

5 Keys to Getting Out of Your Spouse's 'Dog House'

We're all guys, so—let's face it—we all visit “the dog house” on occasion. Getting in there is no mystery; but sometimes we need a little help getting out. This article offers five simple keys to “getting out of the dog house.”

Many of us are masters at insensitivity, obstinacy, foot-in-mouth disease, advanced cluelessness, stirring the pot and more. It's not that we plan to come home from work, enter the house and immediately say something idiotic that ruins our wife's fond “hello” or dinner or the evening or sometimes the entire weekend. If you are like me, screwing up seems to take no effort at all; it's like a talent.

If being consigned to the doghouse resonates in any way, then here are five simple keys to growing in getting out of it:

1. Listen, listen, listen: More than anything, your wife wants to know that you hear her. Not hear her, then correct her; not hear her while doing something else; not hear her, then offer an airtight explanation. No, your wife wants you to practice active listening, and she wants to believe that you are enjoying it.

2. Let the restitution fit the crime: Appropriate restitution accomplishes a couple of things. First, it demonstrates that we know not only *that* we messed up, but *how* we messed up. If we're in the dog house because we were insensitive, then flowers with, “Sorry, I was a jerk,” are good. If our crime is “not paying attention,” then dinner out and our undivided attention would fit.

3. Don't sweat the small stuff (being right is very small stuff): Here's some free advice: Being right is overrated. If you're in the dog house over a disagreement, proving that you

were right all along is never a good move. Getting out of the dog house isn't about justice, it's about grace. Proving a point never restores a relationship; demonstrating your wife is more important to you than your ego just might.

4. Never minimize your culpability: "I'm sorry we had an argument, but it really wasn't my fault," doesn't work. Neither does, "I only forgot our anniversary because my work schedule is overloaded." Accept responsibility for the whole thing.

5. Be randomly wonderful: This tip alone is worth the price of the entire article. Say, "Don't cook, I'm picking up Chinese;" followed up by a personal delivery of a flower arrangement to her at work. Try fresh sheets (make the bed) and a mint on her pillow. Pick an obscure anniversary (first date, 3,000 days married, get creative), make her a card and celebrate. Arrange a lunch date. Or turn off the TV, serve her a cup of tea, and say random romantic stuff.

We can't promise any magic, just plain, simple, well-practiced ideas to help us when we need to re-establish communication—or at least crack the door just a little.

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