

Common Reasons for Feeling Disconnected in Marriage



When many people are asked what they want for their marriage, they reply that they want to love and be loved. And while that is true, most couples want even more. They have a deep desire to feel understood, respected, safe, needed, heard, appreciated, and perhaps most of all, to feel connection (Johnson, 2008).

When most new relationships are formed, there is often a feeling of excitement and anticipation surrounding the “newness” of the relationship. Our brains and bodies release a host of happy neurochemicals designed to draw couples together.

But for all couples, at some point, the newness wears off and the reality of stresses and imperfections arise. Busy schedules, bills, and babies come along and that feeling of closeness and connection becomes more difficult to maintain.

What happens to the connection between couples and what can be done? Here are 8 “D’s” of disconnection that help explain why most couples grow more distant over time.

1. Drifting

Over time, without being mean or nasty, all couples experience a slow drifting apart. Like two people in inner tubes floating a slow river, without intentionally holding on to each other, they will naturally drift apart. Over time, all couples get used to each other and when they get casual and comfortable, they tend to get critical. This often leads to “affection deprivation” and ADD or “attention deficit dilemma” as couples get busy and neglect doing the things that created feelings of connection earlier on.

2. Darts and Daggers

Many couples feel hurt when unkind things (darts and daggers) are expressed. Excessive complaints, criticism, name-calling and contempt drive distance between people. It has been said that reactions can wreck relationships. Couple connection could be strengthened if partners pay more attention to their temper, tongue, and tone of voice. And when unkind things are said, be quick to apologize and forgive. One more tip – don't parent your partner. No one likes to constantly be told what to do.

3. Disruptions to Daily Life

Often circumstances out of our control cause chaos and disruptions that create distance and disconnection in a marriage. These range from mental health and moving to job loss, car troubles and even having a baby. These anticipated and unanticipated disruptions and stresses can create tension that creeps into couple relationships. The key is to be aware of them, manage them in healthy ways, and don't let a challenge to be solved become more important than a person to be loved.

4. Distance

Close relationships require meaningful time together. Some couples drift apart due to factors that keep them from being together. These can include being physically apart for long periods of time, working long hours or different hours than your spouse, working multiple jobs, and frequent travel. Long periods of physical distance can lead to emotional distance in relationships.

5. Destructive Decisions

Marriage requires consistent clear communication about all aspects of life. Making some decisions without discussion or one-sided, secretive hidden habits can diminish trust, connection, and closeness. This could be things such as excessive spending and pornography addiction to substance abuse and even affairs. How each partner uses their time and how they make decisions can make or break some relationships.

6. Disagreements and Defensiveness

All couples will experience disagreements and it is natural to become defensive and even feel some resentment when there is a heated discussion. Common topics of disagreements include money, sex, how time is spent, and how to parent children (Schramm et al., 2005). Anger and resentment can create icy distance that melts feelings of closeness and connection. Instead, view irritation as an invitation for understanding and compassion.

7. Daily Hassles

Living with another person and managing schedules and daily stresses can be exhausting and overwhelming. The arduous list of to-dos ranges from cooking and cleaning to paying bills and

running errands. All couples will face daily hassles—connected couples find ways to check in regularly with their partner, express gratitude, ask how they can help, and practice patience.

8. Digital Distractions

Married couples today encounter a relatively new 8th challenge—managing digital devices and screen time balance. Social media, working from home, gaming, emailing, texting, television—all of these can consume our time and more importantly, our attention. Perhaps the greatest gift you can give your spouse is not your time, but your full undivided attention. Living in the digital age has plenty of perks, but when it intrudes into couple time it can create “technoference,” and quickly erode connection (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016). It may be wise for couples to consider kicking technology away from two areas of connection—tables and beds.

It is important to point out that these 8 “D’s” of disconnection are relatively common in most relationships. The key is finding balance, managing emotions and differences in healthy ways, responding with patience and kindness, being aware of how you use your time and attention, and intentionally investing in ways to connect and communicate.

References

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