

connecting COUPLES

Winter 2011

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Best Tips for your Best Bud

If a friend's marriage is in trouble, what do you say? We've compiled 5 great tips for you to be a supportive friend, without stepping in the middle.

Love & Laughter Marriage Getaway

Want to join us? See details inside on how you can tune up your marriage!

Dynamic Duo

What title depicts you as a couple; adventurous, low-key, or high maintenance? Take our quiz to find out now.

5 Best Tips to Help Your Friend's Marriage

Typically, friends are the first ones married couples turn to for advice when their marriage is in trouble. Sometimes it can put you in the middle of their struggle, and you won't always know how to help. Here are five great tips for handling any situation that can arise.



1 Just Listen – Simply giving them a listening ear makes a huge difference. It is good for your friend to vent a little and get what they need to off their chest. By talking out loud it might bring more clarity than they think. Talking it out with a friend is therapeutic, and your silence speaks volumes.

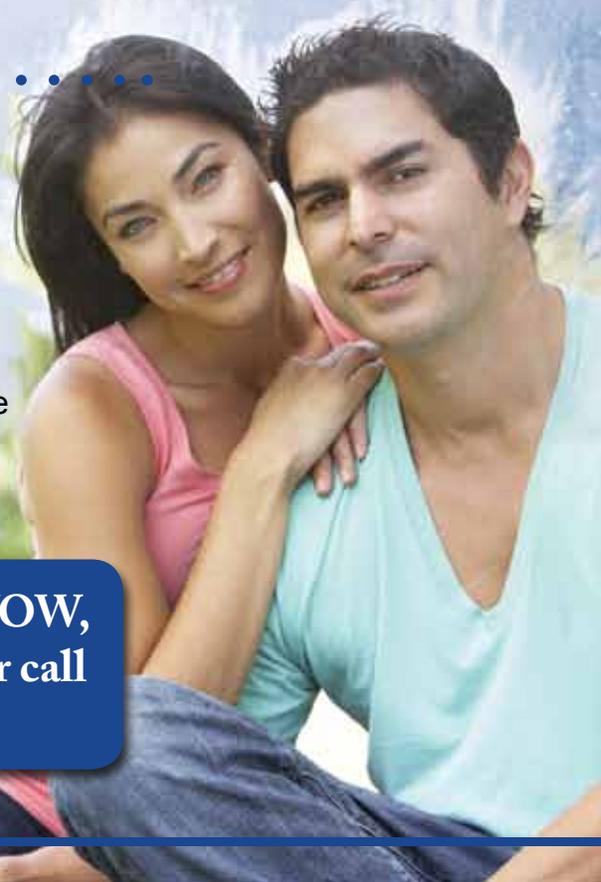
2 Don't Get Involved – It's easy to give your advice and opinions on their situation. The best advice in this case is none at all. Help your friend work through it by listening, and try not to choose sides or weigh-in on their decisions. It's best to steer them in the right direction towards proper help, instead of trying to encourage divorce or separation.

3 Give and Get Them Support – You are a great support system for your friend, but you should find other resources to refer them to. One good resource is the VOW Marriage Education Initiative. VOW helps build and maintain strong marriages by offering marriage education, workshops, and endless resourceful websites.



4 Encourage a Solution – Instead of concentrating on what the problems are, help your friend focus on finding the right solution for them. Encourage your friend to do research to find the right program or counselor to talk with, take action, and get on the right track to a healthy marriage.

5 Just Be There – The best way to be supportive is to simply be there! Be available when they need you. Let them know you are there for support, and be willing to listen anytime. And in any situation where there is violence, the best advice is for their overall safety and well-being.



For more information on VOW, visit www.wevownow.org or call 903.232.1700.

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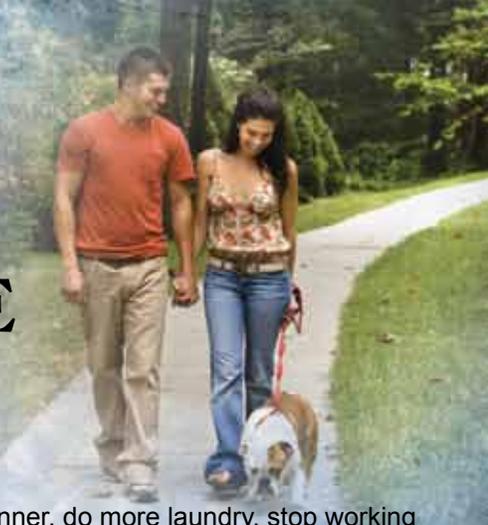


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A photograph of a man and a woman walking a dog on a paved path. The man is wearing a red t-shirt and khaki pants, and the woman is wearing a floral top and blue jeans. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The dog is a small, light-colored breed. The background shows a grassy area and trees.

CHANGE YOUR MARRIAGE Without Changing Your Partner

By Pat LaDouceur

We're good at coming up with ways our partner needs to change - stop yelling, help with dinner, do more laundry, stop working so hard, pay more attention to the kids, be more romantic - the list can be endless. Waiting for those changes to happen can be frustrating, or even lonely. But very often there's an easier way to make a difference in relationships. How we talk, act, and feel can make a huge difference in how our partner acts.

Broken Connections

Relationship difficulties usually start out as "broken connections." Sometimes they start small. Your partner comes home from work tired and distracted, and doesn't respond when you say hello. If you reconnect later in the evening, your bond stays strong. But if you keep "missing" each other, night after night, it can become part of a negative cycle. You try harder to get your partner's attention; your partner insists more strongly on some quiet time. It becomes a self-reinforcing cycle. If the cycle continues to escalate, you might greet your partner with, "You never even say hello when you get home...I might as well be invisible!" Your partner might respond with, "I can't even walk in the door before I'm in trouble. I just can't do anything right!"

Learn to Reconnect

It takes two people for a negative cycle to start. The good news is that it takes only one person to stop it. Even better, the steps you take can be small ones, as long as they are in a new direction. Here are some possibilities...

- Tune into your own deeper feelings. You might be angry, but are you also scared? On the surface you might feel depressed, but underneath do you feel hurt? When you understand your own response, you can begin to act differently toward your partner.
- Listen for your partner's feelings. When someone you care about complains, it's natural to want to help solve the problem. But that's not necessarily what he or she needs. Most of the time you don't need to "do" anything - just be there, be curious, and listen.
- Look for the the dreams hidden in your partner's side of the story. Beneath every disagreement, every problem that never seems to get solved, are two dreams - yours and your partner's. Do your best to understand your partner's dreams before starting to negotiate a compromise or a solution.
- Come up with non verbal ways to connect. Sometimes the easiest way to repair a bond is to take a walk together, have a cup of tea, enjoy a movie, or just touch your partner on the arm or shoulder. A touch or a hug can be incredibly comforting.
- Have compassion for your partner's deeper feelings, even when you disagree with how the problem is being presented. New research suggests that we might affect each other in amazingly subtle ways. Randomized, double blind studies at the University of Washington and University of Edinburgh found that couples might even affect each other with their thoughts. The studies put partners in different rooms. Then one partner was asked to send "loving, compassionate intention." Even with no visible or physical contact, the other partner registered changes in blood flow and perspiration. The odds of this happening by chance were only 1 in 11,000.

It can be a challenge to stop focusing on how your partner can change. But it's also inspiring to imagine the warm, satisfying relationship you want, and the partner you want to be. Changing your response, even in small ways, can make a big difference in how you feel in your relationship.

Reference

National Public Radio, October 15, 2009 - <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104351710>

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Pat LaDouceur, MFT helps people build warm, satisfying relationships. She helps couples solve problems around sexuality, affairs, parenting, money, work overload, and emotional distance. She is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with an office near Berkeley, CA.

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Pat_LaDouceur

DYNAMIC DUO

What best describes you and your partner? Are you adventurous, romantic, low-key, or like to live in luxury? Our couples' quiz will give you insight into just what type of dynamic duo you are.

1. What is your idea of a date night?

- A. A sultry night of cooking a great new gourmet recipe.
- B. Going to catch the latest comedy at the theatre.
- C. Eating out at the new trendy restaurant in town.

2. What is your idea of a weekend getaway?

- A. A "Stay-cay" where you stay at home but shut out the rest of the world!
- B. Have a weekend at the cabin in the woods surrounded by nature.
- C. Booking a 3-day weekend at an all-inclusive resort.

3. What is your idea of staying healthy?

- A. Vegging out in front of the television.
- B. Going on a half-day hike.
- C. Visiting your local gym and running on the treadmill.

4. What is your idea of being crafty?

- A. Putting together the new entertainment center you bought.
- B. Scrapbooking your latest family vacation.
- C. Picking out a frame at your local craft store for the new painting you bought.

5. What outdoor vehicles do you enjoy?

- A. The golf cart around the course on your Sunday round of golf.
- B. Four-wheeling with a group of friends by the lake.
- C. Riding in your convertible top-down with the sun shining.

6. What do you do with the quality time you have with your spouse?

- A. The nights are always a time to relax and be together in front of your favorite shows.
- B. Take the dog for a walk in the evening and maybe play disc golf at the park.
- C. Going out on the town to see a great performance at the local theatre.

7. What is your idea of helping with the chores?

- A. We do the laundry when we get a chance, but leave the socks in the basket so we can just grab a pair!
- B. We split the work between the two of us, so it's fair.
- C. We have a maid come in once a week, and take our laundry to the cleaners to be pressed and starched.

8. What home décor best reflects your home?

- A. Casual and lived in.
- B. Urban chic, yet reflects aspects of nature.
- C. Very modern and contemporary.

9. What would you most likely do in your spare time?

- A. Help at the local church bake sale.
- B. Join the upcoming 5K run and fundraiser.
- C. Attend the big benefit dinner put on by your closest friends.

10. If you wanted to reinvigorate your relationship, who would you turn to?

- A. Your best friend to get their advice.
- B. Ask your mother her past experience!
- C. Join VOW, a valuable resource where you can sign up for free marriage education courses and learn new, exciting things about your partner.

A's – If you mostly chose 'A' as your answer, you two are very chill, low-key people that enjoy the simple pleasures in life. Your biggest goal is just relaxing together and making the most of it. You are the type of couple that can be found sitting at home on a Friday night watching the latest movie marathon!

B's – If you chose 'B' as a majority, you are an adventurous, outdoor couple that is always looking for the next thrill. You love nature, sports, and being very active. This can be great as a couple to enjoy so many activities that you have in common.

C's – This means you love luxury and living life to the fullest. You enjoy pampering each other, and you are probably known as the town socialites. It is important to you to be close to your partner and share your happiness and good fortune with the community.



“For every \$1000 that government spends providing services to broken families, it spends \$1 trying to prevent family breakdown.”

Figure, Patrick F. "Encouraging Marriage and Discouraging Divorce". Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation. The Backgrounder #1621, March 26, 2001.



The **VOW Marriage Education Program** is helping to strengthen East Texas families every day.

VOW Marriage Workshops are scheduled on most Saturdays from 8am - 5pm and costs \$25 per couple. This workshop gives you the chance to mingle with other couples and strengthen your marriage at the same time.

For more information or to pre-register, call **903-232-1700** or visit wevownow.org and lulvlasts.org.

Workshops are held in a group setting with an instructor and several other couples.
Your privacy is respected.



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