

## 4 Ways to Reconnect with Your Spouse

Healthy communication patterns within a marriage relationship are vital. Despite learning effective communication skills and strategies, we all miscommunicate at times which can lead to disconnection. Instances can occur where we misspeak, come on too strong, or do not communicate a clear message. At other times, we do not listen well or are not emotionally attune to our spouse. How we handle these communication missteps is very important. Healthy and satisfying relationships are not made up of “perfect” people who rarely miscommunicate, but rather healthy marriages are comprised of individuals who know how to reconnect after a misstep. Knowing how to reconnect with your spouse is thus as important as knowing healthy communication.

Reconnecting with your spouse is often needed to keep negativity from escalating out of control. All couples unfortunately say unkind things at times, are too critical, get defensive, withdraw from each other, raise their tone, or use blaming statements. These communication missteps, if not addressed, can lead to marital-connection rupturing and additional relational damage. Furthermore, negative emotions are stirred up which can lead to further marital negativity. Consider *Proverbs 15:18*, “A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.” A filled bucket of friendship and emotional safety is often the first step in a marriage relationship to allow grace, communication, and missteps to be well-received. Four reconnecting options below help couples continually nurture a healthy marriage relationship.

### RECONNECTING BY CALMING DOWN OR BRAKING

Reconnecting with your spouse is not necessarily about fixing something that is broken. Relationally it can be more about getting back on track. It is exiting the conversation before it escalates out of hand or use language or demonstrate behaviors that can become detrimental to the relationship. It is “putting on the brakes.” Consider an example: If you were interested in learning how to snow ski, one of the first and most critical skills you would need to learn is the “snow plow”. This skill involves forming a “V” with your skis in front of you. It allows you the ability to slow down when going down the mountain side or you could easily slide out of control. The snow plow skill seeks to prevent disaster, injury and give an individual a sense of control. Reconnection attempts in conversation are like a relational snow plow. Consider some examples below:

- Please just try to listen to me right now.
- Can I take that back?
- I need our communication to be calmer right now.
- Can we switch topics for a while and then come back to this one?
- Can we take a short break and then try again?
- I am starting to feel overwhelmed.
- Please be gentler with me - it would help me stay with you.
- Let's try restarting this conversation.
- I think we are veering off track.

### RECONNECTING BY SHARING AFFECTION

Reconnection attempts are not just about exiting the conversation, but can also be about turning emotionally toward your spouse. This may consist of sharing affection, humor, validation, or taking responsibility. The essential message of communication through these types of reconnecting with your spouse is “you are important to me” or “we will get through this.” Such vital messages lead to a decrease in defensiveness, escalation, and an increase in calm connection. Consider the following:

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- This is OUR problem, not your problem.
- One thing I appreciate about you is...
- I understand.
- I see your perspective.
- Thank you for...
- I realize this isn't your fault.
- That's a great point.
- I love you.

### RECONNECTING BY DISCLOSING EMOTION

It seems the longer we stay in unhealthy communication, the more likely a cascade of escalating emotions can occur.

Consider the passage in *James 3:5-6* “*Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.*” When the tongue gains momentum in an unhealthy direction, we can do well as spouses to heed the early warning signs as it is difficult to turn around before there is damage. One way to notice warning signs is to notice what is happening inside of you and share early in the conversation, in a calm manner, before escalated.

Some examples are outlined below:

- I am feeling blamed. Would you rephrase that?
- I am feeling defensive. Would you rephrase that?
- Please don't withdraw.
- I don't feel understood right now.
- That felt like an insulting remark.

### RECONNECTING BY OFFERING REMORSE

There are times we don't slow down or stop the conversation before it goes off the rails. This is sad and painful and is often a difficult place to be individually and as a couple. Acknowledging and taking responsibility where you personally reacted while offering remorse is critical for reconnection. Sometimes it is simply saying “I am sorry.” Including an apology, there are also other ways to communicate remorse to your spouse:

- Let me start over in a softer manner.
- Could I have a do over?
- I want to be gentler to you right now and I don't know how.
- I really blew that one, sorry.
- How can I make things better?

Reviewing these four ways of reconnecting along with a few examples or phrases is ideal for the next communication misstep. Begin a reconnection attempt by incorporating this new language after poor communication with your spouse. This process may feel phony, artificial, and awkward at first. However, with time, you will not need to formalize the process as your spouse will understand what you are trying to do. The receiver of the reconnection attempt needs to accept the attempt. Start by focusing on hearing each other's reconnection attempts. Learn to recognize such attempts and find out what works well for you as an individual couple. Whether reconnecting with your spouse is about slowing down, stopping

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the conversation, or building emotional closeness, it is beneficial to understand what went wrong. How did we get off track? It moves a couple out of the content of the conversation and into how each spouse is communicating with the other.

### CONCLUSION

As with any new skill, begin using reconnection attempts in simple and small ways. Brainstorm a few ways to integrate this practical but challenging concept into your relationship. Analyze where your marital relationship is currently at...are you ready to try a reconnection attempt today? Do you need to focus on building friendship and a positive environment in your marriage first before reconnection attempts have a chance of succeeding? Two things are for sure – 1. Not doing or trying anything within your marital relationship will keep you and your spouse in the exact same patterns and habits you have already established. 2. Finding small ways to incorporate these reconnection attempts into your relationship will reap the benefit of increased trust and intimacy lived out in *Ephesians 4:31-32* “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*”

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