

# Wellness Wednesday



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## 6 Common Fights Couples Are Having During The Coronavirus Pandemic

Arguing about money, safety and school with your partner? You're not the only one.

Even rock-solid couples are quarreling more in quarantine. The stress of living through a global pandemic with no clear end in sight while dealing with fears about our health, finances, families and the future of our country, has tensions at home running higher than usual.

Maybe you've found yourself flipping out on your partner over a pile of dishes in the sink. That strong reaction may have less to do with the messy kitchen itself and more to do with mounting pandemic-related stress you've been trying to suppress, says Los Angeles marriage and family therapist Abigail Makepeace.

"When you're suppressing emotions, even a small incident can turn into an explosion," she said. "This is because those emotions have been begging for an outlet and being upset with your partner presents an opportunity for their expression. In a way, the dirty dishes left in the sink become a portal to yell and scream."



Plus, you're not able to engage in many of the activities you once relied on for fun and to feel connected to each other: going out to dinner, taking a vacation, going to a baseball game or dancing. Of course, you can find other ways to bond, but these days, options are limited.

"Now, the arguments seem to build on each other because they are not being broken up or balanced with other positive activities and memories," Makepeace said. "In addition, many of us have lost our healthy coping mechanisms and support networks. We've lost our routine and daily stress outlets. Consequently, we are depending on our partners to fill in all the gaps of those different roles, and it's simply not possible."

We asked Makepeace and other therapists about arguments couples are commonly having right now and advice on how to work through them.

## 1. "We don't see eye to eye on how to handle our finances right now."

Since the pandemic took hold in mid-March, more than 54 million people have filed for unemployment benefits.

"Many of us are experiencing changes in income as jobs are being lost and the economy fluctuates, leading to anxiety over our financial well-being," said Miami marriage and family therapist Amanda Baquero.

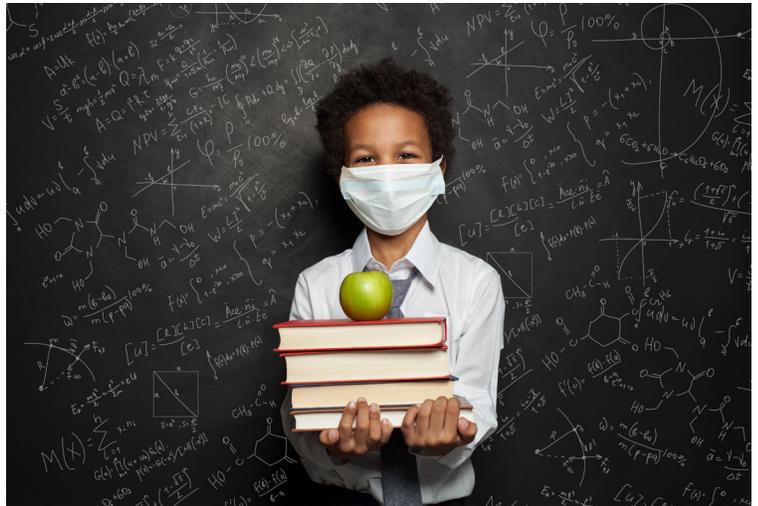
For couples who are arguing about money, Baquero recommends designating time to update your budget.

"Each partner should identify what they believe their urgent needs are and what other expenses can wait," she said. "Then the couple can share this with each other and find a compromise that suits both of their needs."

## 2. "We can't agree on which risks are OK to take."

Another common point of contention among couples is how vigilant they should be about safety measures like wearing a mask or practicing social distancing. Oftentimes, partners have different levels of comfort when it comes to taking virus-related risks.

"From big events like deciding whether to send the kids back to daycare and whether to travel, or the little decisions like how to best run errands or whether to see friends, there will be something," said Denver-based psychotherapist and speaker Brittany Bouffard. "Quarantine is a daily minefield of questions and qualms about risk comfort. You and your partner might find yourself in emotional discussions about differences in risk aversion. This, like anything, may take negotiating."



Bouffard's advice? Try to approach your different points of view with an open mind instead of judgment.

"You might feel adamantly worried and risk-averse to increase a sense of safety, and your partner might be yearning to finally socialize because they're struggling without connection," she said. "Talk out your reasons, fears and needs. This can help clarify the 'why' to better understand each other's perspectives. This is new territory for everyone and opinions can change over time, so practice patience if your partner's adamant stance changes over time."

Look for ways to compromise where you can. If your husband is adamant about visiting his family, see if you can agree on ways to mitigate some of the potential risks involved.

"If it's a priority to visit with family, can your family agree to self-isolating for 14 days before the visit?" Makepeace said. "If not, can you agree to spend time outdoors instead of inside, or perhaps conduct a family Zoom call instead of an in-person visit?"



# EASY BLUEBERRY BUTTERMILK CAKE



168 Calories | *PREP TIME: 20 mins* | *COOK TIME: 30 mins* | *TOTAL TIME: 50 mins*  
*YIELD: 18 Servings* | *COURSE: Breakfast, Brunch, Dessert* | *CUISINE: American*

## INGREDIENTS

2 3/4 cups cake flour\*  
1 1/2 tsp baking soda  
1/2 tsp salt  
1 1/4 cups sugar  
4 tbsp unsalted butter, softened  
3/4 cups unsweetened applesauce  
3/4 cups low fat buttermilk  
2 cups blueberries, fresh or frozen  
1 large egg, beaten  
2 large egg whites  
2 tsp vanilla  
baking spray

This light and Easy Blueberry Buttermilk Cake loaded with fresh, juicy blueberries in a lightly sweetened, moist buttermilk cake is ideal for summer.

## TIPS:

The blueberries are the star of this cake, it really doesn't need any frosting. Simply top it with a little powdered sugar before serving (completely optional) or you can even serve it with some whipped topping (or Greek yogurt) on the side.

## Nutrition Information

Serving: 1/18th, Calories: 168 kcal, Carbohydrates: 33 g, Protein: 3.1 g, Fat: 2.9 g, Saturated Fat: 1.5 g, Cholesterol: 17.5 mg, Sodium: 191.8 mg, Fiber: 1.2 g, Sugar: 17.1 g  
Source: [Skinnytaste.com](http://Skinnytaste.com)



## INSTRUCTIONS



### How to make:

Preheat oven to 325F. Grease a 13 x 9 inch baking pan with baking spray.

In a large bowl combine flour, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl. Mix well.

Using a hand mixer or stand mixer, in a medium bowl, beat sugar and butter for about 3 minutes.

Add egg and egg whites one at a time and beat until combined. Add buttermilk, vanilla and applesauce until incorporated.

Add wet ingredients to the flour mixture and stir until just blended. Gently fold in blueberries.

Place the batter into the prepared cake pan; bake cake until a toothpick comes out clean, about 30-32 minutes.

## FEATURED EXERCISE

# Grab your weights— let's get to work!

### Butterfly Shoulder Press

This is the ultimate upper body multitask-er—targeting your shoulders, triceps and biceps! Keep your arms raised to shoulder level to really feel the burn.

Step 1: Standing with feet hip-width distance apart and a dumbbell in each hand, bring your elbows up to just below shoulder height in front of your chest.

Step 2: Open up your arms into a field goal position, stretching them back to activate your shoulder blades.

Step 3: Extend your arms overhead and then reverse the move to return to start.

» Suggested reps: 12 reps | 3 sets

Source: <https://popculture.com/healthy-living/news/17-free-weight-exercises-for-toned-arms/#16>

*Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.*



It all begins  
and ends in  
your mind. What  
you give power  
to, has power  
over you, if  
you allow it.



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### 3. “We have no alone time and we’re going nuts.”

The concept of personal space has gone out the window in quarantine. Many couples are sleeping, eating, working and relaxing in close quarters. For some, the 24/7 togetherness has reignited the spark in their relationship. For others, it’s bred frustration and resentment.

“Pre-quarantine, the typical routine of most couples included time spent apart during the day for work, school or other responsibilities,” Baquero said. “Now that we are spending a majority of our time at home, sharing the same space, we are losing a lot of that time away from one another.”

The lack of alone time has been the catalyst for other smaller quarrels, Bouffard said. Now the little things are really getting under your skin — like when your partner forgets to replace the toilet paper roll for the umpteenth time or your spouse leaves their socks on the floor mere inches from the hamper.

If cabin fever has you extra agitated, take a moment to check in with yourself.

“Are you getting enough alone time? Are you stepping outside for breathers, where you can’t hear your partner on a work call?” Bouffard said. “Do you need something different about the setup and patterns that have become the new temporary normal? Then bring your biggest needs honestly and kindly to your partner. See if they could use an improvement or two as well.”

### 4. “We can’t agree on whether our kids should return to school or do distance learning from home.”

Remote learning has been tough on kids and parents alike. Children miss being in the classroom and seeing their teachers and friends. Parents want their kids to have their normal routines back but must also weigh the health risks of returning to school against the potential disruption to their own work schedules and child care arrangements if kids are doing distance learning.

“Everyone I’ve spoken to has agonized over making the best decision — and I do mean agonize,” said Kurt Smith, a therapist in Roseville, California, who specializes in counseling men. “In our area, parents made their decisions and then within days had the school districts rescind all options and only offer distance learning. The ever-shifting actions of leaders has only compounded the stress on people and thus the likelihood of parents to take their frustrations out on each other.”

Many parents also disagree about how much their kids should be socializing IRL — if at all — and with whom.

“Some have chosen to keep their kids completely separate from their friends and grandparents. Others are being selective and getting together with family and friends they trust,” Smith said. “Some, as one guy told me this week, have decided to let their kids play with the kids of ‘other like-minded parents.’ Almost none of these decisions were reached easily or without strong emotions.”

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## 5. "I don't feel supported by my partner."

We're living through an extraordinarily stressful time and people handle stress differently. In a relationship, one partner may internalize stress, while the other is more expressive about how they're feeling, Makepeace said, noting this is a very common dynamic among couples.

"As a result, one person may feel that their partner has their 'head in the sand' and is emotionally avoidant, while the other may feel that their partner is 'too emotional,' constantly seeking the other's attention in order to be calmed," she said.

"In the end, people may feel that they are forced to deal with their fears and stresses alone and that they are misunderstood and unsupported by their partner," Makepeace added.

Recognize that there's no "right" way to handle fear and it's OK if your partner deals with things differently than you. Consider also seeking support outside of your romantic relationship, Makepeace said.

"This can be from friends, family, mentors, or mental health professionals. Developing stronger bonds of support outside of your relationship will serve to strengthen you both, and as a result, your relationship," she said. "Although many of these options may be remote or require social distancing, they will do much in the way of bringing a greater sense of peace and connectedness."

## 6. "My partner is blaming me for their struggles."

During the pandemic, Makepeace has noticed some people projecting their general dissatisfaction with their life onto their partner while romanticizing what things might be like if they were with someone else.

"For example, they start to imagine, 'If only I hadn't gotten married and committed to this house, I wouldn't be stressed about a mortgage right now,'" she said. "Or, 'If only I had married someone more financially secure, I would not have had to quit my job to watch the children.' People are extremely stressed, and to cope, begin to fantasize or visualize an alternative life that exists without conflict."

To counteract this kind of negative thinking, Makepeace suggested making a list of all the things you've gained from your relationship — like your kids, emotional support, personal growth and some stability during a chaotic time.

"Sometimes, by shifting your focus from the stress caused as a result of commitment to the positive gains of that commitment, the potential benefits of an imagined life pale by comparison," she said.

"Additionally, when you examine the core appeal of your imagined life, such as freedom or peacefulness, you can then start to list ways to introduce activities and experiences that bring these elements into your life."

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