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LOVE SUNDAY



Love, Relationships, & Your Heart: By Dr. John Kennedy

For centuries, the heart has been associated with love and passion, and as an invasive cardiologist, I'm constantly reminded of the significance of this age-old-adage - especially how it relates to our overall cardiovascular risk.

In fact, data supports the notion of “making love not war” when it comes to your heart health.

Lovers' Quarrels can Break Your Heart

The Broken Heart Syndrome is a peculiar and occasionally lethal cardiac condition that often mimics a heart attack and can be triggered by an intense emotional experience such as a marital spat or domestic abuse. These emotionally charged events lead to sudden surges in stress hormones (adrenaline) which cause a rapid and profound decline in cardiac function. Fortunately, unlike a heart attack the condition is usually reversible.

Additional research relating spousal arguing patterns and cardiac events was published in the Archives of Internal Medicine in 2007. The study showed that arguing with your spouse could be hazardous to your cardiovascular health and that individuals who experienced high levels of negativity in their close personal relationships — especially marriage — were 1.34 times more likely to experience chest pain, heart attacks and even sudden cardiac death

A Loving Heart is a Healthy Heart

Although bad relationships can be harmful to your heart, it stands to reason that good relationships can soothe, heal and protect your heart. Substantial evidence suggests that having a strong social network with friends and intimate relationships can decrease your cardiovascular risk. And a number of previous studies showed that married people in general are less likely to develop heart disease.

Heart Helpful Hints for Relationships

So, in summary, difficult relationships can take a toll on your heart and conversely, healthy, loving and supportive ones can help protect your ticker. And some helpful hints to maintain a healthy relationship include:

- Exercise together. Run or ride stationary bikes together. It will allow you to spend quality time together while protecting your heart.
- Date night is a must for your heart! Be romantic. Go out to dinner and have a glass of wine—it will help your heart in more ways than one.
- Remain intimate. Physical intimacy between partners can offer physical as well as emotional benefits.

Dr. John Kennedy is an invasive cardiologist and board member of the American Heart Association. He has a particular interest in the negative impact of stress on our cardiovascular system and speaks regularly to businesses about managing stress in the workplace. Dr. Kennedy is co-author of the book “The 15 Minute Cure: The Natural Way to Manage Stress and Heal Your Heart in just Minutes a Day,” which will be released by John Wiley & Sons in February 2010.

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