Increase the Joy with Forgiveness
INCREASE JOY
WITH FORGIVENESS

LIVE WELL UTAH
So much of our happiness is within our own control. Find out how to increase joy in your marriage or relationship through forgiveness.

Isn’t it amazing that the people we are closest to have the ability to offend us the most? One reason for this is that when we love someone, we lower our protective emotional wall so we are more vulnerable to getting hurt. It works the same with the people who love us – none of us are perfect – we have all said or done things that offend those we love the most. It is the way we REACT to offending or being offended that determines the effect on our relationship. It is important to think about how we really want to feel. Do you want to feel anger, resentment, bitterness, pain, and misery or do you want to feel love, peace, joy, and happiness? There are two responses that will bring about the positive feelings we all want to enjoy – forgiving your spouse when you are offended, and offering a sincere apology when you have offended your loved one.

The following five steps can help you in the forgiveness process and will allow you to replace the feelings of bitterness and hurt with positive feelings of love:

1. Take time to calm down before speaking to your spouse. This allows your brain to switch from the “fight or flight” area of the brain to the higher level thinking part of the brain.
2. Talk with your spouse about what happened to offend you. Sometimes you will find it was a misunderstanding or totally unintentional.
3. Recognize you aren’t perfect either. Think of the many times your spouse has forgiven you for offenses.
4. Think of at least three memories when your feelings of love were especially strong for your spouse. Whenever you feel negative emotions of anger, hurt etc., think of
these memories.

5. Give yourself time for the hurt feelings to be replaced with feelings of love. It may take some time, but don’t give up!

It is also important to learn how to offer a sincere apology. Three crucial steps are:

1. Recognize exactly what you did to offend your spouse.
2. Develop a plan to avoid repeating the same mistake again.
3. Tell your spouse you are sorry.

Making sure you include the first two steps will make the third step more meaningful and effective.

So…think of something you may have done recently to offend your spouse and begin the steps of apologizing – and think of something your spouse has done that offended you and begin the steps of forgiveness. Don’t forget the three memories!

Marriage can be hard work when you think about giving and taking, forgiving and asking for forgiveness – but when you are snuggling in the arms of the one you love, it is well worth it!

This article was written by GaeLynn Peterson, Wayne County Director and Extension Assistant Professor, FCS and 4-H Youth