

Bonding Behaviors

Soothing music can make these activities even more enjoyable. If an activity doesn't appeal to one of you, try the "Substitute Activity" at the end of the list. If either of you is too exhausted even to do one of these simple activities, just spoon each other as you fall asleep—preferably skin-to-skin. Please use your discretion; if your health may not permit a suggested activity, skip it.

Day 1 Lie on your backs and place the hand nearest your sweetheart over his/her genitals. Without moving your hand, send loving energy to your partner through your hand with each out-breath. With each in-breath, imagine it returning through your partner's hand, until you are both completely relaxed.

Day 2 Take turns holding your partner's head in your lap on a pillow and gently stroke your partner's face and throat.

Day 3 Lie on your backs next to each other. Hold hands and close your eyes. Place your other hand on your abdomen and feel your breath. Let your breathing come into sync with your sweetheart's. Move the hand on your abdomen down and gently cover your genitals. Continue breathing in sync. End by holding each other close.

Day 4 Jump up and down together while laughing or yelling for at least 30 seconds. Now, lie still together, touching. Only move when necessary. Become aware of your partner's temperature, breathing and all sensations where the two of you are touching. Stay like this for at least five minutes.

Day 5 Gently, affectionately undress each other to whatever extent desired with lots of kisses. Lie quietly, skin-to-skin, for at least five minutes.

Day 6 Ask your partner what kind of affectionate touch is most comforting. Try it now. Switch roles.

Day 7 Touch and kiss in s-l-o-w motion for several minutes. Whatever speed you would normally use, use quarter-speed.

Day 8 Lie next to each other, hold hands and breathe in as your partner breathes out. Imaging you are sending a current of loving energy to your partner with each exhalation, and receiving a current of loving energy with each inhalation.

Day 9 Take turns giving each other a caring massage of legs and feet.

Day 10 Gently, affectionately undress each other to whatever extent desired. Seated next to your partner (lying next to you), use the finger of one hand and slowly, sensitively trace the parts of your sweetheart's body you can reach. Stay relaxed and enjoy the experience. Your partner focuses on how your touch feels. End with calming, caressing strokes using your palm. Switch roles.

Day 11 Try spooning each other as you fall asleep, or for a few minutes before you fall asleep. ("Spoonning" is lying next to each other with one partner's belly against the other's back.)

Day 12 Have your partner relax as you caress his/her belly. Experiment with different types of nurturing touch. Hug and switch roles.

Day 13 One partner stands or sits behind the other and gently takes the other partner's ears between the fingers. Massage the entire ear. Now, trace around the edges of the ears in a circular motion. Next, insert the fingers into the ear holes, enough to block external sounds, and continue for 30 seconds. End by massaging the backs of the ears.

Day 14 Put on some dancing music in the bedroom. Lie next to each other, touching, and see how the music moves you. Begin to move your hips and feet. Get your arms moving in the air. Get lost in the music. When the song is over, hold each other for at least a minute.

Day 15 While seated, one partner allows the other partner to lean back and relax against his/her chest. In this relaxed position, stroke each other.

Day 16 Cradle your resting partner's head face-up in your lap on a pillow without moving for a moment. Now, slowly massage his/her scalp and forehead and temples with firm but gentle, circular motions. Do not just play with your partner's hair; move the skin over the cranium. When you finish, hold your partner's head in stillness for a minute or two. Switch roles.

Day 17 Embrace each other gently in a comfortable position. Begin to sense your partner's breathing and gradually try to synchronize your breathing with his/hers. Continue for several moments. Can you feel a merging sensation?

Day 18 Give each other a shoulder rub for a couple of minutes. Switch roles.

Day 19 Sit across from each other, hold hands, and look into each other's eyes for several minutes, until one of you squeezes the other's hands. Now, tell your partner something you really like about him/her.

Day 20 Stand facing each other. One partner is the sculptor. With eyes closed, touch each part of your sweetheart with strokes, as if molding the world's most loving partner out of clay. Pause and relax with a long hug. Switch roles.

Day 21 One partner lies down and for five minutes or so. The other provides comforting, caring touch, not geared toward sexual arousal. The partner lying down should remain passive and avoid talking, although sighs and other nonverbal sounds are fine. Pause and relax. Switch roles.

[If you're enjoying the bonding behaviors and want to continue, here are some more.]

Day 22 One partner lies back and relaxes. The other slowly kisses the resting partner from head to toe while thinking of the partner's qualities s/he most likes. Hug silently for a moment. Switch roles.

Day 23 Test your intuition. Close your eyes as your partner touches the area over your heart and sends healing energy to a part of your body. Can you guess where it is being sent? Switch roles.

Day 24 Take turns giving each other a massage back-to-back, with no hands.

Day 25 Gently, affectionately undress each other to whatever extent desired. Then, get in bed and take turns guiding each other into new positions, using only light, wordless touch. Then, together, choose hand signals for the following:

- ▶ Asking your partner to stop moving, inhale and relax (this allows you to savor the stillness together when you are in a relaxed, loving space)
- ▶ Telling your partner wordlessly how glad you are that he or she is in your life (always useful)

Day 26 Before bed, show each other two of your favorite stretches and do them together. Take kissing breaks between stretches.

Day 27 Take turns lying on top of each other. Melt into each other.

Day 28 You are a musician; your partner is your instrument. Tap, fiddle, rub and caress to the music you hear in your head. If you have time, ask your partner to roll over and play your second selection. Relax together. Switch roles.

Day 29 Cradle or hold your partner as if he/she were a son or daughter and be still for several minutes. (Pillows can make the cradling easier.) Switch roles.

Day 30 Standing, let yourself fall backward into the arms of your partner. Repeat a few times. Trade places. Next, lie quietly holding hands and silently take a moment to think of a reason you are grateful to have your partner in your life. Share it if you like.

Day 31 One partner lies back, eyes closed. The other touches the resting partner's belly using different parts of his/her body. The resting partner tries to guess which part is touching him/her.

Substitute Activity:

The older partner chooses to do a bonding behavior from the following list. Then, the other partner chooses to do something from the list.

- ▶ Several moments of chest-to-chest, skin-to-skin contact
- ▶ Gently placing your palm over your partner's genitals with intent to comfort
- ▶ Several moments of synchronized breathing
- ▶ Touching and sucking of nipples and/or breasts
- ▶ Cradling, or gently rocking, your partner's head and torso (works well on a couch, or with lots of pillows) for at least five minutes
- ▶ Gazing into each other's eyes for several moments
- ▶ Holding, or spooning, each other in stillness for at least twenty minutes to a half-hour
- ▶ Several minutes of stroking with intent to comfort
- ▶ Several minutes of hugging with intent to comfort

These activities arrived from many sources. Thanks to everyone who contributed.