

Healthy Relationships

A ONETABLE X SHALVA SHABBAT GUIDE

Celebrating Shabbat is about ending the week with intention and prioritizing your most important interpersonal connections. This resource is designed to guide you and your partner through Shabbat rituals and give you reflections and readings that we hope inspire you to check in with one another, celebrate your commitment, and share gratitude. Both partners in the relationship are responsible for creating what Judaism calls *shalom bayit*, peace in the home. A new or renewed Shabbat practice is an incredible way to focus on your relationship and create a dedicated time for intimate connection.



Kavanah

SETTING YOUR INTENTION

Shabbat begins on Friday evening, but we encourage you to start thinking about Shabbat several days earlier. Considering your *kavanah*, the Hebrew word for intention, in advance will help you be present at the Shabbat dinner table, allowing you to cultivate conversation that is more open and vulnerable, loving and reflective.

We recommend you read through pages one and two with your partner and set some intentions for your experience a few days before your dinner. Why are you choosing to host a Shabbat dinner that helps you build your relationship with your partner? What are you hoping to learn, experience, or share? Then at your Shabbat dinner table, begin with the ritual of light on page three, and continue through the following rituals, readings, and reflections at your own pace.

Encountering Ritual

Whether you are considering traditional ritual items like Shabbat candlesticks, a kiddush cup, or a challah cover, or more innovative takes on these items, we invite you to explore and choose together. Creating new traditions and cultivating personal approaches to ritual will strengthen your bond as a couple. If you come from a family that has Shabbat traditions, consider sharing them and talking about how you might merge your stories to create a new Shabbat narrative all your own.

A note on active listening:

Sometimes a person wants to have a conversation that includes problem solving and sometimes they just want to be heard. Psychologists have remarked that active listening is one of the best gifts you can give your partner and it takes time and practice to master. When starting conversations, ask what type of conversation your partner needs in the moment and then be ready to fill that need. Here are some pro-tips for active listening: maintain eye-contact; don't judge; focus on listening, not what your response will be; reflect back what you heard so you know you heard right; stay focused!

Light

Every moment is made glorious by the light of love

— Rumi

Shabbat candles symbolize the last act of the work week. Use these first moments at the dinner table to quiet your mind, turn off your technology, and be present. Commit to one another that you won't discuss work, politics, or other stressors during this time and instead, focus on your relationship.

Let the light do the work. Dim or completely turn off your regular lights and let the Shabbat candles (and maybe a few other strategically placed candles or nightlights) create some Friday Night Magic.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu
b'mitzvotav vitzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.*

Blessed is the Oneness that sanctifies our lives,
and inspires us to kindle the light of Shabbat.

Read

Love rests on two pillars: surrender and autonomy. Our need for togetherness exists alongside our need for separateness. One does not exist without the other. With too much distance, there can be no connection. But too much merging eradicates the separateness of two distinct individuals. Then there is nothing more to transcend, no bridge to walk on, no one to visit on the other side, no other internal world to enter. When people become fused — when two become one — connection can no longer happen. There is no one to connect with.

— Esther Perel

Reflect

On Shabbat we light (at least) 2 candles. These candles stand independently and create their own glow, but they also illuminate the room individually, standing side by side. Maintaining independence in your relationship is important for your own mental health, as well as the health of your relationship. Relationships are not about merging into one entity, they are about standing in solidarity through life.

What hobbies and interests do you have independently?

How might you continue to support and maintain these individual interests over time?

Blessing One Another

In Jewish tradition, celebrations often begin with blessing those present, a reminder that we're empowered to bless others. We invite you to turn to your partner and offer one of the blessings below, or whatever good wishes are in your heart. Blessing another person is a practice in empathy — it allows you to both give and receive love — because often in blessing someone else, you're tapping into your deepest hopes for someone.

Be who you are – and may you be blessed in all that you are.
— Marcia Falk

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ
יֵאָר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיַחֲנֶךָ
יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִשֶּׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

*Yivarechecha Adonai v'yishmerecha
Yisa Adonai panav eilecha v'yasem lecha shalom
Ya'er Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka*

May you be blessed and guarded
May you know favor and grace
May you receive kindness and peace

Read

Teodoro Luna's Two Kisses by Alberto Ríos - 1952

Mr. Teodoro Luna in his later years had taken to kissing
His wife

Not so much with his lips as with his brows.

This is not to say he put his forehead

Against her mouth—Rather, he would lift his eyebrows, once, quickly:

Not so vigorously he might be confused with the villain

Famous in the theaters, but not so little as to be thought

A slight movement, one of accident. This way

He kissed her

Often and quietly, across tables and through doorways,

Sometimes in photographs, and so through the years themselves.

This was his passion, that only she might see. The chance

He might feel some movement on her lips

Toward laughter.

Reflect

Every relationship has ups and downs; sometimes reaching out for guidance during tough times is a blessing. Think about a couple — perhaps an older couple whose relationship you admire — that provides a great model of healthy love. **What about their relationship stands out to you? What can you seek to emulate in your own?**

Consider taking some time to connect with this couple in the weeks to come and inviting them to be a resource when you need guidance in your relationship. Let positive role models be a blessing.

Sanctify

We bless this wine and we bless this moment together.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ מְקַדֵּשׁ הַשַּׁבָּת.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam borei p'ri ha'gafen.
Baruch Atah Adonai m'kadesh ha'Shabbat.*

Blessed is the Oneness that creates the fruit of the vine.
Blessed is the Oneness that sanctifies Shabbat.

Reflect

L'Chaim! A toast to your relationship!

What are your favorite memories together?

What is a memory you look forward to sharing in the future?

Nourish

Just like our physical bodies, we have to feed and nourish our relationships.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz.

Blessed is the Oneness that brings forth bread from the earth.

Reflect

Developing an enduring practice of open communication over time nourishes long-lasting, healthy love.

Share a situation in which your partner was fully supportive of you. What did that experience feel like?

Appreciate

It's a remarkable thing that Jewish tradition seeks to inspire us to be present before we eat, and all the more so that we're then directed to acknowledge our gratitude *after* we eat, not for the food itself, but for the incredible feeling of being full. May we find peace, a whole and complete peace. May we be fulfilled, not only by our food, but by our partner, family and friends, by our actions and our words.

בְּרִיךְ רַחֲמָנָא מַלְכָּא דְעֵלְמָא מִרִּיה דְהַאי פִּיטָא.

Brich rachamana malka d'alma marei d'hai pita.

We are blessed with compassion by the Oneness that sustains us with bread.

Read

To Love Is Not To Possess by James Kavanaugh

To love is not to possess,
To own or imprison,
Nor to lose one's self in another.
Love is to join and separate,
To walk alone and together,
To find a laughing freedom
That lonely isolation does not permit.
It is finally to be able
To be who we really are
No longer clinging in childish dependency
Nor docilely living separate lives in silence,
It is to be perfectly one's self
And perfectly joined in permanent commitment
To another--and to one's inner self.
Love only endures when it moves like waves,
Receding and returning gently or passionately,
Or moving lovingly like the tide
In the moon's own predictable harmony,
Because finally, despite a child's scars
Or an adult's deepest wounds,
They are openly free to be
Who they really are--and always secretly were,
In the very core of their being
Where true and lasting love can alone abide.

Reflect

Expressing gratitude is a core component of long-term healthy relationships.

Why are you grateful to have your partner in your life?

Consider these prompts:

I felt grateful when you supported me in/with ____.

I am grateful that you make me feel ____.



The core belief at SHALVA, the country's oldest Jewish domestic abuse agency, is that every woman has the right to be safe in her intimate partner relationship. SHALVA supports Jewish women experiencing and healing from domestic abuse through counseling, supportive services, and community education.



OneTable knows how important it is to celebrate and elevate healthy, loving partnerships and provide resources to strengthen relationships. We're excited to offer this guide as a way to do that through the lens of Judaism and the rituals of Shabbat — a pause in the week, and a time couples can truly be present with one another and reconnect.

