Navigating Relationships in Challenging Times

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Go for the Green!

Healthy relationships during these challenging times are ones that go in and out of the four zones of this continuum scale using tools such as reflective listening, venting, rules for fighting fair, understanding of each other's core needs, and learning your love language.

Relationship Tools That Help You and Your Partner “Move to the Green”

Understanding Your Partner's Needs

Take a personality test such as The Enneagram or Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to help you to better understand your partner’s perspective and not just your own.

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Venting

Ask permission to vent and assign a time for you to vent with your partner. Venting should be conducted away from the children, perhaps outside and partners should face one another six feet apart. The person in receipt of the venting does not interrupt or respond to the other’s venting, they only start a stopwatch/timer and allow the other to “empty out” their frustrations and resentments associated with their day. Do not employ criticisms of the other during the venting session. When the “venter” begins to become quiet, the partner in receipt of the venting simply asks, “Are you emptied out?” If the venter starts up again, the venting exercise continues until they respond that they are finished. At that time, the timer is stopped, and the amount of time is announced. There is a beginning and an end to the venting exercise and partners agree to not allow the venting to spill into the rest of their day.

Reflective Listening

When possible, seat facing each other eye to eye, knee to knee, and hand in hand when discussing critical relationship issues. Starting with an appreciation for the other, take turns repeating back what the other has said to validate that the other has felt heard. Try not to use this time to try to win arguments or analyze what the other is saying. Intentionally use “I” statements instead of “You” statements.

Rules for Fighting Fair
(John Gottman)

No name calling
No interrupting
No blaming or accusations,
No cussing at each other
No yelling AT each other
No sarcasm when angry
No defensiveness
No generalizations (starting out your sentences with "you always" or "you never")
No physical/emotional intimidating gestures/violence/threats
No walking out without naming a follow-up time

Remember

No relationship is entirely broken if partners are willing and open to exploring their own thoughts, behaviors, and feelings. To improve and move any relationship towards the green, using different coping skills is imperative!

Contact a FEAP consultant for strategies to improve your relationships.