

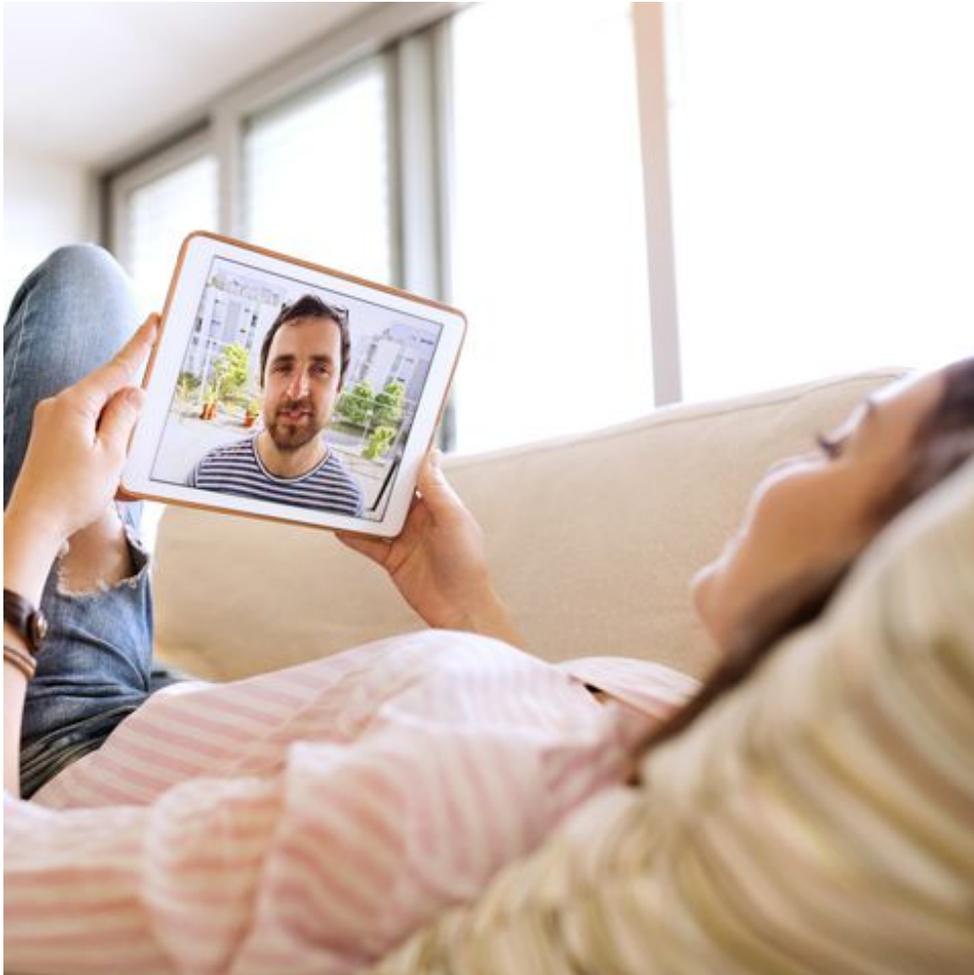
Advice for Making Your Long-Distance Relationship Work, According to Experts

[menshealth.com/sex-women/a25411882/long-distance-relationship-advice/](https://www.menshealth.com/sex-women/a25411882/long-distance-relationship-advice/)

Hint: Try phone sex.

By [Meagan Drillinger](#)

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For three years I was in a long-distance relationship.

I am not in one anymore.

Being in a long-distance relationship is one of the most difficult things to pull off successfully. Why? There has to be communication and, more importantly, there has to be trust. Without either, all you're doing is meeting someone attractive on vacation, sleeping with them, and then lying to yourself for a considerable amount of time that being exclusive with each other is a really good idea.

So while I may not be the best person to give advice on maintaining a long-distance relationship, I can certainly tell you what *does not* work, and can offer solutions from real-life psychologists and relationship experts—many of whom are actually good at being in long-distance relationships.

Have a Game Plan

Setting expectations is the first and most important step in maintaining a long-distance relationship. Whether you're in the same time zone or on opposite sides of the world, it's best to talk to each other about realistic expectations in terms of communication, visits, and, well, everything else.

Do Not: Over-promise or break plans.

Do: Give each other the freedom and flexibility to change plans, but also emphasize the importance of setting expectations.

“Each couple who is in a long-distance relationship has their own unique needs, wants, and expectations, and it takes time and patience to figure out what works best for each couple,” says Dr. Kelifern Pomeranz, Psy.D., and AASECT Certified Sex Therapist. “Communication needs to be on point in terms of expectations around daily/weekly contact, and what happens if one individual is busier than the other and has less time to devote to contact, visits, and how conflict will be managed.”

Questions to consider: How often will we chat for? For how long? How frequent will the visits be? How will visits be paid for? If there is a fight, what are our agreements about hanging up or not answering texts?



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Coordinate Schedules

For many couples, being in a long-distance relationship isn't a challenge: It's precisely what makes the relationship work. But all couples who are trying to maintain their long-distance relationships should try to coordinate schedules so that their partner has time to feel like the priority.

Do Not: Call your partner in the middle of seven other tasks, or schedule your conversation for the end of the night when you know you're likely going to be exhausted.

Do: Make sure you're on the same page about when communication will be meaningful and prioritized.

"I recommend coordinating your schedules so you can have undistracted communication at a time of the day that works for each of you," says Dr. Rachel Needle, psychologist and certified sex therapist. (Dr. Needle has also been in a long-distance relationship for the past three years.)

"Get into a rhythm of communicating with your partner that is comfortable for both of you. Work on having meaningful discussions at times, rather than just check-ins and catch ups so you can grow closer despite the physical distance," she adds.



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Video Chat

When it comes to relationships, technology can certainly be a silent killer—social media stalking, anyone?—but it can also be a relationship saver. With more ways to communicate now than ever before, your partner might live in Bangkok but look and sound like they're in the

same room. Video chatting is one of the most effective ways to build intimacy with long distance relationships.

Do Not: Stalk your significant other's friends or followers and create stories in your head about how they might have met this person.

Do: Make time to look each other in the eye.

"I recommend using video chat to couples in long distance relationships," says Dr. Tom Murray, psychologist and certified sex therapist. "Order the same meal at a chain restaurant and eat it together. This allows for a shared experience."

For maintaining a sexual relationship—because, let's face it, you're going to be horny and alone many, many nights—Dr. Murray recommends couples masturbate with each other. Do it over the phone, or even better, with video.



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Maintain Your Individual Lives

Wondering and worrying about your partner (where they are, what they're doing) can become obsessive, especially if there isn't enough communication or trust.

Do Not: Follow each other on Find My Friends. That is creepy and a little controlling.

Do: Maintain your own life.

"A common problem I see in long-distance relationships are couples that are enmeshed, meaning they communicate all throughout the day and spend hours on the phone or video chatting all night," says Dr. Pomeranz. "This causes each individual to isolate themselves from

their friends and can lead to increased feelings of insecurity and jealousy, particularly if their partner's schedule becomes busier."



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Include Your Significant Other In Your 'Own' Life

If you're already great at having a fulfilling life outside of your partner, that's awesome. But don't forget to include your significant other in that life when they come to visit.

Do Not: Keep your worlds separate. It will breed suspicion and jealousy, not to mention that the way to build intimacy is to let your partner truly know all sides of you, the same as you would if you lived in the same place.

Do: Make time to introduce your friends and colleagues to your significant other when he or she is in town. Make them feel included.

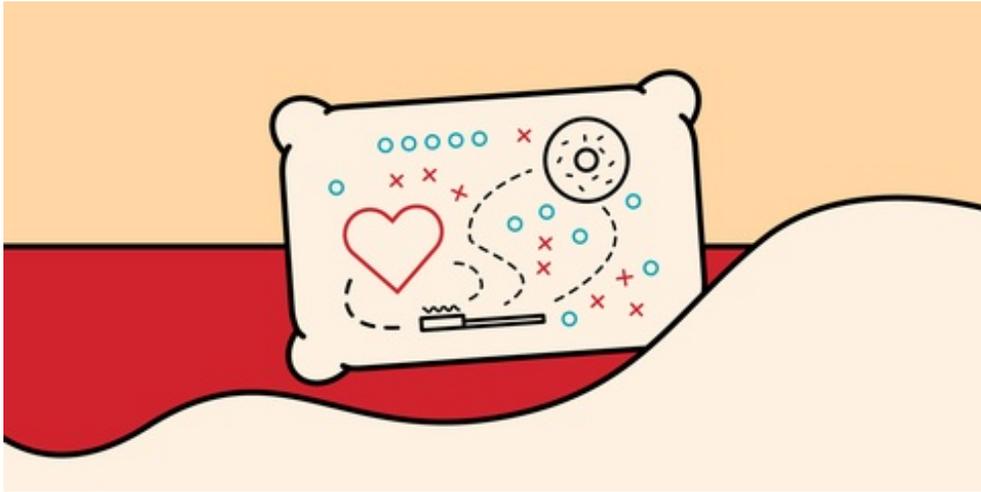
"Building a life and strong support system outside of your romantic relationship can be helpful," says Dr. Needle. "When possible, include your partner in that life when he/she is in town."

The Take-Home:

Like any relationship, long-distance relationships thrive on communication and trust, just like any other relationship. Oh, and phone sex.

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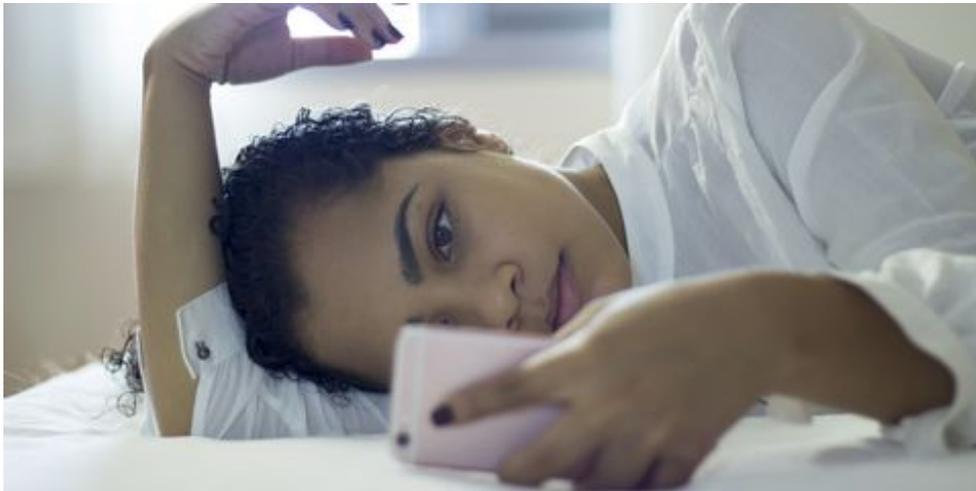
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