

10 Do's and Don'ts for a Happy Long Distance Relationship

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How many times have you heard that “Long distance relationships are hard and/or impossible”? When I was first matched and getting to know my husband, Mira, telling people where he lived would often elicit a surprised reaction. It made me sad that so many people were negative and doubtful about our relationship. I thought, “What do they know about Mira and me? Why do they think we can’t do this?” In the beginning I thought the relationship would be so easy and that all the doubters were just silly. But over time I realized how difficult a long distance relationship can be. And to make things worse, I remembered how many times I saw TV or movie couples break up once their relationships became long distance. It seems like our culture is saying that long distance isn’t even an option. But since long distance relationships seem to be more common in the “matching process” than in mainstream American culture, we need keep a positive attitude and learn how to make them work!

Here’s a list of “Dos” and “Don’ts” that I’ve found to be extremely helpful in having a successful long distance relationship. Enjoy!

Do...

make plans for the future. Whether they are for visits, holidays, or when you plan to go to the Blessing and move in with each other, looking forward to something will help you remember that “this too shall pass;” the long distance part of your relationship won’t last forever.

Don’t...

ignore the future. It’s not necessary to map out every detail, but having a general plan will help you keep a positive attitude and prevent getting emotionally trapped in the various challenges of long distance.

Do...

talk with each other as often as possible. Try to experiment with various forms of communication, such as Skype, letters, emails, etc. What works for one person might not work for another; but if you are creative and experimental in trying different methods of communicating, both of you will find the freedom to fully express yourselves. I am horrible at talking on the phone... when I was young, talking on the phone terrified me; and that hasn’t changed much. (Ha ha!) Mira, on the other hand, is much better on the phone, and he would actually do more of the talking when we called each other. Since I’m much better at expressing myself through writing, if I had something important to say I would often send Mira an email or text instead of trying to talk about it on the phone.

Don’t...

just rely on texts or go too long without communication. Texts can be confusing and their tone isn’t always clear. More serious conversations should be saved for the phone, Skype, or emails (where you can explain things in more detail). There were many times that Mira and I had little disagreements because of a bunch of confusing texts. If that happened, we would either call or email each other to clear up the confusion.

Do...

find out about common interests and each other’s likes/dislikes during phone conversations. This can help make those dreaded first visits less awkward. Since you will already know more about your match, you can focus on doing fun activities with each other and trying things that you already know the other person likes.

Don’t...

forget to get to know each other in the beginning. Being silly and just having fun during phone conversations isn’t a bad thing, but too much can distract from learning deeper and more meaningful

things about each other. When Mira and I first began talking on the phone we had some very long conversations, but it seemed like most of the time we were just being silly and chatting aimlessly. After noticing this, we decided to dedicate a part of every conversation to getting to know each other (ex. asking about favorite things, telling childhood stories, discussing future plans, etc., are great ways to get to know each other!).

Do...

take turns visiting. For us, visiting at least every two months worked well. Of course we would have preferred to see each other more often, but that's what worked with our schedules and bank accounts. Airfare and travel expenses can limit how often visits happen, so get a job!

Don't...

go too long being apart. The longest Mira and I went without a visit was about 6 months. We were both very busy with school and work, and we were also trying to save for the Blessing. This put a strain on our relationship because we also weren't able to communicate as often or as well. So try to see each other as much as possible!

Do...

know their schedule and give them time respond to texts/calls. If your potential match is in a different time zone or is on a schedule that doesn't always match up with yours, he or she won't always be able to talk whenever you are. Discuss your schedules and be aware of the best times for communication. Even if it's challenging, MAKE communication a priority.

Don't...

worry if they haven't responded the whole day. He or she is probably not ignoring you, just busy. The beginning of any relationship is very exciting and you're going to want to talk as much as possible, but learning patience is key to having a successful long distance relationship. You might not be able to talk as much as you would really like to. Mira and I had totally opposite schedules for most of our long distance, but we got through it by scheduling times to talk and being aware of each other's schedules.

Do...

learn each other's Love Languages. This is a great tool because it can help you learn the best way to express love to your potential match. If you know that the other person feels a lot of love from receiving gifts, then you can surprise him with little gifts in the mail. Or if his love language is words of affirmation, you can say sweet things on the phone or write him endearing love letters.

Don't...

have expectations for the love that you give. If your main Love Language is "gift giving" but his main Love Language is "words of affirmation," then you might easily get disappointed when he isn't as excited about gifts as you'd hoped. It's important to remember that everyone feels love in different ways, so just be open to learning and adapting.

(If you don't know your Love Language, then take the quiz! www.5lovelanguages.com/)

Do...

find a balance in your life and schedule. Keep yourself busy at home and focus equally on school and work. And keep up your relationships with family and friends as well.

Don't...

be completely obsessed with talking to or texting your potential match/spouse ALL THE TIME. It could drive you (and your potential match/spouse) crazy if you're always waiting for a response from them and not doing much else with your life. You don't want your schoolwork to suffer or get fired from a job because you're not focused! And if your potential match is the sole source of love and connection for you, then he will quickly get overwhelmed and your relationship will be unnecessarily strained!

Do...

be creative. Keep things exciting and new! Mira once surprised me by showing up at my house on my birthday. Best. Surprise. Ever. You can also think of creative and fun things together! Make a list of "things you want to do together," "places you want to visit," "movies to watch," etc. There are also a lot of fun ways to interact even though you are long distance. Try playing games online (such as Words with Friends or Scramble), read a book together, or have a Skype/movie date (where you press "play" at the same time).

Don't...

feel too pressured to be super creative and romantic all the time. As long as you make a little effort, it will be appreciated! It's "the thought that counts."

Do...

say sweet things. We had a tradition of texting each other “good morning” and “good night” every day. Even if we weren’t able to talk much that day, it made us feel like we shared the day because we started and ended it together. And say “I love you” often! (if that has been said already) Also, since you can’t always be physically close to your match/spouse, you need to make effort to develop the attraction. If you share things you like about each other, you will both feel great! Tell your potential match/spouse that he/she is cute or handsome, or that you like his/her eyes, hair, arms, or legs!

Don’t...

say things that your potential match/spouse may be uncomfortable with. If the other person isn’t comfortable with compliments, maybe don’t give as many yet (especially in the beginning, it might seem like you’re moving too fast).

Do...

stay positive and excited about your relationship!

Don’t...

listen to the negative people who say long distance never works. It’s definitely hard, but it’s SO worth the investment.