

Using a Road Trip To Strengthen Couple Communication

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

One more getaway before the kids head back to school is just the ticket. Perhaps you had hoped to dedicate more time and energy to each other this summer, but time slipped away from you as usual. Maybe you've decided there's still an opportunity to kickstart that goal and are planning one final road trip together—sans kids. A road trip coupled with a communication exercise might be the thing to reignite the closeness in your relationship.

After being married for a while and sharing all your stories, it can feel like there's nothing left to discuss that doesn't involve work or the kids. It might even seem like you're so absorbed in the daily grind that you've become dull to each other. Amidst the hustle and bustle, communication and conversation often dwindle.

It becomes challenging to gauge where you stand in your most important relationship when this happens. You might handle logistical issues that arise, but you may not feel as connected as you'd like to be. Communication is vital for fostering and sustaining closeness over time. Without it, you might find yourself guessing about your partner's thoughts and feelings, and some of those guesses could be far from reality. Without communication, partners may continually misinterpret each other's behavior, leading to confusion, conflict, and distress in relationships. You might just miss your partner.

Spending quality time together, fully present and communicating, can effectively convey love, acceptance, and the desire for connection. When you engage in meaningful conversation, you focus on the emotional aspect of the relationship, express and listen to feelings, and share inner experiences.

There are many ways to engage your spouse in communication that create an intimate emotional environment. When you share interests, you have a ready-made, engaging topic. But sometimes, it seems like you have nothing in common. That is probably not true. You have the life you have built together in common. You can spend some of your communication capital talking about logistics and minutiae of daily life but dive deeper for more emotional engagement.

The give-and-take of engaged conversations should involve taking turns sharing things about yourself (e.g., thoughts, feelings, wants, needs, preferences, and goals) and really listening to the other person. Ask questions, use active listening skills, and repeat what you heard. Mutual self-disclosure involves sharing your experiences, beliefs, values, opinions, and expectations with your partner.

Couple communication exercises can serve as catalysts for opening up communication channels. The Honey Jar is an entertaining and enjoyable couples' communication exercise. This convenient conversation starter is compact enough to carry in your car's glove compartment for your trip. I designed the Honey Jar for couples who have been together for a long time and have exhausted topics of conversation. Still, it is just as helpful for couples at all stages of commitment in their relationship. So, a road trip with The Honey Jar might be just the ticket! **Note: This article has been revised and edited from its original version, which was previously published in 2012 on this site. The content has been updated for contemporary language, clarity and accuracy.**



**The Honey Jar,
A Couples
Communication
Exercise**

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