

## I. INTRO

Today we will be exploring the joys, struggles, and absurdities of being in a long distance relationship.

A long distance relationship is a romantic relationship in which the partners are physically separated from each other by a considerable distance, often with miles, kilometers or even oceans between them. In other words, it's a relationship in which the two people involved are unable to see each other regularly or spend time together in person due to geographic, financial, or other constraints. Did you know that over 14 million couples in the United States alone are in long distance relationships? That's right, folks, you're not alone in your struggle to keep the spark alive when your significant other is miles away.

But why are long distance relationships becoming more common? Well, according to a study by the Center for the Study of Long Distance Relationships (yes, that's a thing), There are several reasons why long distance relationships are becoming more common in today's world:

1. **Ease of communication:** With the advancement of technology, it is now easier than ever to communicate with someone who is far away. Video chat, messaging apps, and social media platforms make it possible to stay connected even when physical distance separates the couple.
2. **Increased travel opportunities:** With the increase in travel opportunities, people are more likely to meet someone from a different part of the world and fall in love, leading to long distance relationships.
3. **Globalization:** The world is becoming more connected and globalized, which means that people are moving to different countries or working in different places. This can lead to long distance relationships as partners may have to live in different parts of the world for extended periods of time.
4. **Online dating:** Online dating has become increasingly popular, and many couples meet through dating apps and websites. This can lead to long distance relationships as partners may live in different parts of the country or world.

But it isn't all sunshine and rainbows. It takes work, patience, and a whole lot of trust. As the famous philosopher Aristotle once said, "Love is composed of a

single soul inhabiting two bodies." And when those two bodies are hundreds or even thousands of miles apart, maintaining that connection can be a real challenge.

But fear not, for we're here to help. Throughout this podcast, we'll be sharing stories, advice, and maybe even a few awkward moments, all in the name of keeping your long distance love alive and kicking. So, whether you're separated by oceans or just a few states, join us on this journey as we explore the wild world of long distance relationships.

## **II. PROS AND CONS**

Ah, long-distance relationships. The ultimate test of love and trust. The source of countless songs, movies, and heartache. Some people swear by them, while others run in the opposite direction at the mere mention of the term. So, what's the deal with long-distance relationships? Let's take a closer look at the pros and cons.

### **Pro: You Get Plenty of "Me" Time**

One of the upsides of being in a long-distance relationship is that you have plenty of time to pursue your own interests and hobbies. No more feeling guilty for wanting to spend a lazy Sunday afternoon binge-watching Netflix instead of going out on a date. According to a survey by KIIRROO, a company that specializes in long-distance sex toys, 72% of people in long-distance relationships say that they have more time for themselves than they would if they were in a traditional relationship.

### **Con: The Distance Can Be a Real Bummer**

Obviously, the biggest downside to a long-distance relationship is the distance itself. It's hard to feel close to someone when they're hundreds or thousands of miles away. In fact, a study by Queen's University found that couples in long-distance relationships report feeling less intimate and less satisfied with their relationships than couples who live in the same city. Ouch.

### **Pro: The Reunions Can Be Pretty Epic**

When you're in a long-distance relationship, the time you spend together is precious. It's not like you can just pop over to your partner's place for a quick dinner or movie. As a result, when you do finally get to see each other, it's extra special. According to a survey by the dating app OkCupid, 61% of people in long-distance relationships say that the reunions are the best part of being in the relationship.

### **Con: The Trust Issues Can Be Real**

Let's face it, being in a long-distance relationship requires a lot of trust. You have to trust that your partner is being faithful, that they're not secretly seeing someone else, and that they're really as committed to the relationship as they say they are. According to a survey by the dating site eharmony, 27% of people in long-distance relationships say that jealousy and trust issues are the biggest challenges they face.

### **Pro: You Get to Know Each Other Really Well**

When you're in a long-distance relationship, you can't rely on physical intimacy to keep the spark alive. Instead, you have to rely on other forms of communication, like texting, phone calls, and video chats. As a result, you really get to know each other on a deeper level. According to a survey by the dating site Zoosk, 70% of people in long-distance relationships say that they have more meaningful conversations than they would if they were in a traditional relationship.

### **Con: The Lack of Physical Intimacy Can Be Tough**

Of course, all the deep conversations in the world can't replace the feeling of being physically close to someone you love. According to a survey by the sex toy company LELO, 63% of people in long-distance relationships say that the lack of physical intimacy is the biggest challenge they face.

And how do people end up in a long distance relationship in the first place? Let me share a couple of stories from listeners for you:

Sarah and James had been dating for a few months before James moved across the country for a job opportunity. They decided to give long-distance a try, but it

wasn't easy. Sarah missed James so much that she would sometimes cry herself to sleep. James, on the other hand, found it hard to balance his new job with the demands of the relationship. According to a study by the Center for the Study of Long-Distance Relationships, 40% of long-distance relationships end within six months - and Sarah and James became one of those relationships.

Sometimes, people don't plan to end up in a long-distance relationship, but life takes them in that direction anyway. Take the case of Tim and Jessica. They met on a dating app while Tim was on vacation in Jessica's city. They hit it off right away and spent the week exploring the city together. When Tim had to go back home, they thought it was the end of their relationship. But they kept in touch, and before they knew it, they were in a long-distance relationship. According to a survey by the dating app Plenty of Fish, 47% of people in long-distance relationships say that they ended up in the relationship unexpectedly.

And sometimes, people fall in love with someone who lives in another country. That's what happened to Laura and Carlos. They met while Laura was on a study abroad program in Carlos's country. They only had a few weeks together before Laura had to go back home, but they knew they had something special. They decided to give long-distance a try, even though it meant dealing with time differences and expensive flights. According to a survey by the Center for the Study of Long-Distance Relationships, 14% of long-distance relationships are international.

### **III. COMMUNICATION**

Communication is something we talk about in one way or another in most episodes, and that is because communication is one of the things that can really make or break a relationship regardless of distance. So, why is communication in long distance relationships so important? Well, according to a study by the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, communication was the most important factor in maintaining a successful long distance relationship. So much so in fact, that the study found that the more frequently couples communicated, the more likely they were to stay together. But let's be real, communication in long distance relationships can be easier said than done.

The first issue that usually pops up is different expectations about the communication. Some people get frustrated if their partner doesn't at least send a hello or even an emoji throughout the day to let them know that they are thinking of them, and other people are ok not having contact during the early

part of the day because they know that they will connect later on. And this is something that I see in almost all relationships, not just the LDRs - rarely do people have the same exact style. How do you get on the same page? Well, shhh it's a secret... you have to communicate!

Andrea and Mike were struggling with the communication - if Mike didn't message her at least three times a day she started to spin and worry that this meant that he didn't want to be with her, he was seeing someone else... you name it, she thought it. Mike was frustrated because he isn't glued to his phone 24/7 and his job didn't allow employees to have their phones on them while they were working. Andrea was able to let Mike know (in a more productive way) that she feels more connected when there is regular contact. Mike needed to impress on her that he couldn't check his messages until after work. They were able to come to a common ground by Mike giving her a copy of his work schedule so that she knew when he would be unavailable, and Mike was able to make sending her a "good morning, headed to work, I'll message you when I get home" message each morning. By being clear about the expectations and the reality of what COULD be done they were able to fix some of the stress in the relationship fairly easily...

Another issue that seems to pop up a lot is having nothing to say. And this is another one of those that is not exclusive to LDRs. There are days where my husband and I can sit in absolute silence - it is being next to each other that matters. But that is so much harder when you aren't in the same place. I have seen some really interesting ways to get around that. Janice told us that she and her boyfriend would be on FaceTime together while cooking dinner, or even sitting down together. They would set a place at the table and put their phone or computer there so it was like they were sitting across from each other. Jeff was another person that shared his go-to technique: He purchased a card game just for it - and there are a number of them out there! When you head over to the show notes we will have some linked that you can check out. Each night they would pick a card out of their respective decks and discuss. Sometimes they pulled something deep and meaningful, sometimes it was something that turned out to be really silly. Not only did they get to gain some insight to each other, but they had fun, and it gave them something to look forward to each night.

## IV. INTIMACY

Next, we'll be talking about the challenges of intimacy in long distance relationships, both physical and emotional. We all know that distance can make the heart grow fonder, but it can also make things a little bit more complicated.

Most of us hear intimacy and think sex, right? Well, yes but it is deeper than that. Intimacy as a whole is created with trust and a connection between two partners. Intimacy is trust and connection between two partners. A healthy relationship needs a balance of physical and emotional intimacy. Physical intimacy is closeness, touching, kissing, sex. Emotional intimacy is the feeling of connection to your partner.

Because most LDRs reserve physical intimacy for visits it becomes even more important to have that emotional intimacy - which comes from our old friend communication. In a regular relationship, you have easy access to your partner on an everyday basis. You get to see each other to talk to each other to maintain emotional intimacy. When you're in a long-distance relationship, physical intimacy is impossible. Depending on your situation, you may not see your long-distance partner for weeks at a time. While you are not seeing your romantic partner, your body still needs the reassurance that you are physically in a romantic relationship. You can think and talk about being in a romantic relationship, but your body feels different. When the need for physical intimacy is not fulfilled, you can start feeling sexually frustrated, which is perfectly normal and expected.

Sexual frustration in a long-distance relationship doesn't only affect the sexual aspect of your life. This frustration affects other areas of your life, like work and friendships. Sexual frustration affects your long-distance relationship in many ways. The obvious one is a desire to fulfill your sexual needs. If you're in a romantic relationship your need for sex, it's probably somewhere at the top of your list. In a long-distance relationship, you can only have sex with your partner when you see them, which can be once every few weeks or months. If the distance in your relationship only lasts for a few months until you move in together, there are ways you can manage your sexual desire. You can play with your partner on video calls, texting, or phone calls. However, if the distance in your long-distance relationship lasts a long time, it will become unhealthy from a sexual point of view. When you don't see your romantic partner for a long time, you will naturally want to fulfill your sexual desires with someone else. Telling your partner about it can be awkward and uncomfortable. Some people tend to

get involved with other people outside of their relationship. And cheating is one of the top three LDR relationship killers, accounting for 34% of all LDR splits. To manage sexual frustration in a long-distance relationship, you need to take it for what it is. Sexual frustration is a sign that your sexual needs and desires are not fulfilled. Trying to ignore that fact or to suppress your feelings isn't going to work. You may think that you are compromising for the sake of your relationship, but in reality, you are making yourself unhappy. When you are dissatisfied in the relationship, it won't be long before your whole relationship becomes unhappy as well. So, if you are in a long-distance relationship, you need to have a sex talk with your partner. You need to agree on how often you can visit each other and if it's usually enough to fulfill your sexual needs. If you can't visit each other frequently enough, you may consider an open long-distance relationship. And open long-distance relationship allows you to maintain the trust and connection with your romantic partner while fulfilling your sexual desires with someone close to you.

Sometimes people are not comfortable with the sex conversation, and I get it, it can make you feel really vulnerable. But if you want your relationship to succeed then you need to have tough conversations sometimes. Sit down and talk about it - discuss how long the distance will last, how often you will get together in person, how you are going to satisfy your needs while apart, and any ground rules. I have talked to women who don't want their partner to watch porn while they are apart, and then I have talked to others who are OK with their partner getting a blow job but not having intercourse. In some of the resources in the show notes there are some worksheets and specific conversation topics that will help with a lot of the issues we are talking about today. Some of them we will also touch on in a couple weeks when we talk about cheating. I could certainly spend hours on this alone - but we have to move on.

## **V. DEALING WITH SETBACKS / ENDING IT**

There are a number of things that can cause problems or splits in a LDR. These include jealousy, insecurity, cheating, lack of progress and having no plan. In some cases it even becomes a financial strain. Let's talk about all of these a bit more.

First up is that old green eyed monster called jealousy. It is the number two relationship killer at 28.7% of the relationships looked at. It can often happen where one partner starts to have an issue that their partner spending time with other people - it doesn't even have to be someone that could be a romantic rival.

It could be as simple as being jealous of the fact that someone else is getting to see them day after day, eating out together, going to events, even mundane things. This ties into our next issue - insecurity... it affects 34% of LDRs with the oft-quoted "Out of sight, out of mind" causing problems, which isn't surprising. Insecurity can be related to the presence of significant others in respective partners' life which can make one feel neglected and insecure about their importance in their partner's life. It is advisable that partners quell such anxieties by dedicating time towards planning near future events such as next vacations and get-togethers and starting at least tentative planning about future goals such as marriage or living in together etc. if so desired. Such planning can improve the attachment between partners and give sense of security to both. Communication helps a lot here too!

Another issue that can cause problems in a long distance relationship is lack of progress. When you're apart, it can be difficult to feel like you're moving forward in your relationship. In fact, a recent study found that 38% of long distance couples struggle with lack of progress. So, what can you do to make progress in a long distance relationship? Well, you can set goals for your relationship, make plans for the future, and celebrate your achievements together. Finally, there's the issue of having no plan. When you're in a long distance relationship, it's important to have a plan for the future. In fact, a recent study found that 47% of long distance couples struggle with having no plan. 70% of all long distance relationships that failed were because there was no plan for the future - that is a pretty significant portion! I have seen plenty of people hang on even though it is clear that things are going nowhere fast, because who wants to admit that they wasted a significant chunk of their time on something that was a waste?

So how do you know when it is time to throw in the towel and move on?

1. You just don't feel invested anymore - in the beginning you couldn't wait to talk about how their day was, what they are doing exciting, what they think about something going on for you... and you stop asking questions. You start to zone out when the other person talks. Conversations that were hours now are short and abruptly end because one of you "has a thing". You no longer talk about the future, it is small talk and minor details from your life.
2. Lack of commitment - this one creeps up on you. You start to have less quality time, or it becomes unreliable. Maybe Saturday was your day to soak



up each other, with no work or commitments to interrupt. But recently your partner cuts calls short, or reschedules on you. At first the reasons seem reasonable, and you roll with it... but then they start to pile up and the resentment builds. The more it happens the less guilty both of you feel for not following through on plans - after all, a precedent has been set and you have shown each other that it is ok to not follow through.

3. Putting off visits - Studies have shown over and over that the more often you see each other in person the higher the chance of success. Now you are looking forward to other things more, and you are no longer counting down the days until you are together again. Gradually work, the price of flights, etc.. all become excuses and one or both of you says something like "things are really busy here, I have to figure out when I can make time to visit" but there never seems to be a good time.
4. Financial Issues - Inflation is starting to have a considerable impact on LDRs over the last year or so. Even under the best of circumstances it can get pretty expensive to see your partner. Price of gas keeps rising, flights are damn near highway robbery depending on where you are going and even hotels start to add up. I have seen a number of relationships fail because they went from flying to see each other once every two months to maybe twice a year. Now these could be legitimate reasons why things fizzle out, or they could be used as a convenient excuse. Either way, long term the relationship is no longer worth the expense and sacrifice.

So even when you gain the clarity that you need to let the relationship go it can be easier said than done. Even knowing that the average long distance relationship only lasts about 4.5 months doesn't make it easier. There can be a million reasons to put off breaking up - maybe they have been dealing with stress and work, maybe their dog has been sick... no matter what is going on, it is going to hurt anyway, so no sense stringing them along.

When it comes to the actual break up, PLEASE don't do it over the phone or via text. That is the cowards way out, and it usually causes more problems than it is worth. An in person conversation is best - if done correctly. Don't let them spend a ton of money to come visit, thinking everything is cool and then tell them as soon as they get there. If in person is not possible, do it over video. They deserve

the respect of you looking them in the eye when you tell them. Be direct about why you want to end things, don't blame them...be kind, but also don't give them false hope. Cut contact, grieve the loss of the relationship and then focus on staying busy. Studies show that a break up can affect your brain much like drug or alcohol withdrawal, so understand that it takes some time to sort of detox from the relationship and be ready to look forward. Give yourself no less than 30 days, but most experts will tell you a month for every year that you have been together.

## **VI. WRAP UP**

As we wrap up this episode, it's clear that long distance relationships come with both benefits and challenges. While distance can strengthen the emotional bond between partners and provide opportunities for personal growth, it can also present communication and intimacy obstacles.

It's important to recognize that every long distance relationship is unique, and what works for one couple may not work for another. However, open and honest communication, creativity, and a willingness to adapt and grow are key to making a long distance relationship successful.

Whether you're currently in a long distance relationship or considering starting one, remember to approach it with patience, understanding, and a positive attitude. And if you're struggling with any of the challenges we've discussed, know that you're not alone.

Head over to the show notes for some great resources on how to create a healthy long distance relationship, how to deal with challenges, and more!

Thank you for joining us on this journey of exploring long distance relationships. We hope that this episode has provided you with some valuable insights and perspectives, and we look forward to exploring more topics related to love and relationships in the future.