



The Most Important Tools
to Practice for You to Have

THE ULTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

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NAME / DON'T BLAME what you're feeling in the moment. Practice using "I" statements, rather than "You" statements...and practice communicating with curiosity and compassion; it'll decrease defensiveness and increase connection and understanding.

Say: "I feel unimportant when you don't look up from your phone when I am telling you about my day."

Don't say: "You are always ignoring me!"

***Hint:** It's not an "I" statement to say, "I feel like you're always ignoring me." That sounds like naming, when in actuality, it's blaming.

CAPITALIZATION is when you can receive your partner's good news with positivity, excitement and joy; everyone wins! Even if the information is hard for you to hear, try stepping outside of yourself and be empathetic to your partner's enthusiasm.

If you have a concern with what they are sharing, wait until some time after they share their initial excitement so you don't burst their bubble - that'll make them hesitant to share in the future.

ALLOW AND ACCEPT YOUR PARTNER'S EMOTIONS. Once you start limiting, denying, resisting or judging your partner's emotional expression, disconnection follows. You don't have to agree with or feel the same as your partner for you to create space for what they are feeling.

MAKE GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION A DAILY HABIT. It can be about anything your partner does - tasks or chores, their values, morals or ethics; let them know you value them for it all! Be grateful for even the smallest of things.

DOING SMALL THINGS OFTEN for your partner is the key to building a strong relationship. Leave a note for them, rub their feet at the end of the day, make dinner reservations, take out the garbage without being asked...even the smallest task can go a long way. Creating a ratio of 5:1, positive to negative, will help you master your relationship.

BE CURIOUS ABOUT WHO YOUR PARTNER IS IN THE HERE AND NOW. Realize that you've both grown since the beginning of your relationship and show interest in learning about those changes. When you first starting dating you'd ask a lot of questions - what they like, dislike, dreams, hopes, expectations...just because you've been together a long time doesn't mean you should make assumptions that you know who they are. They (and you!) have likely changed over time. Inquire, without attachment, to how they think, and be open to hearing it, especially if it's different than how you think.

KNOW YOUR, AND YOUR PARTNER'S, LOVE LANGUAGE. These are the ways in which we know that we, or they, they are loved. The five love languages are: physical touch, quality time, receiving gifts, words of affirmation, and acts of service. Many partners don't share the same love language, and we often give what we most want, and it may end up having the opposite effect for our partner.

COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS ACCURATELY. When asking your partner for something, know the difference between an invitation, request or demand. An invitation allows for a yes/no answer, without judgment. A request is asking your partner for something that is based on your value set. A demand just tells them what to do. The best way to get your needs met is with a request.

KNOW, AND UNAPOLOGETICALLY NAME, YOUR NEEDS AND BOUNDARIES. Don't be afraid to tell your partner what you need from them; remember, they can't read your mind. For example, if you would like them to plan date nights, be explicit about it. If you have the need to talk on a deeper level, don't feel "too needy" for expressing what will make you feel more seen, heard, validated or connected. And don't apologize for what you need - own it!

MAKE REPAIR ATTEMPTS. After you've had an argument, conflict, or misunderstanding, you need to make repairs to get unstuck, heal, and reconnect. Stepping towards one another can be done in a variety of ways: soft, compassionate touch (a hug, touch on the arm), offer an apology, be curious how the other is feeling, seek understanding that lead to the transgression, engage in a joint activity, sit next to one another, inquire what your partner needs to feel resolved, etc... Even if you don't feel like it, and your overwhelming emotions are still activated, make the repair attempt anyways; it'll help you to move past the issue quicker.

RESPOND TO BIDS FOR ATTENTION. When your partner seeks your attention, respond by acknowledging them. For example: put down your phone; look up; make eye contact; answer the question; pause on what you are doing; comment on what they are showing you; show interest. When you are busy, you can still acknowledge by saying, "I see that you want to show me _____, and I'll be happy to take a look in a minute when I finish _____." When our bids consistently go unacknowledged, the message received is that our partner doesn't care, and they will likely shut down and stop trying.

WHY DOES ALL THIS MATTER??

Because we all want to feel seen, heard, validated, acknowledged and loved. Building the relationship of your dreams is possible. These are all learnable skills, and with greater awareness and intention you and your partner can practice the steps that will lead to greater connection, intimacy, vulnerability, sex, and happiness.