

3 Things Not to Do When You Feel Disconnected From Your Spouse

When you got married, you were hoping the fireworks between you would continue. The bond was real, and it felt good. But life happens, and now you feel disconnected from your spouse. What do you do now?

That disconnection usually starts small. He says something that irritates you. She doesn't respond in the way you hoped. Other life stresses take your attention to things outside the relationship.

Sure, there are different seasons in a marriage. But if unaddressed, that feeling of disconnection can grow, and before you know it, you feel like you're living more as roommates than as husband and wife.

To borrow a frequent line from the popular TV show *Blue Bloods*, "It's what you do next that counts."

But first, here are three things *not* to do if you are feeling disconnected from your spouse.

1. Ignore it.

Imagine you and your spouse in a room together. What's the space like between the two of you? Is it warm, inviting and safe? Or is it prickly and uncomfortable? Has a wall developed between you? How thick or high is that wall?

The ground between you and your spouse doesn't get clean by ignoring the trash that's accumulated. Walls don't crumble by pretending they aren't there. Regardless of the cause of feeling disconnected, honesty is important.

The smallest things may grow into mountains when they're ignored. And big marriage problems grow even bigger when you don't deal with them.

Your radar for how disconnected you are may become desensitized if you've allowed busyness to crowd out relationship-building, or if you've ignored problems for a long time. Pay attention to that sense in your soul that the ground between you and your spouse has become cluttered.

2. Accept it.

Because your spouse *will* disappoint you, it can be tempting to just accept that your marriage will never experience true intimacy. Expectations differ. Communication styles differ. What you looked for in marriage is not happening, and now you feel stuck. Why should you hope for anything else? Perhaps "roommates" is better than being alone.

Loneliness in marriage may be one of the most painful things anyone can experience. I've talked with many of you who feel exactly that way.

God bless you if your spouse steps up in making a change on their own. But don't buy into the insanity of doing the same thing and expecting different results. You can change the dance, and your spouse will have to respond in some way. Even when God calls you to stay in a bad marriage, accepting the misery as permanent is the best guarantee things will never get better.

3. Project it.

Over 95% of married people who write to me blame their spouse for their misery. "My spouse doesn't listen to me, or show me affection." "I feel lonely and rejected because my spouse is" "My spouse always (or never) ..."

Yes, you've confirmed it; you married a sinner. (Is that

really a surprise?) So can we take that as true, and now talk about what to do next?

You cannot change your spouse. So when you focus on everything your spouse is doing wrong you have no focus left to look at the things you *can* do something about. Lashing out, criticizing your spouse or trying to force them to come closer is a sure way to drive them further away.

Is your spouse abusive? Or manipulative? Or addicted, or selfish, or clueless, or irresponsible or angry? Is he or she refusing to work on the marriage, demanding or withholding intimacy or blaming you for his/her own problems?

Now, how are you going to respond?

Intentionally choosing to look at your marriage honestly, seeking to understand both your spouse's perspective and God's perspective, and then choosing what to do next is the only way to move forward when you feel disconnected from your spouse.

And we'll talk more about how to do that next week.

Your Turn: *Have you been ignoring, accepting or projecting the problems that are leading you to feel disconnected from your spouse? If so, which of these is hardest for you to address? Leave a comment below. {eoa}*

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