real wedding.

Our story showcases the fact that when it comes to long distance relationships and tying the knot, you need to be flexible and understanding. There are many things that will be out of your control and trying to make everything perfect for your big day will more often than not prove to be futile. It is important to remember that marriage isn't about the wedding when it comes to long distance relationships; rather it is about conquering the distance which should be celebrated.

For many long distance relationships, marriage allows couples the only path to be together permanently. Whether you wish to get married or not, sometimes getting married will be your only choice if your ultimate goal is to live happily ever after. Hopefully one day all couples will be afforded this choice and opportunity so that they can spend their lives with the ones they love the most.



## Same-Sex Marriage

Long distance relationships are difficult for any couple, but even more so for many same-sex couples. Not only do they have to face the challenges of being separated by distance, but they are also up against discrimination in many parts of the world.

Unfortunately there are still countries that not only ban same sex marriage, but also criminalize such relationships. Currently more than 70 countries, most located in Africa and Asia, have laws criminalizing homosexuality where same-sex sexual activity is banned and there is no recognition of same-sex unions.

These countries sadly offer little if any freedoms to the LGBT community, offering no protection by way of anti-discrimination laws concerning sexual orientation. Many countries don't allow members of the LGBT community the opportunity to serve in the military nor do they allow them to adopt children or express the gender they wish to identify themselves as. Although the UN Human Rights Commission has urged all member nations to pass and enforce basic rights for the LGBT community, many are still opposed to the idea.

Couples caught engaging in same-sex sexual activity can face harsh punishment including life imprisonment and even death in countries where it is deemed illegal. It is interesting to note, however, that the harshest cruel punishments are often restricted to male same-sex relationships. Females in same-sex relationships, while not being allowed to marry and without many other basic rights, are sometimes allowed to engage in sexual activity with one another without facing consequences.

Same-sex couples in long distance relationships need to be aware of the laws that are in place in their own country, and around the world if their relationship is intercontinental. You

*Although the UN Human Rights Commission has urged all member nations to pass and enforce basic rights for the LGBT community, many are still opposed to the idea.*



*Tragically, you and your same sex partner could face discrimination or prosecution should you decide to settle in or travel through a nation where such relationships are deemed illegal.*



*The Netherlands would become the first nation to legalize same-sex marriage when they did so in 2000. This gave same-sex couples the right to marry along with allowing them to divorce and adopt children.*



*Same-sex marriage has come a long way in the past few decades but it still has a very long road ahead to becoming accepted worldwide.*



and your same sex partner could face discrimination or prosecution should you decide to settle in or travel through a nation where such relationships are deemed illegal.

Throughout history, many cultures were accepting of same-sex relationships. Many Roman emperors were homosexual and some were even in official same-sex unions. History also shows us that same-sex unions were allowed in Mesopotamia which was a historical region that today corresponds to many nations which are now most opposed to such unions. It goes to show you that the attitudes towards same-sex relationships have continually changed throughout history. Often it comes down to things like religion which play a key role in determining whether same-sex relationships are deemed acceptable or not.

In the United States, the issue of same-sex marriage started to become a large issue in the 1970's. Maryland was the first state in the U.S. to statutorily ban same-sex marriage in 1973 and most other states would follow suit. There were, however, some states that supported same-sex marriage by attempting to issue marriage licenses and extend basic rights to same-sex couples.

Meanwhile Denmark would be the first country in the world to legalize same-sex unions by way of a registered partnership bill in 1989. Other European countries would jump onboard as they passed similar registered partnership or civil union bills for same-sex couples. A civil union or registered partnership is similar to marriage but often doesn't provide the same benefits or protections as marriage. It's basically a watered-down version of marriage.

The Netherlands would become the first nation to legalize same-sex marriage when they did so in 2000. This gave same-sex couples the right to marry along with allowing them to divorce and adopt children. The world's first same-sex marriage took place in Amsterdam a few months later.

As the 2000s rolled on, the United States would finally realize the importance of accepting same-sex marriage and states began passing registered partnership bills. Massachusetts would become the first U.S. state to legalize same-sex marriage in 2004. Other states would continue the trend until same-sex marriage was legalized in all 50 states as a result of the ruling of the Supreme Court of the United States. Even after this ruling, however, many states and counties tried to fight against same-sex marriage, refusing to issue marriage licenses and give equal rights. Slowly these issues have been dealt with by the Supreme Court, but same-sex couples should be aware that although the Supreme Court has continued to side with them, many regions throughout the U.S. may still display negative views or attitudes toward such relationships.

Same-sex marriage has come a long way in the past few decades but it still has a very long road ahead to becoming accepted worldwide. Just as a long distance relationship's success may look bleak at times, so too can the acceptance of same-sex marriage. However, with enough determination and fight, both can hopefully be achieved.



## Divorce

In America, over 50% of marriages fail and European nations fare even worse. Across Europe, the divorce rate climbs to around an average of 60% with countries like Belgium experiencing a 70% divorce rate according to some statistics. Countries in Africa and Asia see some of the lowest rates of divorce but that doesn't necessarily equate to happy and healthy marriages. Women across many of these nations may lack many freedoms experienced by more westernized societies and may not have the power to divorce even when they experience abuse in the relationship.

Nobody likes to think about divorce when they are looking to get married. The majority of people go into a marriage with the intent of making it last forever. Circumstances and people change, however, and sometimes divorce is inevitable.

Getting divorced can be difficult for any couple, but this can be especially true when it comes to long distance couples. Because marrying a long distance lover often involves life altering moves such as relocation, ending a marriage can cause a wide range of significant problems.


Let's say you move halfway across the country or world to marry and live with your long distance partner. If that marriage were to break down quickly and you find yourself filing for divorce, you could be left living somewhere you are unaccustomed to and a place where you may not have a support base. You will then be faced with the choice of remaining in your new state/country or return to your original place of residency. This choice can often prove difficult once you have made large purchases like a house, have a job, or had children with your long distance partner.

Laws regarding divorce may also be different depending on which country you and your partner live in. Some countries may allow a quick and easy road to divorce while others may make you wait a substantial amount of time before being allowed to divorce. Sometimes you may find that certain laws make divorce seem nearly impossible. Divorce can of course also be very expensive, especially when the breakup is not amicable. With intercontinental marriages, divorce could have implications regarding immigration and your residency status, so you will need to research what impacts a divorce could have. Thankfully many nations provide a

path to continued permanent residency and citizenship when divorce is a result of abuse or neglect. There are often protections which will allow you to remain in the country on the grounds you have established a new life in the country and leaving would create extreme hardship for you.

Because more is at stake when it comes to long distance relationship marriages, you really need to be careful when making the decision to get married. Marrying your long distance partner can prove to be the best day of your life, where you'll go on to live happily ever after. Others that find themselves going through a divorce may potentially experience a complicated mess of events that could leave them wishing they never entered into the long distance relationship in the first place.

You need to do all you can to make sure your long distance marriage has what it takes to survive so you won't be presented with such a catastrophe. This means taking things slowly with your long distance relationship as hard as that may seem. Take the time to make sure you can make the transitions that are required and realize all the hardships that may be involved with relocating to be with your partner. Hardships such as living far from your family or general difficulties with adapting to a new environment can often be more difficult than you could imagine. Only after you are 100% sure of you and your partner's love should you consider marriage.



## MARRIAGE FACTS

- The average length of a marriage that ends in divorce is eight years.
- 75% of people who marry partners from an affair eventually divorce.
- The divorce rate of couples with children is 40 percent lower than couples without children.
- The average age for couples going through their first divorce is 30 years old.
- Marrying younger than age 25 increases the risk of divorce.
- 90% of couples experience less marital satisfaction after the birth of their first child.
- Workers with a 45-minute commute are 40% more likely to divorce their partner.
- The more you spend on your wedding, the more likely your marriage will end in divorce.

# **Relocating and Immigration**

*-Megan-*

Whether your long distance relationship involves being in another state or another country, one of you will eventually have to relocate if you want your relationship to progress to marriage and beyond.

Simply moving interstate can be difficult enough as you will likely have to quit your job, end a lease or sell a home, obtain new documents such as a driver's license, and transport all your belongings to your new home. When it comes to international long distance relationships, relocation becomes even more complicated. You have all the hassles that come with a big move combined with immigration issues and higher relocation costs. In addition, you may have to get used to a whole new set of customs and laws that are unfamiliar to you.

Long before the actual process of relocation can even begin, the challenge of deciding which partner will relocate can put a strain on your relationship. At first the idea of moving to a new state or country may sound adventurous or romantic but it can become quite scary when you are faced with the logistics.

It is hard to start over from scratch and that is often what relocation makes you do, especially when making an international move. Relocating often involves making huge sacrifices where many things you take for granted may change. It's not that it won't be worth it, but you do need to realize that things will most likely be difficult in the beginning.

## **Choosing a Location to Live Together**

When it comes to closing the gap on your long distance relationship, the difficulty of relocating in order to be together is once again something that will vary depending on the circumstances of each couple.

Sometimes the decision of where you and your partner should settle will be quite clear, while other times it may be more of a dilemma. If one person owns a home and has an important high paying career while the other lacks both,

relocating to the place where financial security and a roof over your heads may seem like the obvious move to make. In cases where you and your partner both own property or have careers, one of you will end up having to be the one that makes big sacrifices.

For us, deciding where to initially relocate proved to be rather easy. I had just graduated university, was living at home, and didn't have a career per say. Mike on the other hand owned a home in the United States. I wouldn't be able to transfer my recently earned Australian legal qualifications but it was more logical for us as a couple to move to the States at this time. Although I wouldn't get to practice law, I was able to easily pick up hospitality work to get me started.

It is hard to know if getting married before relocating is a better idea than relocating and then getting married. For some couples, like those in international relationships, you may need to get married before you will be allowed to immigrate to another country. For those living within the same country, you should have the freedom to decide what to do first.

Relocating before you get married can give you a chance to see if you will be able to adjust to your new surroundings and will allow you to see what day to day living with your partner will be like. You may realize that the life you thought you wanted is in fact not right for you. Being unwed allows you to return to your old life without having to deal with issues of divorce.

Even if you're in an international relationship, there are often options that can give you a chance to trial a life together with your long distance partner. You can look into a travel visa that allows you to work or a program that will allow you to study abroad. This can allow you to live in your partners' country temporarily and could be a great opportunity to see what it's like to live together before starting the process of marriage and permanent immigration. Before I relocated to the United States, Mike came to Australia on a 12 month working travel visa. We found an apartment rental where we moved in together while I finished my final year of university. This gave us nearly a year to figure out if we could see ourselves living together permanently. Thankfully, things worked out for us.

On the other hand, getting married before relocating can show that both you and your partner are truly committed to the relationship and will work together to get



*When choosing a place to settle, you and your long distance partner have three decisions. You can either move to your partner's home, have your partner relocate to be with you, or choose a new home for you both.*



*Don't be afraid to test out both locations of where you and your partner currently live if that is a possibility. This will allow you to see what home will be a better fit for the two of you.*



through whatever life throws at you. You can make difficult decisions like quitting your job or selling belongings with more assurance that those decisions are for something that is more apt to last. The idea of being married may also motivate you a little more to work through problems and find solutions, since ending the relationship in divorce can present more difficult challenges. Marriage makes it much more difficult and inconvenient to simply walk away when things get rough.

When choosing a place to settle, you are left with three decisions. You can either move to your partner's home, have your partner relocate to be with you, or choose a new home for you both. Most often the decision is made to choose a location where one of you currently lives, at least to begin with. This often proves to be the more economical and logistical option.

Things to consider when deciding which partner will relocate are cost, living standards, ease of immigration, education opportunities for you or your children, availability of employment, and housing. You of course want to choose a place where you both will be happy in terms of preferred climate or availability of hobbies and activities you enjoy.

Don't be afraid to test out both locations of where you and your partner currently live if that is a possibility. This will allow you to see what home will be a better fit for the two of you. Mike got a taste of Australia during his working travel visa and I moved to the U.S. after we got married. We spent two years living in the United States before finally deciding to move back permanently

to Australia. This process gave both of us a chance to see what living in each country would be like.

Although Mike loved living in Florida and had thought he would never relocate from the U.S., we both decided it wasn't the best place for us as a couple or for raising a family. Australia with its low population density, low cost healthcare, low crime rate, and strong focus on communities and family seemed the better option. I also have a very large family in Australia where Mike could count his on one hand. You have to decide for yourself which state or country will offer you and your partner the greatest opportunities and conveniences or maybe which one of you is in an easier position to relocate.

The important thing to remember is to stick with your decision and fully commit to the place you decide to make home. Moving back and forth, especially internationally, can get to be incredibly expensive and can create an unsettled feeling. There will always be both benefits and drawbacks to living anywhere and you mustn't fall into the trap of thinking the grass is always greener on the other side.

## **Making the Move & Immigration Issues**

I was the first one to make an official move when I applied for a United States K-1 non-immigrant visa, more commonly known as the fiancé visa. This allowed me to travel to the U.S. with the intention of getting married to a U.S. citizen and residing there permanently.

For couples in our situation, where your long distance relationship involves immigration issues, you need to research what visas will be required and make sure you really look into what the process is to obtain those visas. The process of immigrating to a country is often complicated and may prove to be the greatest challenge of your relationship. You are at the mercy of governments to decide the fate of whether you and your partner will be able to live together and there's usually a lot of waiting. You tend to feel as though you are in limbo during this period.

For long distance couples residing in the same country, relocating to another state or region becomes a lot simpler because there isn't much in the way of legal issues stopping you. However, there will still be important issues you will have to deal with.

## **Moving Interstate**

When planning an interstate move, you first need to budget for your move and decide what belongings you want to accompany you. You will usually have the choice of renting a van to move your items yourself or hiring the services of a moving company.

You may want to sell many items such as furniture since you and your partner will unlikely need two beds, two sofas, two kitchen tables, etc. Instead of paying to have these double-ups relocated, you might as well make some money off them. A great way to get rid of your belongings is to create an Ebay account, post ads on a website like Craigslist, or have a moving sale.

If you are the one moving and own a home or are locked in a lease agreement, you of course will need to deal with this issue as well. If you are leasing, there are a few options to consider. You can choose to break your lease in which case you may have to pay penalties or pay rent until a new tenant is secured. You could also hold off on moving until your lease is up. Things can be a bit more difficult when you own a home since selling your home quickly for the price you need or want may not always be easy. In cases where you own a home and are choosing to relocate, you should not set any strict deadlines for your move or quit your job until once your home is sold. You and your partner don't want to put yourselves in a position where you are paying two mortgages or living on just one partner's salary when your living situation requires you both earning an income.

Once you have official relocated, you then enter the wonderful world of changing documents. You will eventually have to get a new driver's license, register your car in your new state if you are bringing one, and notify your car insurance company of the move. You will also need to notify credit card companies along with others services such as your cell phone about your change of

address. So as to not miss paying bills or receiving important documents, be sure to have your mail forwarded to your new address if that is an option

You will want to contact utility companies and other services that you will no longer need so they don't continue to charge you for them. These include electricity, water, cable, internet, and your local gym membership. Be aware that fees for utilities and others such as driver's licenses and car registration may be vastly different in your new state. You may have been used to paying very little for electricity or car registration in your home state, but now may be subjected to fees that are many times more expensive. You also may have moved to a state with higher sales tax rates or may now be in a state which collects state income tax while your previous state did not. These are all things to think about when budgeting for your move.

Once all your documents have been sorted and you have tied up loose ends in your previous state, you then have to focus on your new life in your new city. You will have to find employment if you need to work and learn the ins and outs of your area.

## **Moving Internationally**

For those that find themselves immigrating to another country to live with their long distance partner, things get even more involved. As we have already touched on, immigrating to another country involves a lot of paperwork and requires even more patience. The process of moving to another country used to be fairly easy. Today we find that many countries are beginning to tighten their borders to "foreign invaders". It is feared that too much immigration will lead to overpopulation,

*Every year, the process of immigration becomes stricter, more expensive, and more demanding in terms of what documents or evidence is needed to prove you and your partner are in a bona fide relationship.*



*You will most likely be required to undergo health examinations as well as numerous local and federal police checks during the immigration process.*



loss of jobs for current citizens, and become a strain on a range of systems such as healthcare.

Every year, the process of immigration becomes stricter, more expensive, and more demanding in terms of what documents or evidence is needed to prove you and your partner are in a bona fide relationship. The waiting time involved from the moment you submit your application to the time your visa or permanent residency is approved has also dramatically increased for many countries in the last few years. This may be due to immigration department budget cuts where there are not enough case officers to handle the amount of people wishing to immigrate, or the increase in waiting times may be purposely put in place to act as a deterrent. Whatever the truth is, the result is that immigration is often a long arduous process.

Obtaining a visa to actually travel to another country permanently is the first step to immigrating. You will be required to fill out pages and pages of documents and will need to submit mounds of evidence that prove the authenticity of your relationship. You will be required to undergo health examinations to prove you don't have any serious diseases that may place a burden on the health system you are immigrating to. In addition you will have to undergo numerous local and federal police checks to prove you don't have a criminal record. This is where your past can come back to really haunt you, as some offences may deem you ineligible to immigrate to the country you wish to.

Once you gather all the required information and documents, you then submit your application and it sits on a desk somewhere for a very long time. You are often given a very rough approximate waiting time that never seems to prove accurate. Waiting times for approvals may quote 6 months but could take double that time. This is where you and your long distance partner need to be patient and flexible. Sadly, you are often forced into a situation where you can't make plans for getting married or living together until your visa is approved. This of course can put a lot of strain on your relationship.

When and if you hopefully receive your visa to immigrate, it generally allows you permanent residency strictly on a temporary basis. This means that during a set amount of time you have to maintain a clean criminal record and continue to save evidence of you and your partner's relationship. You may at anytime be forced to

go in for a face to face interview with a case officer whose goal is to determine if your relationship is legitimate. The reason for this “temporary” permanent residency is to stop sham marriages where citizens of another country con, pay, or simply talk someone into marrying them in order to gain citizenship in a more favorable country. By increasing the cost, time, and difficulty of the immigration process, it has led to a decrease in fraudulent marriage cases in many countries.

In addition to maintaining a good character image, there may also be certain restrictions involved during your temporary permanent resident status. You may only be allowed to travel outside of your new country for a certain amount of time each year and may not have full access to all government programs. You will generally be allowed to work in your new country but there may even be restrictions when it comes to employment as well. For instance, even if you are a permanent resident in Australia, you cannot apply for a government position until you become a citizen.

Eventually, you will be allowed to apply for citizenship. The time you must be a permanent resident before doing this varies depending on the country you are immigrating to. In addition, the government can pass new legislation which changes the immigration laws at any time. You may think you will be able to apply for citizenship next month for instance, but then new laws get passed which make you wait an additional two years before being allowed to apply.

Even once you have received citizenship in another country, the long ordeal may not exactly be over. You may be forced to make a decision of whether you wish to hold dual citizenship or renounce your citizenship from your previous country you once called home. The decision is not one to be taken lightly as it is irreversible. While it may seem a no brainer to retain your previous citizenship, you may not be allowed to depending on the country you are immigrating to. Many countries do not allow for people to be dual citizens. You may also want to renounce your citizenship for tax purposes or to become eligible for certain careers. Countries like the United States require you to report and in some instances pay taxes even if you no longer reside there but remain a U.S. citizen. If you are seeking certain government jobs, you may find the position does not allow you to be a dual citizen.

*Countries like the United States require you to report and in some instances pay taxes even if you no longer reside there but remain a U.S. citizen.*



*If the process of immigration becomes too overwhelming and not something you feel confident with, consulting with an immigration lawyer may be your best bet.*



To sum things up, immigrating to another country takes a lot of time and patience. It is a decision that will affect your life for many years to come. Whether the hassle will be worth it is hard to say. It all comes down to how much your long distance relationship means to you. If the love you and your partner share for each other is the most important thing in your lives, then the immigration process, albeit annoying and difficult, will prove to be worth it in the end.

We filed all of our immigration applications independently without the help of a lawyer. We did this both for my initial immigration to the United States as well as for Mike's immigration to Australia. Generally, the application forms come with a comprehensive booklet of instructions for applying which I highly recommend that you read and re-read thoroughly.

We printed everything out and made checklists of everything we needed for our application. We also made a timeline of which forms were required when, which helped us make sure we didn't miss anything. If you're organized and you're thorough, there's no reason you shouldn't be able to complete the process without legal help. If the process becomes too overwhelming and not something you feel confident with, consulting with an immigration lawyer may be your best bet. Forgetting to include required evidence or not filling out your application properly may mean it gets denied. This will result in further wait times and potentially mean you lose the money you put down for the application fee, which can be thousands of dollars.

## **Adjusting to Your New Location**

Whether you are moving interstate or relocating abroad, adapting to your new home can be just as difficult as the actual process of moving. Obviously it is more likely to be easier if you relocate within the same country as opposed to moving internationally, but adapting to any new location can take both time and an open mind.

Where once you may have lived in a warm tropical climate, you now may find yourself having to shovel snow or learning how to drive in a blizzard. Stores you may have been used to shopping at may not be present in your new location and products you love may not be available. You may need to learn how to deal with new natural disasters or poisonous animals you are unaccustomed to. If moving from a rural area to a big city, you will be introduced to the wonderful world of traffic congestion.

The point is, relocating to a new state or country can present you with a drastically different way of life. For many, this new transition is adventurous and exciting. For others, this conversion may take a toll on their emotions and cause anxiety. Most people are able to eventually adapt, especially when they have the support of their partner throughout the process. There are also steps you can take to make settling in a bit easier

Giving yourself time is one of the biggest keys to successfully adjusting to your new life. Settling in doesn't happen overnight and the length of time to do so will vary from person to person based on their individual personalities. It would be impossible to predict how much time it will take you to feel at home. It could be weeks, months, or it may even take years. Don't book a plane ticket home the moment things get rough. Be patient and don't be afraid to ask for help or talk about how you are feeling with your partner.

It definitely helps to build up a new social network and you should make it a number one priority to meet new people. Having friends allows you to share your experiences, plan fun activities, and really get to know a new place. You can socialize with colleagues, classmates, or even other expats which will understand what you are going through. A great way to meet new people and to make friends is by participating in an organized sport or hobby. Being part of a sports team tends



to bring people close together, which will make it easier for you to settle in more quickly.

It is also important to get into a daily routine or at least begin to get some consistency. Having a routine allows you to take your mind off the challenges of relocating. Try driving around your new area to see everything it offers and use this time in your life to try new things.

It's important to keep in touch with your family and friends back home, and we're quite fortunate in today's day and age that all we have to do is jump on the internet or pick up the phone. Family and friends can offer a great deal of support. Knowing that you can easily contact them goes a long way to not feeling so isolated. It's quite natural to miss your friends and family and talking with them will allow you to speak in your own language if you've had to learn a new one in your new country.

Relocating abroad will often mean you have to learn a different language. Even when you move to another country where the same language is spoken, accents and slang may be a bit different. When Mike came to Australia, I had to explain to him that a thong was a sandal and not a g-string, a baby stroller was a pram, capsicum was a bell pepper, the boot of a car was its trunk, and a good root meant great sex!

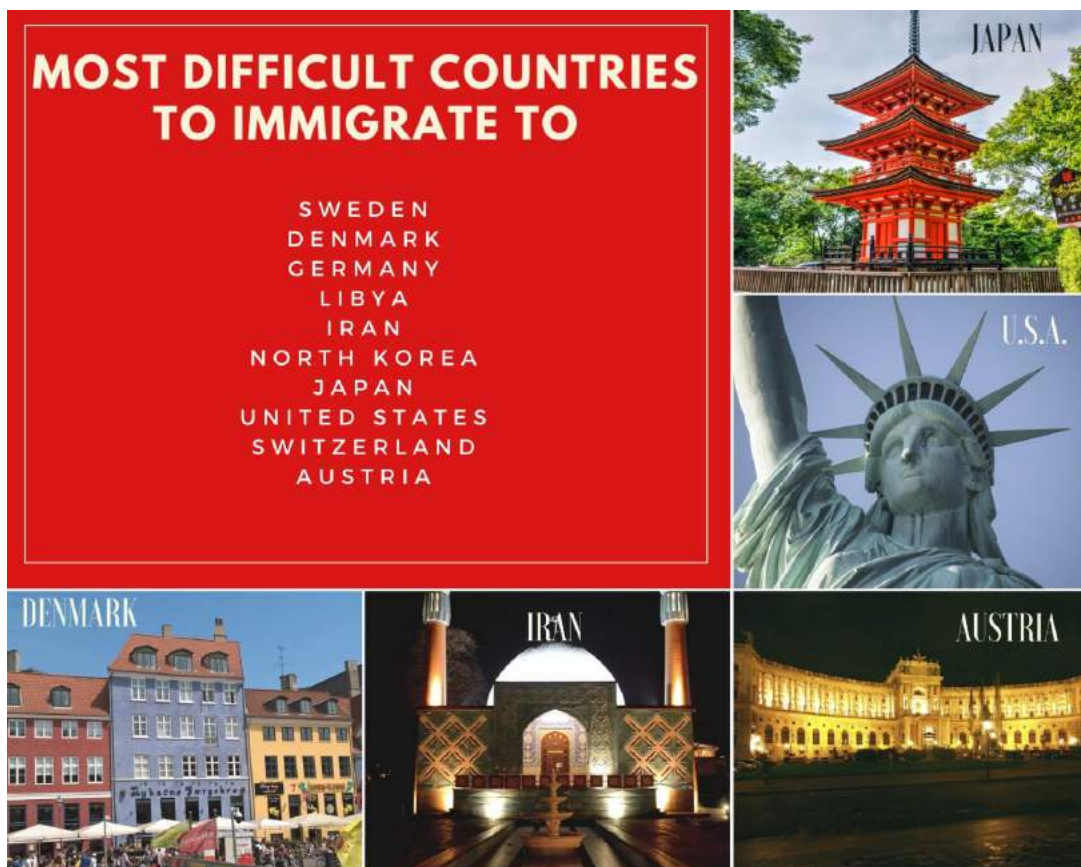
You may discover that finding your favorite foods from home is a lot more difficult in your new country. You may have to resort to the internet to purchase and have items from your home country shipped to you abroad. The shipping can of course get a bit costly but over time you will learn to do away with your previous food cravings as you embrace the new flavors of your new home.

Driving can prove to be a new challenge since you may find yourself having to drive on the opposite side of the road. During my Florida driving test, I remember turning on my windshield wipers instead of my turn signal indicators. Fortunately the instructor accepted my explanation that the two are switched in Australian cars. You will also no doubt get in to drive and find yourself on the passenger side by mistake the first few dozen times.

Road rules may be quite different in your new country as well, so you will need to thoroughly research what the differences are. You may be used to gauging your distances and speed in miles and now be forced to use kilometres.

One of the most important things to remember when relocating to another country is to embrace its customs and values. You have to remember that you should be the one to adapt and not the country having to adapt to you. That is not to say you have to give up your beliefs, values, or religion, but you should generally try your best to assimilate. You shouldn't be afraid to be yourself and bring new ideas to the table, but you should do so in a respectful manner that stays true to the values and laws of your new country. If you are unwilling to fully adapt to your new country, you should ask yourself why you chose to settle there in the first place.

It is important to remember and value where you came from but also realize that you now have a new culture and home. Embracing a new country and its culture can be truly rewarding and act as a new chapter in your life. Sometimes we can try too hard to hold onto our past instead of letting ourselves grow as a person. Life is all about new experiences and challenging yourself. In addition to the love you have for your partner, part of the romance and enjoyment that comes from a long distance relationship is about learning to love your new home just as much.



# Children

*-Mike-*

Many children are forced into having a long distance relationship with one or both of their parents due to divorce. While adults may separate from one another and find new partners, children cannot change who their mother and father are. They are often required to live with a single parent and may only see their mother or father on infrequent occasions. This can of course be quite difficult for a child of any age to understand and deal with.

Those of us who went through or are currently going through a long distance relationship can relate to what children of divorce must often feel. We consistently have the desire to be with our long distance partner that is often far away, similarly to the way a child wishes to be able to see both of their parents whenever they wish to.

We may not be inclined to think about how our long distance relationship may affect others, but we are forced to when children are involved. You may already have children from a previous relationship, may be planning to have children with your long distance partner, or may have children with your current partner but find yourself forced into a long distance relationship scenario due to military deployment or a job offer. In any case, the long distance could have a large and lasting impact on your children. It is something that definitely must be considered carefully.

In cases where you have children from a previous relationship and are now in a long distance relationship with someone new, deciding to relocate could mean that your children will have to face not seeing you. If you choose to take your children with you, you may be robbing them from spending time with their other parent.

Other couples may have started their family while in a traditional relationship where long distance was never an issue. These couples may have lived this way for years only to now find themselves facing a long distance situation. This can be caused by a new sudden job offer in another state or country that uproots one parent rather quickly. This scenario often happens with professional athletes who get traded to another sports team across the country. Although interstate or

international moves for employment reasons may not bring about financial hardship, they can cause a great deal of stress for children. Depending on their age, children may have to switch schools, say goodbye to their friends, and get used to a new way of life. Our kids are sadly forced to accept whatever changes we bring their way.

Military deployment is another common situation where we may have to leave our kids for long periods of time. The emotional stress of a child not having their mother or father with them is only enhanced by the possibility they may never see them again due to the nature of war and combat.

Even if you and your long distance partner don't yet have children, your relationship can still have an impact on them once you do decide to have them. Let's say you move to another state or abroad to be with your long distance partner and down the road you both decide to have children. Your children may not have the fortune of frequently seeing grandparents, aunts & uncles, and cousins from both sides of the family. Although this may not create any serious issues, it is something to think about.

When it comes to international moves, you are also deciding what kind of life you want your future child or children to live. For instance, countries like Norway and Sweden offer free university education but a country like the United States makes it often financially difficult to give your children a higher education. Many countries are also far more superior when it comes to providing families with quality and affordable health care. Some countries provide free health care which gives you the peace of mind that you will never face hardship due to unfortunate medical situations involving astronomical bills.

The city you select for your children may also determine what their standard of living will be along with level of safety they will have. The city you choose will decide what opportunities they will have as they get older. That is not to say where you decide to settle will determine what kind of person your child will become or how happy they will be. Kids around the world and from all different backgrounds can experience enjoyable and fulfilling childhoods. There is no denying, however, that certain places will open your children up to more opportunities where they have a greater flexibility in choosing the life they wish to have.

*Family court systems across the world have recently seen a large increase in the number of divorced parents wishing to relocate interstate and internationally.*



*Finding long distance love when you already have children with an ex-partner can exacerbate the hardships your children must face. Not only must they deal with having parents that have fallen out of love, but now they may face separation from one of them.*



## **When You Have Children from a Previous Relationship**

If you find yourself currently in a long distance relationship and already have children from a previous relationship, you may be facing a bigger challenge than most long distance relationships where children aren't part of the equation. There are often laws in place that won't allow you to take your children far away from your previous partner if they are the mother or father of those children. This could leave you with having to make the difficult decision to be with your kids or be with your long distance partner.

Family court systems across the world have recently seen a large increase in the number of divorced parents wishing to relocate interstate and internationally. This is mainly due to the fact the world has become far more connected with the internet. Whether it's online dating apps or social media, people are finding it easier to find and connect with long distance partners. Although this enlarging pool of potential partners can be great for us adults, it often leads to children not living in close proximity to both their parents.

Finding long distance love when you already have children with an ex-partner can exacerbate the hardships your children must face. Not only must they deal with having parents that have fallen out of love, but now they may face separation from one of them. If you choose to leave your children to be with your long distance partner, it is easy to make promises that you will make every effort to still see your children frequently. The fact, however, is that you may struggle to make good on those promises unless you are financially well off.

Although travel may have become easier, with frequent flights to more destinations, it still proves to be quite costly. Finding both the money and the available time off work to keep in contact with your children may prove hard to accomplish.

Statistics show that roughly half of all divorces involve children and the decision to divorce can affect them in many ways. Apart from the emotional impact of being separated from a parent due to divorce, children may also face other hardships. By you and your partner deciding to divorce and split your assets, you are essentially throwing away money and resources that could be used to help give your children a better life. Instead of parents owning a single home, divorced parents will now be paying two mortgages or rents. They will be paying twice the amount for things like utilities and will now incur travel expenses transporting their kids between each other. And this is for amicable divorces. For highly contested divorces, parents can end up throwing out tens of thousands of dollars on legal costs. All of this leads to children of divorced parents having to most likely face a lower standard of living than they would have had if their parents stayed together.

If there is any chance of saving your marriage, you should by all means attempt to do so for you and your partner as well as for the well being of any children. Many say you should always put your children first, and although this is sound advice, you do need to look after your own needs and desires as well. Having children doesn't mean you need to sacrifice every aspect of your life. You deserve to enjoy a life of happiness just as much as your children do. The more you sacrifice your wants and needs, the more you may begin to feel resentment for your children. Kids are very intuitive and will pick up on this.

If your relationship has reached the point where it is clear that it is well beyond repair, then divorce may be a better

*Statistics show that roughly half of all divorces involve children and the decision to divorce can affect them in many ways.*



*Children of divorced parents often face a lower standard of living than they would have had if their parents stayed together.*



option than staying together for both you and your children. We cannot control who we fall in love nor can we know for sure that our relationships will last forever. We often go into relationships with the best intentions, but things can change for the worst despite our best efforts to keep things afloat. Many times I think there is a stigma around divorced parents that paints them in a light as though they did something wrong. This can often be far from the truth.

Many times a couple may realize they simply desire a different path in life. While you should always make it a priority to provide your children with the best life possible, it may not be wise to stay together with a partner you have fallen out of love with simply out of fear it may negatively impact your children. There's only so long you can sustain a fake relationship before your unhappiness will begin to affect your kids as well. Quite often divorce can be the healthiest option for your family dynamic, most importantly your relationship with your children. If you and your partner do decide to go down the path of divorce, know that there are ways you can limit the negative side effects your children will experience.

The key to any divorce is communicating with your ex-partner and being open to making compromises despite what led to your divorce, except of course in cases where illegal behavior or domestic abuse was experienced. In cases such as these, leaving the relationship is often the best decision one can make for themselves and their children.

Some cases of divorce will be brought on by the poor decisions or actions of one partner and the innocent or abused partner should not be looked down upon for deciding to leave the marriage, even if they do have children. Often people find they married an exemplary individual only to see them become abusive or afflicted with a harmful addiction as time passes. If your partner becomes drastically different from the person you married and it's causing you and your children harm, you should have every right to remove your children and yourself from the toxic situation.

After a divorce, life must go on and eventually many will find themselves in new relationships. There is nothing wrong with this of course and it can prove to be healthy for both you and your children. When it comes to managing a long distance relationship and one or both of you have kids, things can become a bit

tricky. For many, moving away without their children would be unthinkable. In cases like this, it would help matters if one partner in the long distance relationship did not have kids. This would make it an easier option for them to be the one to make the move to where you reside so you can remain with your children. Should both of you have children from previous relationships, then your situation becomes a lot more difficult.

It is important for both parents to be actively involved in their children's lives. You also owe it to your partner to take equal responsibility when it comes to raising the children you had together and you are both entitled to a life with your children, except in cases of abuse or neglect of course. Although you and your former partner may have decided to divorce, you both must come together and have an equal say on how your children will be raised.

Just because you may have found a new love via a long distance relationship, you cannot expect your ex-partner to make sacrifices in order for you to be with your new partner. You could ask your ex to move interstate with you so you can both be with the kids, but this would both be highly unrealistic and unfair towards your former partner. In cases of international long distance relationships, immigration laws would most likely prevent this idea from even being a possibility

Those finding themselves in a very good financial situation will no doubt have more options when it comes to making arrangements to frequently visit their children, such as acquiring a second residence close to their kids aside from the house they may share with their new long distance partner that is located far away from the kids. Most people, however, must often make the choice of what will be easier for their children, their ex, their new partner, and themselves. In this case there may not be a right answer. It comes down to what you value most.

At the very least, technology has made it easier to stay in contact with your children should you decide to move away from them. The same technological advancements that allowed you and your long distance partner to successfully remain together can also work to stay close to your children. Video messaging, social media, and even travel in general have all made it easier for families to stay in touch and share thoughts.



## **Having Children with Your Long Distance Partner & Agreeing on How to Raise Them**

Any set of parents will be forced to make decisions and compromises when it comes to how they wish to raise their children. This becomes even more pronounced when it comes to long distance relationships, especially international ones. Because international long distance relationships often bring together different cultures and religions, you and your partner can experience clashes from time to time when it comes to raising your children.

Without even realizing it, you are deciding how your child will speak and to some extent act depending on where you and your partner decide to settle. Move to Australia and your children will develop a lovely Aussie accent and probably follow cricket and rugby. Move to Canada and your children will probably say “Eh” and be great hockey players. Your children will of course acquire traits from both parents and may even learn to speak two different languages, but a person’s characteristics and personality is often largely based on the environment they find themselves growing up in. Where you and your partner decide to raise your children will determine the type of influences they are subjected to.

Often you may find yourself in a long distance relationship where you and your partner share different religious beliefs. Although you and your partner may have fallen in love despite your differing faiths, you may encounter disagreements when it comes to what religion you wish your children to be raised believing. For instance, one parent may have a strong wish to have their child baptized while the other is vehemently against it. One may wish for their male child to be circumcised while the other wishes him to remain as he was born.

*Because international long distance relationships often bring together different cultures and religions, you and your partner can experience clashes from time to time when it comes to raising your children.*



*Your children should be taught to accept the culture of wherever it is you and your partner decided to settle, along with being encouraged to learn where you and your partner came from as well.*



*It can be beneficial to open your child's mind to many ideas and cultures. They will be more well-rounded and more apt to be accepting towards others.*



It is my belief that parents should leave it to their children to decide for themselves what faith if any they wish to believe in later on, but of course the parents' beliefs will most likely influence what faith their children will follow early on in their childhood. It may be wise in some cases to have your children raised under a religion that will best suit them in the region they live. For example, a city may offer catholic schools that offer a greater education and sense of safety for your child that the local public schools cannot match. If you find that the majority of people in your area follow a certain religion such as Islam, your child may be better accepted into the society if they follow the same beliefs and traditions.

Religion is and always will be a difficult topic to both discuss and make compromises on. Religion should be a personal belief and it should be your duty to put aside your individual beliefs if that means giving your partner and your children a better life. You are more than free to teach your children good values and teachings, but you mustn't get too hung up on the specifics of a religion or your own personal views if it may place limits on your child.

Your children should be taught to accept the culture of wherever it is you and your partner decided to settle, along with being encouraged to learn where you and your partner came from as well. If Megan and I have children in the future, they will no doubt grow up to follow Aussie traditions and values as we have chosen to live in Australia. However, I will surely make it a point to introduce them to American culture by teaching them how to play things like baseball or American football as well. Our kids will show their Aussie pride by spreading Vegemite on their morning toast or diving into a bowl of

*The key to selecting a destination to settle down is to choose a place that works for both you and your partner. If you are planning on having kids, you then have to factor their needs into the equation as well*



Weet-Bix but may have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or macaroni and cheese for lunch, both of which are staples of every American child's diet.

It can be beneficial to open your child's mind to many ideas and cultures. They will be more well-rounded and more apt to be accepting towards others. Diversity is what makes many of our finest cities so wonderful.

Of course not all long distance relationships will involve large cultural differences and beliefs that often come with international relationships. Interstate relationships will share many of the same national beliefs and ideas, but there can still be discrepancies between states or regions.

Individual states generally have their own sets of laws and ways of life. This becomes especially apparent when you look at countries like the United States. Compare a state like Nebraska to New York for example. You and your family will lead completely different lives in these two places even though they are within the same country.

If you and your partner decide to settle in the city, your children will generally have easier access to more career options, a greater variety of entertainment options, and more resources available to them in terms of libraries, museums, and higher end schools. However, living in the city can have its drawbacks. Things like taking your kid fishing, horse riding, or simply exploring the woods in search of animals may not be possible without involving a long drive outside of the city. Big city life may also present safety issues for your children and may not allow you to purchase or rent a place with a big backyard for your children to play in.

As previously stated, the key to selecting your home's location is to choose a place that works for both you and your partner. If you are planning on having kids, you then have to factor their needs into the equation as well. Raising children is all about making compromises and selecting a home that is right for your kids is one of those compromises.

The main thing to keep in mind despite all this advice is to understand that there is no single correct way for how or where you should raise your children. As long as you show your children love and respect, they can grow up to live fulfilling

lives. Like anything in life, the more time and effort you put in, the better the results will be.

# FAQ

After becoming travel bloggers, Mike and I published a blog post in 2013 on [Maintaining a Long Distance Relationship](#). The article highlighted the journey we went through to make our relationship a success. That post has gone on to become the most popular article on our website and we continually receive comments and questions from people seeking more helpful advice. This book was inspired in response to that.

We receive a large volume of comments and emails from those in long distance relationships asking for advice on their individual situations, and we're always happy to help out where we can. We have created a Facebook community "[Long Distance Relationships: Advice & Support Group](#)" that offers a direct line where you can ask us anything. The following questions are ones we are asked most frequently. We hope the answers to some of these questions may be able to help with your own situation, otherwise feel free to reach out to us if you have questions of your own.

I'm contemplating a long distance relationship. What did you consider before going ahead with yours when it came to things like finances, how you would communicate, and how you would stay committed to each other?

Financially, it definitely helps to have the means to see each other as frequently as you can. Mike and I tried to see each other every 3-4 months and we would often meet up in-between our two countries (Australia and America). We used this as an excuse to take a vacation and meet up with each other at the same time. We were both working two jobs to make that a financial possibility.

In terms of communication, this is often the key component to whether or not your relationship will be successful. We committed to speaking every day, however, some people with demanding jobs or who find themselves in other restrictive situations may not be able to make that same level of commitment.

I would recommend making your best effort to schedule a decent amount of time to talk at least every couple of days if you can or as much as your schedule permits. You need to find a routine that works for both of your schedules and lives.

Commitment wise, we found it helpful to make our relationship official rather quickly as it allowed us to feel as though we had an official commitment to each other. Long distance relationships are stressful, so making some kind of pact that you are both serious about it can go a long way to make you get through the tough times. Without some kind of commitment, it can be easy to simply call it quits and move on to something that is easier.

We are currently facing the “who moves” situation. We are stuck and just don’t know how to make a decision, any suggestions?

The “who moves” scenario is always a tough one. If you know in your gut that this is the person you truly want to spend the rest of your life with, you can make any move you decide to make work out.

If you’ve gotten to the stage of your LDR where you’re now thinking about a move, your relationship should be strong enough to endure any location you decide on. We recommend making the leap of faith to move to be together. Settling into a different state or country takes time to adjust, but it’s always worth it to be with the love of your life.

We both try and live by the motto that the only things in life we regret are the things we didn't do. Even if you make a move and it doesn't work out, you will never have to wonder "what if" and you can't say you didn't give it your all.

A good idea would be to write up a list of possible options for when, how, and who could move and go from there. It is often much less overwhelming when you have a physical piece of paper with options that you can look.

Our work schedules are crazy, so we don't get to talk much. Some days we don't get to talk at all and these days can be really difficult.

We totally understand the stresses that come from a hectic work schedule and maintaining a LDR. Our advice would be to try and schedule times to talk to each other, such as blocking time out in each of your calendars just as you would for a date. This may be difficult, but pre-arranging time to talk together gives you something to look forward to and may force you to commit to continual communication. If you really have no time to talk at all, really try and keep it alive with texts or perhaps emails. This will allow you both to communicate back and forth when you each individually get the chance.

My long distance partner and I still have not physically met. I am beginning to feel that I am losing the motivation to continue with the relationship. Should I push my partner to have us meet in person?

Although you can definitely spark up a quality relationship without physically meeting someone, it is important to eventually connect face to face. A connection that solely exists online may not always carry over to the real world.

We often hear about long distance couples who after meeting for the first time realized they didn't have the same connection they had hoped for. You definitely don't want to invest a great deal of time or energy in a relationship you are uncertain about. If you feel you need to meet your partner in person in order for you to be certain it is something you wish to pursue, then you should definitely express that to your long distance partner. If your partner really has feelings for you, they should want to meet you just as much as you want to meet them. I wouldn't say you should push or force your partner to meet you, but let them know you think it is important and agree to a time to meet that is suitable for both of you.

It can be hard to maintain the enthusiasm for a long distance relationship when you haven't yet met your partner in person, therefore you shouldn't be afraid to try and keep it alive by meeting up. Meeting may provide you both with the answers you need to decide whether you want to continue with the relationship or move on.

Can you give me any advice on dealing with doubts and facing the unknown?

The biggest piece of advice we can give is to not over think things or force anything. You want your long distance relationship to develop naturally just as it would a normal relationship. Long distance relationships are often very difficult, so don't try to seek all the answers right away. Part of the excitement of relationships is not knowing where they may lead. Life is a long time; don't think you need to figure everything out at a young age. If your long distance relationship does in fact break down, simply learn from it and move on. Eventually you will find the person that is a better match for you when the time is right.

Too many people try to control the unknown and this only prevents you from living in the moment. Learn to accept that there will be many unknowns and adapt a positive attitude to pull you through difficult times. The more pessimistic you



are, the more likely your relationship is to fail. Try to always remain positive while also setting realistic expectations at the same time.

Was the process of immigrating to a new country a stressful or extremely difficult process? What can I expect?

The process of immigrating to a new country will be different for each unique situation depending on what country you are immigrating to as well as what country you are currently a citizen of. There are a number of factors that will dictate how difficult or stressful your own experience will be. Your past criminal history, medical history, finances, and even the length of your relationship will all factor into whether you will be allowed to immigrate and how quickly.

You should be prepared to be patient throughout the process since almost all countries have made the process more involved over the years. The key is to be honest and thorough in regards to your application. We managed to successfully file all of our paperwork without the help of an immigration lawyer. It was still quite stressful in terms of the length of time the whole process took and it was difficult not knowing when everything would be finalized.

You are often left in the dark and must try to keep a positive outlook. As long as you plan everything out and do your homework, you should be alright. You need to realize, however, that immigrating to a new country does require work and is never a certainty.

I want to meet my long distance partner but I have never travelled far from home before. I am afraid to fly and we are separated by a very long flight. How can I overcome this fear?

Long distance relationships often require you to go well outside of your comfort zone. At some stage you will have to meet each other if there is going to be a future for you both. If your partner is able and willing to travel to you first, this is probably your best option in order to make sure the relationship is really something you want to pursue.

You might also consider your partner flying to you, where they can see how you live, and then both of you can fly together to see where and how they live. Having your partner beside you may help to ease the anxiety of flying and keep your mind preoccupied.

Alternatively, you could ask a close family member or friend to travel with you to meet your partner. This allows you support while flying and during your visit. If the meeting between you and your partner goes poorly, you will still have someone there for you which could also be smart in terms of safety. Even if your long distance relationship doesn't pan out in the real world, you and your traveling companion can still enjoy a holiday together.

My adult kids are very much against my long distance relationship as they feel that it was the reason for me divorcing their father. What should I do?

Without knowing the specifics regarding how your marriage to their father ended in divorce, it is rather difficult to understand why they may feel this way. Whatever

the reason was that made you leave your children's father, you obviously made the choice because you weren't happy with the relationship you both shared.

Moving forward, your biggest priority should be your own happiness and focusing on your new long distance relationship. If your kids are adults and are now independent, they should be focusing on their own lives. You should of course be considerate of their feelings and be open to answering any questions they may have. If you give them space and time, they may eventually come to accept your new relationship.

I think the biggest thing would be to not force your new relationship on your children. Let them decide when they are ready to meet your new partner and try to understand from their perspective why they may be upset. Most importantly, never try to interfere with their relationship with their father. Don't force them to take sides and try to be respectful towards your ex-husband.

My long distance partner tells me my romantic gestures are childish. I have sent him old fashioned love letters and small thoughtful gifts but he doesn't seem to like or appreciate any of it. Am I doing something wrong?

Everyone is going to have different personalities but it is important for you to stay true to who you are. You shouldn't need to hold back on expressing your love for your partner or the ways you wish to do that.

You need to have a discussion with your partner to find out the real reason he doesn't like your gestures. Maybe he is embarrassed that you are putting in more effort than he is able to or knows how to do. Often men like to be the ones to sweep women off their feet, so it may be just a case of him feeling emasculated.

If he simply just doesn't like or appreciate your thoughtfulness, you should ask yourself whether he is the right person for you.

My long distance partner and I are engaged, though we haven't met yet. We love and trust each other, but my friends ask me how I can really know him without having met him.

We recommend you get to know him properly before rushing into anything. You may feel as though you really know someone before actually meeting them, but you need to spend time with them in person to know if you both are actually compatible. A person's persona can be completely different in person to the one they portray online. It is impossible for you to gauge how you will act together as a couple without having spent time with each other.

This is not to say that your relationship won't work out, but you may want to slow things down a bit. It would have been wise for you both to meet before rushing into an engagement. You need to be 100% certain before committing to someone for the rest of your life. Being 100% certain about someone you have not physically met seems like it would be a very difficult task.

Do you have any advice for young adults maintaining a long distance relationship when it comes to travel, school, and currently living with your parents?

Maintaining a long distance relationship when you're young can be quite difficult. You may find it difficult to continually meet with your partner since younger individuals don't always have the finances to do so. It may also be hard to find the available time to travel if you are still in school. If you are still in school,

we recommend you focus your attention on your studies and future. You are at a stage where you are finding out who you really are and what you want out of life.

Trying to maintain any relationship when you are still living with your parents can be difficult since you are often bound by the rules of the house. By all means keep communicating with your long distance partner but realize that you are both most likely going to see a lot of changes happening in your lives during this period, assuming you are of similar age.

Don't be in a hurry to make things official and allow yourself to grow into the person you have the potential to be. If your relationship proves to last until you are both finished with school and you have become truly independent of your parents, it is a very good sign that your relationship is both genuine and able to endure hardship. Young love often works out but the key is to be patient and allow it to take a backseat to creating a life for your individual self first.

My partner seems to be less certain than I am that our long distance relationship will ultimately succeed. How do I boost her confidence that we can make things work?

Continually let her know that you are fully invested in making the relationship work. Try not to overwhelm her with discussions that involve your future together as it may only create anxiety for her. The more we try and think about things like marriage, relocating, changing jobs, selling houses, and having kids, the more we may believe that the whole situation is too much to handle or too difficult to figure out.

Try to take each day as it comes and simply try to have fun with your partner. The specifics of your future will eventually fall into place, but the important thing

for now is to simply focus on getting to know each other and making your time together enjoyable.

Be open to answering any questions she may have along the way and be willing to give her space to think through things herself. If you truly love her, you won't force her into anything she is uncomfortable with. If she does decide that the relationship is too much for her to handle right now, don't completely write the relationship off.

Give your partner a bit of space to allow her to decide if the relationship is indeed something she wants to fight for or if she would like to break it off. If you both do decide to take a break or end the relationship, don't be afraid to move on yourself. Explore other options that may be more suitable to your needs instead of simply waiting around for your partner to possibly change her mind.

My partner's parents are really against our long distance relationship. We have been together for a long time now and have plans to one day get married. I don't want to be the reason my partner loses his family. What should I do?

Whether or not your partner decides to stay with you or listens to the advice of his parents is a decision that he needs to make. You should have a conversation with him that explains you understand what a difficult decision it is and that you don't want to be the reason he has a falling out with his family.

If he decides to choose you over his family, you should never feel guilty as long as you allowed him to make the decision without any pressure. You need to have a very honest conversation that explains you don't want to find yourself in a situation where he blames you for his decision down the road.

The best case scenario is that your partner's parents will eventually come around to accepting you and the relationship. Parents can often be overly protective of their children and simply want to assure a wonderful life for them. Continue to be respectful and courteous towards your partner's parents so they don't have any excuse to dislike you.

The only person you really need to care about you is your partner. As long as he is certain of your relationship together and will fight for what you both have, then you will be fine.

Many of my friends and family have been negative about my long distance relationship. What can I do to make them understand and show support?

The biggest advice we can give you for dealing with the negativity from family and friends is to make a promise to yourself to not to let it affect you. Don't allow negative energy to sabotage your relationship. It will be difficult at first, but know that it will get easier over time. As your relationship progresses, your friends and family will eventually get used to the idea and the negative remarks should start to die down.

Chances are your partner is dealing with same negativity as well. Have a discussion about it so as you may be able to support each other. Seek out the friends or family members that do support you and ones that don't judge what you are doing.

Often people show negativity when they don't understand the situation. They may also be against your relationship because they care about you and because they think they are promoting what is best for you. Let them know you appreciate their concern, but make it clear that you know this relationship is what is right for you.

Although it would be ideal to eventually gain their support, you ultimately don't need it in order for your relationship to succeed. As long as you and your partner believe in your relationship, you can be certain it will work out. Don't ever feel like you have to defend your relationship. Simply live your life and let your friends and family accept it if they want to.

Of course you should always be open to the thoughts and concerns of your family in case they can see something that isn't as apparent to you. Respect what they have to say, but ultimately know it is up to you to decide what you want in life.