

Friday, 13 February 2015

Love Is Not Just For Valentine's Day, Say Counsellors

Valentine's Day comes round once a year, but working on our relationships every day is just as important, according to the Irish Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP).

The IACP, which represents almost 4,000 accredited counsellors and psychotherapists across Ireland, said that it would be beneficial for couples, friends and relatives to make an effort in their relationships on an ongoing basis.

"This is a time of year when we focus on our relationships and make a special effort with our partners, but what if we made an effort every day," said Shane Kelly, spokesman with the IACP.

For those considering making positive changes in their relationships, communication is the key factor, the IACP advised.

"Communication is vital for the success of any relationship, regardless of whether it is romantic or platonic, so don't take it for granted. Think about it and work at it," Mr Kelly said.

He added that it was important for people to be honest with one another. In turn, this would create an environment where both sides would feel comfortable and safe to talk.

"Keep talking to each other and express your fears, concerns, loves and desires. This helps you build trust. It will also strengthen the bond between you and keep you connected as your relationship evolves," Mr Kelly added.

Once there is good communication, couples, friends or relatives can provide support and act as a team. This allows them to discuss problems and face them down together.

"Some problems are bigger than others and there is nothing wrong with appearing vulnerable, but together you can get through it," Mr Kelly said.

The IACP also strongly recommended that people prioritise their personal relationships. Demanding work schedules and fatigue from the daily grind can make this easy to forget, but the IACP feels that it is a key element in making relationships work.

"Our lives are full of demands that fill our time and our headspace. Work, children or commitments to other family members put a drain on our personal resources. In turn, this causes us to neglect ourselves and then our relationship," said Mr Kelly.

"At the same time, it is very important that we don't put our relationship at the bottom of our list of priorities and that it becomes neglected."

The IACP added that it was important for couples to be conscious of how much or how little quality time they were spending together. They said that to protect relationships, it was vital to create space for them to nurture and grow.

"It was easier to spend time with each other in the beginning. Due to children and increased work commitments, you may have to create space for your relationship - but it's certainly a good investment," Mr Kelly added.

To further strengthen relationships, the IACP also recommends that people give each other compliments, find activities that both people can enjoy and share and surprise one another.

"Do something nice that's not planned or expected. Doing something small such as buying flowers, breakfast in bed or going for a meal can have a positive effect. If you are at work, call each other, even if just for 2 minutes to check in and say you are thinking about your partner," Mr Kelly said. "But most importantly, make sure to talk, talk, talk."

For a list of accredited counsellors and psychotherapists in your area, visit www.iacp.ie

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For more information, contact Richard Brophy, OHC on 086 385 3260 / email: rbrophy@ohcpr.ie

About the IACP:

Established in 1981, the IACP identifies, develops and maintains professional standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy through education, training and accreditation. In promoting best practice and the professional development of its members, IACP holds at its core the protection of the public. Representing both the interests of clients and practitioners, IACP provides a telephone referral helpline, an information service; and an online counsellor / psychotherapist / supervisor directory. IACP is a registered Charity (CHY 6615).