

Cultivating an Environment for Connection – Jan. 2024

LWCC Marriage Ministries Email For January 2024

Well, greetings to you all as we head to the end of the first month of 2024. And what a month or so it's been! I'm sure most of you have caught up with the drama I have put my family through in recent weeks. Around mid-night on the 10th Dec., after feeling a bit grotty all day, we called an ambulance, and a couple of hours later I was told I had had a mild heart attack. Later that day, things went from a mild heart attack to needing quadruple bypass surgery, which happened 4 days later. As most of you will have heard, it has been a bit of a journey since then, with a few trips back to hospital, but here I am feeling like I'm finally making some good progress. So, to our first email for 2024.

When it comes to feeling connected to your spouse, what are the main factors that play into that? You might think of things like whether or not you've recently had a fight, or how much quality time you've gotten to spend together lately. And those things certainly contribute to an environment of connection. But there are also several small moments throughout every day where you have a choice: you can capitalize on the opportunity to connect – or you can let the moment pass. While your relationship certainly isn't doomed if you occasionally choose the latter, choosing one over the other consistently, is bound to have a corresponding, cumulative effect on developing the health of your marriage. Here are five daily moments that can make or break your connection over time:

1. Good morning:

When you wake up and get ready for the day, what kind of interactions do you have? Are you grumpy and gruff, barely speaking over your coffee or as you brush past each other in the hallway? Or do you give each other a hug as you wait for the coffee to brew, asking your spouse how they slept? Even if you're not a morning person, you can still choose to be warm despite not feeling super energetic or ready for an in-depth conversation. Initiate physical contact with a hand on their shoulder as you bring them their coffee. Tell each other about the weird dream you had. Ask each other about what they have going on for the day. All of these are small ways to start the day off feeling connected.

2. Parting ways:

Do you kiss each other goodbye and exchange "I love you's"? Or do you rush out the door without even saying goodbye? Research has shown that establishing rituals like a goodbye kiss has an overwhelmingly positive effect on marriage. Why? They create and nurture a sense of connection - I care enough to pause and give you this moment-, shared meaning, and stability in your bond. So even if getting out the door is always chaotic, try to make it a habit to at least give each other a quick hug or kiss before you go your separate ways.

3. Checking in:

Let's be honest, your days are probably pretty busy. Most days you might not have time to call each other for a long leisurely chat. But what about a quick text? It could be wishing them luck on something significant happening in their world today, or even just, "I can't wait to tell you about this funny thing that happened today." It's so basic, but it creates a touch-point of connection that lets your spouse know you're thinking of them even when you're apart.

4. Reuniting:

Are you happy to see each other when you return at the end of the day, and do you show it? Do you greet each other at the door, or not even acknowledge when they get home? Do you share about your day? This is the other half of the goodbye ritual – re-establishing your connection after a day apart. It sets off the rest of your evening on a warm and positive note. Over time it's not uncommon for this habit to fade away, that's why it's important to put effort and intention into maintaining a reunion ritual.

5. Good night:

Do you try to go to bed around the same time? If you don't, do you make it a point to say good night to each other? Do you brush your teeth together, even if you've spent the evening doing your own things? Do you share some pillow talk and some cuddling before a goodnight kiss? Those moments before hitting the hay are a great time to connect on a consistent basis.

Every time you choose to seize these moments, you're adding a log to the fire of your connection. They build on each other, making it easier and more natural to maintain that sense of closeness. Realistically, you might not hit all of these every single day, and that's okay. Hopefully by being aware of these moments and seeing them as opportunities to make or break your connection over time, you'll be less likely to let them pass.

As always, we trust you find some food for thought from our communication this month, and we pray God's blessings on you as you continue to look for ways to stay connected.

Blessings from your Marriage Ministries team, Stan and Ronnie, John and Karen

(Content adapted from article by Dr's. Les & Leslie Parrott)