

6 Crucial Steps to Help Close the Gap Between You and Your Spouse

Intimacy doesn't just happen. If you and your spouse ever are going to come closer together, one of you will have to make the first move. Think of the space between you. Is there a gap between you and your spouse? Closing that gap doesn't have to be as overwhelming or dramatic as you may think.

If you and your spouse are somewhat disconnected, your natural reaction may be to either wait for your spouse to invite you closer, or to in some way manipulate or demand they make the move. If you want real intimacy, meaning no walls between the two of you, neither of those methods will work.

Put yourself in your spouse's shoes. If you were he or she, would you want to come closer to you? While ideally both of you will make the effort to connect, don't sit back and wait. You can make the first move.

And here are some relatively low-key ways to do that.

Keep in mind that these steps may be helpful when both of you are basically people of good will. If abuse and outright destructive behavior is involved, get some help!

1. Invite, don't force.

Not that you could force intimacy even if you tried. Remember, you don't really want to force your spouse to come closer; you want him/her to *want* to come closer. Manipulation may, in some cases, result in physical proximity or sexual contact. But that's not intimacy!

See yourself as winning your spouse's heart all over again.

In this light, don't go after connection with your spouse primarily for your own benefit. It's true that connecting is what you desire, but your spouse won't want to connect with you because *you* want them to. She/he may respond to your invitation when your heart becomes the kind of place *they* want to be.

Remember that this is a choice: on your part and on their part. You can choose for you. Make that choice! And follow up that choice with action. But the only way intimacy ever develops is if your spouse also makes that choice. You can't choose for them. But you can invite them.

2. Honor your spouse's heart.

If you have wounded your spouse in the past, or if your spouse is carrying wounds from elsewhere, it may take much longer than you anticipate for him/her to feel safe enough to come closer to you. The very fact that you repeatedly honor your spouse's perspective will help. In this case, it's your job to demonstrate over time, and in the ways that are meaningful to your spouse, that you are trustworthy. Seeking to understand your spouse's heart will be helpful.

Wives, remember that most men are emotionally modest. They usually need privacy and safety before they will let their emotional barriers down.

Husbands, remember that most women only feel able to engage sexually when they feel emotionally connected. Learn to communicate in the way your wife needs you to.

3. Make the mental switch.

Connection begins by intentionally turning toward your spouse in your mind and then following that up with action.

Wives, intentionally choose to look at him a little longer. Catch his eyes and hold on to them. Put your hand on his

shoulder, and leave it there a little while. Watch for when he shows a moment of vulnerability; pause, notice and with tenderness, draw him out.

Husbands, intentionally choose to pay attention. Make sure your sexual desires are only focused on your wife! Then listen for her mood, or need or for whatever is occupying her mind. Come alongside her, lighten her load and listen to her heart. Be there.

4. Don't try to be perfect.

The biggest way to invite connection may be to be vulnerable. (Remember, this only works if your spouse is a person of good will.)

Choose the time and place carefully. Then try sharing something of your own heart with your spouse in a way you suspect they can hear you. Are you struggling with something? Try inviting your spouse's help. Have you caused your spouse pain? Without being defensive, ask for forgiveness.

Sharing frequently invites sharing. Try it.

5. Listen. Listen!

There's perhaps no better way to close the gap between you and your spouse than to listen. Really listen.

That doesn't mean coming up with a rebuttal in your mind while your spouse is talking. It means staying engaged even if it's uncomfortable to do so, and allowing your spouse to be him/herself in your presence. Listening is part of healthy communication in marriage.

Husbands, most of the time your wife needs you to hear her more than she needs you to fix anything. In doing so you really *are* helping her.

Wives, your husband often needs you to pay attention and help

draw him out. You can help him process emotionally what he may struggle to process himself.

6. Study your spouse.

If you've been significantly disconnected, don't expect your spouse to immediately come rushing in your direction the moment you make one small move. It will take time to break through the walls and come closer again.

Continue to study your spouse. Study how she/he responds to your initial efforts at coming closer. Rather than continuing to hammer at the lack of connection using tools you think you want to use, learn from how your spouse responds to your initial efforts. As if you were wooing him/her for the first time, adjust your efforts based on what you know and learn about him/her.

You make the first move to close the gap between you and your spouse. Intimacy just might be the result.

Your Turn: Have you been waiting for your spouse to make the first move in coming closer? What step might you take to move closer first? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

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