

Improving Your Relationship By Setting Aside Special Communication Time

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

So, you want a deeper emotional connection with your partner. You're not alone. Your partner may feel the same way. Your plans to do something about it but never get off the ground. It can take a lot of work to make it happen. You may have erroneous thoughts holding you back. You might believe that making a connection only counts if it happens spontaneously. You may have mixed feelings about spending time with your beloved, wondering if you'll have anything to discuss or whether you will enjoy each other's company. You may have even tried date night only to end up on your cell phones.

Try something different. Schedule time to spend together--routinely. And if you are ridiculously busy, you may have to make it a "sacred time." That means it has top priority— nothing bumps it off the schedule. The action of scheduling a "sacred" time communicates its importance. The act says, "I love you. I miss you. It is important to me to spend time with you. You are important to me."

Let go of the idea that it has to be spontaneous. Don't worry about whether you will have anything to say to each other. There are communication exercises to help you with that. Simple conversation starters, like [The Honey Jar](#), can help with that. Being with each other and giving each other your undivided attention can have the desired effect. Regularly scheduled [Couple's Feelings Meetings](#) enables you to get into the habit of talking and sharing.

Carving out a block of time to be together can significantly impact the quality of your relationship. If you can start your day with coffee on the deck together, or have a feelings meeting at night before you go to bed, you set the stage for being connected all day. You are more in tune with

each other and your accomplishments, challenges, thoughts, and feelings of the day. You may have more of the same information to work from to manage the complexities of your daily life.

It's much easier to work together when you have the same information rather than assuming and guessing. Couples' Feelings Meetings, at the end of the day, help you process the events and your thinking. One of the best parts about couples' feelings meetings is that you don't have to fix anything; you just need to talk and listen.

Trying to fix your partner's feelings usually defeats the purpose. Just listen and let them be responsible for handling and dealing with their feelings. They are grown up. They can do it. When trying to fix someone's feelings, you are most likely trying to help them problem-solve. Instead, it takes away their feelings. That annoys your partner. Please don't do it. Instead, listen and tell them, "I can understand why you feel or think that." Ask them to tell you more if you can't understand their position or feelings. Don't try to reason or rationalize them out of their perception. Don't give them advice or tell them what to do—even if your empathy for their feelings generates anger for the person in question. It's probably not your job or your fight, and to take it on puts your loved one in an even more awkward spot of needing/wanting to comfort you now and still having the issue with the other person. More egregious boundary violations, attachment injuries, or even crimes may be something to take action on together. Still, the desire to fix it is mostly about not wanting your loved one to feel hurt.

Sharing your feelings, the stresses of the day, and your perceptions of events will lead to feeling supported, bolstered, and connected. These feelings invite you to see your marriage as an oasis amidst daily life's chaos and rapid pace. Knowing that your spouse is still there can be a grounding lifeline. By dedicating time and attention to each other in a habitual way, you build that all-powerful sense of "us" to call upon.

It does not occur overnight, and it does not happen through a monthly date night alone. That sense of "us" is built on daily practice, made up of minor and significant conversions and problem-solving sessions, those

small, special events of watching the sun come up together, playing tennis badly and laughing about it, dancing in the living room, and those moments where you are looking in each other's eyes and feeling blessed.

Dedicating time and attention to your relationship is essential to developing habitual acts of talking, sharing, and listening, which creates a sense of connection and importance. When couples can communicate, problem-solve, and resolve emotional differences, they can be happy in their marriage. Think about what it takes to accomplish other goals in your life. The rewards will be yours when you devote that much time and effort to your marriage. Don't worry about who is inviting. Just set it up and follow through. You can do it, and it is worth it. **Note: This article has been revised and edited from its original version, which was previously published in 2013 on this site. The content has been updated for contemporary language, clarity and accuracy.**

