



Reconnect With Your Spouse!

INTRODUCTION

Do you know what sea otters do when they sleep? They lie on their backs in the water--but then they hold paws with their loved ones to make sure that they don't drift apart. It's absolutely adorable. And I think we could learn a thing or two from those sea otters!

The natural course of life is that we will drift apart. It isn't "perhaps" we'll drift apart, or "we might" drift apart. We simply will. The currents of our lives pull us away from each other--money worries, job stress, in-law stress, babies--you name it. It comes between us. So you could marry your best friend, and then five years later feel like you hardly know each other.

So here's what we're going to do: over the next 5 Mondays you and your spouse will try a challenge. It will be simple, it won't take too much time, and each will build on the previous week. By the end of the five weeks, it's our prayer that you'll find yourselves talking more easily, laughing more readily, and feeling a lot of goodwill towards each other.

Now, are you ready for your first challenge? **Let's learn the daily "Hi/Low" sharing.** Each night, either chatting when you get home from work, over a cup of tea after dinner, or even on the phone if you do shift work or one of you is away from home, ask yourselves these 2 questions:

- When did you feel most "in the groove" today? Excited by life? Productive? Like you could feel God working through you?
- When did you feel more defeated today? Most exhausted, most discouraged, most frustrated? What were you doing?

That's it. Just those two questions. When we share them with each other two things happen:

- We get to know each other's hearts - what makes them tick, what excites them, what frustrates them, and that makes us feel closer.
- We also get to know ourselves. And that's important, too!

So pick a time of the day, and start asking those questions every day. By the end of the week you'll feel like you know so much more about each other! Even if you haven't been getting along well lately, *this can help open the door to communication a crack*, and it can start to break some of those walls down. So go find out about each other! We'll see you again NEXT Monday!

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WEEK #1: STRATEGIES TO CARVE OUT TIME

It's best to start these challenges on Mondays, because that's the best day of the week to try to implement something new. Here's what we want to work on this week: *carving out about 10 minutes, everyday, when we can just chat.*

In the introduction, we gave you the assignment to start sharing your highs and lows everyday. Today we're going to look at how to solidify that as a daily routine. We know carving out 10 minutes can be difficult because often people's schedules vary day by day. But here are some ideas to get you started:

- Go for a walk after dinner
- Call each other and talk or FaceTime on a lunch break
- Cuddle with the lights still on when you climb into bed
- Have a cup of tea right after you get the children in bed
- Have breakfast together (and talk about yesterday's highs and lows)
- Have a cup of tea/coffee when you reconnect after work, and before you start dinner
- If you have babies/toddlers, put them in the car or in strollers and head out in the evenings

Choose one of these that would be easiest to incorporate into your schedule every day so that it becomes routine. If you choose something like taking a walk after dinner, but that only works for 5 nights out of 7 because one of you is out of town or at work, see if you can call each other at around the same time on the other two nights.

But what if my spouse isn't open to this? A few hints if you and your spouse have really grown apart and don't talk at all anymore.

- Try to involve food or a hot beverage. If you can bring him or her a hot cup of tea and simply sit down, that's more relaxing and takes the pressure off.
- Don't ask to talk; that can sound scary. Ask instead, "how about going for a walk after dinner?" Or, "would you like to sit down with a cup of tea?"

Then ask the high/low questions: "Tell me about the best thing that happened to you today. When did you feel the most in the groove?" *So here's what your assignments look like so far:*

- Choose a 10-minute routine everyday when you will talk about your highs and lows.
- Practice this everyday this week.

This may seem small. Shouldn't you do more to reconnect? If you implement this ONE habit, and you make it into a ROUTINE, you will start to see immediate results!

So this week: solidify the high/low questions into a routine. Then get excited for your next challenge on how to start having fun together next Monday!

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WEEK #2: HOW'S YOUR BEDTIME ROUTINE?

I know some of you are likely hoping for some big, epic quest you can do that will magically transform your marriage. But you know what? *A great marriage is more often built on little habits that you develop everyday.*

We've talked about having a scheduled daily marriage check-in, where you go over your "highs" and your "lows" of the day. *Now we want to talk about how you end your day.* Thirty years ago, most couples went to bed at the same time. Today, that's no longer true. And when we go to bed apart from one another, we lose one of the best opportunities to feel connected.

What happens when we turn in to bed together? We usually chat. We get a chance to pray. We often hug, or at least touch as we lie in bed drifting off to sleep. But when you don't go to bed together, you lose out on the natural time of day when you will connect.

This week your challenge is to create a bedtime routine where you head to bed at the same time. This may take some adjustments. If one of you has to get up for work at 5:30, it may mean that both of you have to start going to bed at 9:30! Here's how to figure out a bedtime routine:

- Decide when you need to get up
- Count backwards 8 hours. That's when you have to get to sleep
- Count backwards another 20 minutes. That's when you want to be heading up to bed (to leave time to talk, or anything else!)
- Count backwards another half hour. That's when you want to do something relaxing together, like getting a cup of tea, playing a game, or reading in the same room.

The main thing is to decide WHEN you're going to go to bed each night, and then create things that you do together that become habits - your bedtime routine so you get that chance to drift off together. What if your husband (or you!) snores so you can't sleep in the same room? You can still share the bedtime routine and snuggle before going off to another room.

What if someone is working shift work? If they're home when their spouse is turning in, then do that bedtime routine anyway with them, lie down and cuddle for a few minutes, kiss them goodnight, and leave. If you're not home when someone is going to sleep, then schedule 20 minutes at another time during the day when you'll cuddle together on the couch and just talk.

We need that cuddle time! And we need our sleep. Without cuddle time, and with exhaustion, you will feel distant from each other, guaranteed. So decide this week that you will implement a shared bedtime routine that works for you.

- Continue your 10-minute "check-in" during the day when you talk about your highs and lows.
- Plan a bedtime routine together, and go to bed together this week (or at least cuddle together during the day)

This week: Get some sleep! And maybe more cuddling (and anything else that comes with it!).

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WEEK #3: IT'S JUST ONE HOUR ... AND IT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE!

Has life become a big marriage rut? Do you have any time to have fun together? In this 5 week challenge we're moving towards *deeper levels of communication and emotional connection*. But what we've wanted to stress in the first few weeks is that you can't get to those levels of communication and feelings of closeness until you actually spend time together.

You need a few minutes everyday to check in. You need to have cuddle time, ideally at the end of the day. And this week we're going to talk about having fun together.

One of the best things you can do for your marriage is to find something fun that you can do with each other, even just once a week. It doesn't have to take a lot of time, either. Just one hour a week of a new activity that you share together can make you feel close and can help you laugh more. And it feeds something important: while women tend to like to communicate face-to-face, sitting across the table or setting time aside specifically to talk, men tend to like to talk more side-by-side, when they're doing something with someone else.

Finding something to do with your spouse is one of the best things you can do to improve communication in your marriage, and help you to feel more invigorated with life as well! This week we want to issue you a challenge: *Let's pick at least one hobby (and maybe even two!) that you can start doing with your husband*. Now here's what to do:

- Each of you look through **THIS LIST** and choose 3 hobbies that you'd be open to pursuing.
- Then look at each other's lists, and choose ONE hobby that's on their list.
- That leaves you with two hobbies. Try to spend one hour on each this week (or choose just ONE that you will do).

If you have no time to spend even an hour with your spouse this week, then it could be that you're doing too much of the wrong thing. Your children will do better if they have fewer activities and you have more time with your husband! And a lot of these are super easy.

Sometimes we feel exhausted not just because we're working too hard in the home and at work, but also because we're spending so much time in front of a computer that we rob ourselves of energy. So if you're one of the ones who read that hobby post, but didn't do anything about it: *this week I'm challenging you to actually choose a hobby*. And if you already have one - that's okay! But this week actually do that hobby with your spouse.

- Continue your 10-minute "check-in" during the day when you talk about your highs and lows.
- Continue your bedtime routine and go to bed at the same time together this week.
- Choose a hobby that you will do with your spouse this week, and plan ONE HOUR that you will do that hobby. It can be a hobby you've already been doing, or a new hobby. But spend at least one hour doing something that you both would enjoy!

This week: Have some fun and laugh together!

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WEEK #4: THIS SIMPLE LIST CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING

Do you feel LOVED in your marriage? Or has your relationship often seemed more like you're two roommates? We've been working for the last three weeks at building a foundation where you're doing things together and conversation is coming more naturally. *Now we want to move deeper, making sure that you each feel loved.*

When you're disconnected, it's easy to become self-focused. But to decide to do something that would let your spouse know - you matter to me? That changes the whole dynamic. This week I'm going to ask you to do the same thing. But how do you come up with those things?

Think about your love language. Most of us naturally feel love in one of five ways, and that tends to also be the way that we want to express love. Those languages are:

- Acts of service
- Words of affirmation
- Physical touch
- Quality Time
- Gifts

Think about small ways your spouse can meet you at your love language.

Show your Spouse Love Project

Follow the instructions and see what happens! This one can feel tough if there's a lot of distance between you and your spouse. It may be that you need to spend another week or two doing your hobby together before you broach this subject. But if you're afraid of how they'll react, try phrasing it this way:

"I love you so much, and I'm afraid that sometimes I don't communicate it well. I want you to know how proud I am to be your [husband or wife], and I want us to feel close. So I'd like to do this exercise where you tell me 20 really concrete things I can do to make you feel like a million bucks, and then I'll do the same for you. And let's see what that does to our marriage!"

- Continue your 10-minute "check-in" during the day when you talk about your highs and lows
- Continue your bedtime routine and go to bed at the same time together this week.
- Spend at least one hour on a hobby you enjoy together AWAY from a screen.
- Make a list of 20-25 ways that your spouse can show you love, and have him make a list for you. Exchange the lists and do 1-2 things a day

This week: Feel loved!

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WEEK #5: LET'S DREAM TOGETHER!

Do you ever feel like you and your husband are just treading water? You're concentrating so much on just getting through the day that you don't really plan ahead. This is the last week in the "Reconnect With Your Spouse" challenge. Now we're going to ask you to do something big. *We're going to challenge you to DREAM together.* One of the reasons that we often don't feel emotionally connected is because we don't have common goals and dreams.

We can communicate at different levels: we can simply talk in cliches or tell facts or opinions; or we can become more vulnerable and transparent and share our dreams and goals. We're going to encourage you to become more transparent this week.

We've prepared a "Values and Vision" exercise for you to do with your spouse, where you try to hammer out what are the main values for you and your family; what are the ways you can practically live out those values; and what are you aiming for.

It's best to do each component on its own date night. Maybe spread them out over the next few weeks (or even the next 3 months). *As you talk through these issues, you'll have a much greater sense of teamwork and togetherness, and you'll understand each other's hearts better.*

Are you up for it? Download the Values and Vision worksheets [HERE](#).

We encourage you to print out two copies so you can each work on them together, but you can also talk through them on your phone if that's easier.

If you're afraid that your spouse may not want to do this exercise, try this: "I want to make sure that I'm not the one setting the groundwork for what our family is going to be. I really want us both to have input, so I want to know your heart. This is only going to take a little bit of time. Can we snuggle up with a snack and a drink, and talk about this?"

- Continue your 10-minute "check-in" during the day when you talk about your highs and lows.
- Continue your bedtime routine and go to bed at the same time together this week.
- Spend at least one hour on a hobby you enjoy together AWAY from a screen.
- Do 1-2 things to show your spouse love everyday (use their list!)
- Work through the values & vision worksheets, doing one module a night for three nights (spread over three days, three weeks, or three months)

That's it! Now you're done. We pray that these exercises have helped you feel closer to your spouse!

This week ... dream big! Your marriage can know no limits, if you both make the decision to live big lives!