



Long distance relationships don't just occur after a fleeting summertime romance. Work and school are the primary reasons why two people who love each other have to spend time apart while trying to keep the flame of love lit.

I don't know about you, but more than once I have seen a guy sad because things are not going well with his girlfriend. Upon speaking to him, and learning a little more about his situation, the depressing news is revealed: she has been out of town for a few months. This is not just a problem for young people, many spouses spend time apart due to work; trying to keep the ship afloat, sometimes at great cost.

Perhaps you've met a person in this situation and want to encourage them, or you yourself are in a long distance relationship, we want to offer you some suggestions so that the love not only survives but grows and becomes stronger with the hope of being together again. These ideas are not just the opinion of the author, the majority are from the happy testimonies of couples who have improved their relationships with longing, effort, and great faith.

1. Stay up to date on the activities of the other. Show interest.

This doesn't just mean knowing their schedule and their daily routine, it means showing that you are aware of their activities and still interested in what happens to them. Ask, "How was your test? I was thinking about you while you were taking it." Not only does it show concern, it also shows that you are still present to them even from a distance.

2. Make plans to do the same thing at the same time in a different place

It might sound ridiculous, but you can have plans together, sort of. Things like watching a movie, reading a book, even going to Mass at the same time, will have a result similar to having been together physically. To use a sports analogy, you can give a play by play commentary during or afterwards. You can still share the experience.

### 3. Be trustworthy and trusting.

The most difficult burdens to carry are doubt, fear, and jealousy which threaten love. If you are trustworthy you are halfway there. The complicated part is trusting the other while they live their life by spending time with other friends and having a good time (without you!). Show that you are faithfully committed to the relationship and encourage them to find joy in life.

4. Maintain the desire to serve the other person as well as the element of surprise. Not all romantic surprises consist of a bouquet of flowers and chocolates delivered to the house by courier. Do simple things, like a card in the mail, an unexpected phone call, a picture, etc. Striving continually to woo them will keep you focused on your relationship and make the other feel loved. Don't let distance kill creativity and romance!

### 5. Make the other feel that they are special to you

If they know that you choose them, doubts and insecurities disappear. A girl told me that she felt very valued by her boyfriend because he introduced her to his whole world: parents, friends, siblings, (he even formally introduced her to the dog). He spoke to his friends about her. She never doubted that he chose her over all the other girls. This reassurance is appreciated when distance causes doubts, jealousy, and insecurities to arise.

### 6. Always pray for the other

"I want the best for you, and I know that God can give it to you." That is what we say to those we love when we tell them that we pray for them. Keep praying as a sign of love, (offer fasting, Mass, the Rosary, etc. for the beloved) If your love is shaped by His Heart, your relationship is going the best place it could go: towards God.

### 7. Always remember that faith shortens the distance

A friend that has been out of the country for several months for an academic exchange program was unable to talk to her boyfriend on his birthday because she was on an assignment in a remote place without phone service. She concluded, "I know that he is happy. He received my greetings through prayer." Recognizing that God shortens the distance is an invaluable consolation which nobody else can provide.

### 8. Avoid arguments

There is never enough time, why waste it arguing? Even if you have good reasons, avoid being in a bad mood and taking things badly. Practice patience, grace, and understanding. It is extremely painful to argue from a distance when you can't end with a hug and a kiss to make up.

#### 9. Take advantage of technology but guard your intimacy

Don't become slaves to being connected and checking in with each other every minute. Don't announce everything that happens in your relationship on Facebook. Believe me, we don't want to see teddy bears with hearts and romantic phrases which aren't meant for us. Use technology for your benefit to mutually nourish each other with love, but guard your intimacy, your modesty, and don't allow your relationship to be made public. There are many ways to stay connected and demonstrate love through social networks, but always protecting intimacy.

#### 10. Above all. Strive to transform the long distance relationship into a spiritual relationship

I believe that this is the greatest of all the advice which I received: a long distance relationship brings with it absence and loneliness, but a spiritual relationship comes with consolation, hope, and closeness of hearts. Two people with a spiritual life, even while separated, will make their relationship become more spiritual. Despite missing each other, they will make this stage of their relationship an opportunity to grow together, and they will always feel accompanied by the other.

Finally, keep in mind that love is not just about pleasure and happiness, that is only half of it. Remember how Saint Paul describes love. It is not easy, but coming from the heart of God it is beautiful.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Thanks to Paulina Campos, Paula Palacios, Sara Ramón, Camila Escobar, Christopher Antezana, Claudia Rauld, Davicho Tapia, Anto Del Valle, and everyone else who shared their testimonies with me for this article. They have fought valiantly for their love and have converted it into an affirmation that if God is in the middle, distance strengthens a relationship and helps love mature.