

How Can I Foster a Growth Mindset in my ADHD Kids?



Social difficulties are common among children who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). This can lead to negative interactions with others. William Pelham, Ph.D., director of the Center for Children and Families at the State University of New York, and an expert on ADHD, says, “Studies show that the average child with ADHD has one to two negative interactions per minute with parents, peers, and teachers if you extrapolate, that’s half a million negative interactions a year,” he continues, “What that means is that *most* of these kids’ interactions with other people are negative. They’re not the ones invited to birthday parties or over to another kid’s house to play. Either you sit back and let your child have those negative experiences, or you intervene early and do something to stop them.” (McCarty, 22).

One strategy that parents can implement as an early intervention is the idea of a growth mindset. Growth mindset teaches that the brain is always growing, and that children and adults can learn new things and improve their abilities if they apply hard work and effort. Research findings show that growth mindset among those individuals with ADHD helps them to self-regulate and cope more effectively. (Burnette, et al,

2020). One of the benefits of fostering a growth mindset in ADHD children is helping them to understand that they do have some control over the way they think, which encourages positive and flexible thinking. Psychologist Alana Yee shares several approaches parents can take to teach their child to have a growth mindset. More information and details about these approaches can be found in the full article which is linked in the Additional Resources at the end of this article.

- Use daily growth mindset conversation starts.
 - “What did you do today that made you think hard?”
 - “What challenge or problem have you worked on today”
 - “What is something new you worked on today?”
 - “Was there anything that make you feel stuck today? ...Great! What other ways could there be to solve this?”
 - “Can you think of a mistake you made today?”...Great! How can you use this mistake to do better next time?”
 - “Can you think of anything today that was easy for you? How can you make this more challenging?”
 - “What is something you would like to become better at? Who can you ask to help you with this?”
- Share information about the brain. Encourage child to learn about the parts of the brain, how feelings are expressed, and how new information is processed. Reinforce that their brain can learn new skills and improve old ones.
- Focus on the process of goal setting rather than on the goals themselves.
- Make space for failure. Address the set-back and the skills they are lacking head on and talk to your child about the next steps for learning. Problem solve with them rather than dictate what they should do.
- Anticipate explosive behavior and use it to their advantage. Learning about a growth mindset helps a child

in the moment, during explosive behavior, and helps to decrease it in the long run. When you notice your child beginning to escalate, remind them in a calm and reassuring voice of what they have been learning about growth mindset. Once they have calmed down completely, review what worked and talk about how to implement this type of thinking again in the future.

- Share stories of other people's success. Sharing real-life examples of people who have overcome negative mindsets and find success through growth mindset are not only encouraging but illustrative to a child struggling to understand how to adjust negative thinking patterns. (Yee, 2018)

Additional Resources:

Being Strength-Minded: An Introduction to Growth Mindset

Developing a Growth Mindset with Carol Dweck

Growth Mindset for Children with ADHD, Anxiety, Autism, and Other Challenges

Growth Mindset for Younger Students

Growth Mindset

What Should I Do When my Child says "I'm Dumb"?

5 Powerful Ways to Teach Growth Mindset to Children with Special Needs

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By Christina Pay, Extension Assistant Professor

What are Some Fun, New Ideas for Date Night?



When you hear, “date night,” what do you picture? Getting a great babysitter to watch the kids and heading out for dinner

and a movie? Or maybe, “who has time for date night?” is what flashes through your mind. Whether it’s been years since your last date night or you’re looking for ways to shake up your routine, we’ve got a few ideas for you.

1. Talk To Each Other

With busy days, we may not realize that time to talk with our partner has slipped away. Just the act of communicating about intimate and vulnerable topics with another person can strengthen our connections (Aron et al, 1997). Here are some ideas for how to set time aside for talking with examples linked:

- Ask and answer the 10 Relationship Checkup Questions or the 36 Questions to Build Intimacy
- Use a Couple’s Journal to guide your conversation in new ways
- Do some MadLibs
- Use the Card Deck Gottman app to help you explore what is most important to you both

2. Play Together

Play promotes greater closeness and positive feelings between people which has been associated with better couple bonding, communication, and ability to resolve conflicts (Aune & Wong, 2002; Vanderbleek et al, 2011). What that play looks like is entirely up to you. Play should be lighthearted and something that you both find fun, funny, or entertaining (Aune & Wong, 2002). Here are a few ideas and links to get you started:

- Sign up for a Murder Mystery kit or similar kits that you can do together
- Go for a hike on a local trail, get outdoors together
- Play a game

3. Do Something Totally New

It's easy to get stuck in a comfortable pattern. However, boredom can be harmful to our relationships and "lack of novelty" or not having enough new experiences with your partner can lead to boredom (Ursu & Turliuc, 2019). Finding something that pushes you out of your comfort zone a little or allows you and your partner to have a new experience together might be just what you need:

- Take a class (online or in person) and learn something new together
- Find something happening in Utah that you've never heard of and try it out
- Go to an amusement park or arcade without the kids

The most important factor in any date night is the people involved. Making the effort to spend time together regularly and connecting in ways that you both find enjoyable is the most important goal. These few ideas can get you started on new adventures, but don't be afraid to find more and create your own date nights, too!

Additional Resources

Date Your Mate Adventure Guides for areas all around Utah

<https://extension.usu.edu/relationships/hiddengems/date-your-mate-adventure-guides>

More Articles and Videos on Improving Couple Relationships

<https://extension.usu.edu/relationships/couple-relationships>

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By Chapel Taylor-Olsen, BA and Ashley Yaughner, Professional Practice Extension Assistant Professor, PhD

Four Tips to Make Summer Safe



Many families are heading outdoors for one last outing before school starts. Whether in the water or hills, on the ballfield or in the backyard, it's essential to keep family members safe from sun, insects, and injuries. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website includes information on family health. A summary of their tips for staying safe is included below. For additional information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/kidsafety/index.html>.

1. Master water safety. Swimming is a great way to cool off and get exercise; however, drowning is the leading cause of death among children ages 1 to 4.

- Supervise children at all times when in or around water.
- Teach kids to swim so they feel comfortable and confident in the water.
- Help prevent water illnesses. Talk to children about not using the pool as a toilet, encourage bathroom breaks, and change toddlers' diapers often.
- Install a four-sided fence around home pools.
- While boating, kayaking, paddle boarding, or other water sports, make sure everyone wears a properly fitted life

jacket.

2. Be sun smart. Even healthy children and adults can overheat or get sunstroke when participating in strenuous activities in hot weather. If someone shows signs of heat exhaustion, move them to a cool location and seek medical help. The CDC website includes a list of signs to watch for.

- Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Schedule outdoor activities in the morning and evening hours.
- Seek shade. UV rays are most harmful midday. If you need to be outdoors, sit under a tree, bring an umbrella, or use a pop-up tent.
- Take cool baths or showers.
- Use sunscreen with at least SPF (sun protection factor) 15 and UVA (ultraviolet A) and UVB (ultraviolet B) protection when outdoors. A few severe sunburns can lead to skin cancer in the years ahead.
- Wear a hat and sunglasses to protect your scalp and eyes.

3. Protect against ticks and mosquitos. Zika, West Nile Virus, and Lyme disease can be transmitted by insects.

- Use an effective insect repellent. Products containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, and some natural oils provide long-lasting protection. Acaricides (a pesticide) can reduce ticks, but shouldn't be relied on for complete protection.
- Check yourself and your children for ticks after being outdoors, especially if you have been camping or hiking. If you find a tick, instructions for effectively removing it are available on the CDC website.

4. Prevent injuries. Falls at home and on the playground are common causes of injuries and trips to the emergency room.

- Make sure playgrounds are well-maintained and have soft landing areas.
- Wear appropriate protective gear when participating in sports.
- Teach family members basic first aid.
- Teach family members about potential fire hazards and what to do, whether camping or grilling in the backyard.

Enjoy the rest of summer, and stay safe out there!

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Raising a Confident Child



A confident child is one who has a positive self-image, speaks positively about themselves, knows that they are loved unconditionally, can do things for themselves, and, have all the tools they need to believe they can do hard things (UPMC, 2022). With that definition in mind, building confidence in young children may seem like a daunting task. Where do you, as a parent, begin? Parents often wish for a parenting manual

that tells them what to do. However, you can help your child build confidence by understanding some basic principles and applying some helpful practices.

Focus on Identifying and Building Strengths

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), children build confidence through watching, experiencing, and reacting to the environment around them. Play, interaction with peers, failure, success, and parent involvement are all instrumental factors that influence how a child learns to be confident as they begin to explore their place in the world (Alvord, et al., 2020).

What does it look like to have a confident child? Children who are confident are not necessarily loud, extroverted, or even voluntary public speakers. Confidence in children can grow when parents help identify and build children's strengths, nurture them with compassion, and support them in activities they enjoy. Dr. Carol Dweck, in her book, "Mindset", encourages praising the process, not the person. That is, praise the effort and work of the child instead of telling them they are a good girl or good boy. Avoid placing labels but acknowledge their efforts. Praising the process reinforces children's efforts, dedication, and perseverance, which is directly linked to confidence.

Model Resilience

Teaching your child to become resilient will increase their confidence. Resilient children learn to push through adversity and keep moving forward. Researchers have learned that "the ability of parents to support and promote resilience positively influences children's individual resources and positive adjustment. Children that live with parents who can

be models of resilience promoting behavioral, emotional, and cognitive processes can also positively adapt in the face of stressful situations” (Wigley, et al 2021). Children learn to respond to their environment by watching how their parents respond. If a parent reacts to challenges with frustration, anger, or fear, a child may learn that this is the response they should also have when they come across challenges. Instead, parents can show their child that challenges might be hard, but by moving forward and doing the best they can challenges can be overcome.

Foster a Growth Mindset

Confident children often develop a growth mindset. This means that they purposely challenge themselves to do new things and develop new skills. Helping them to understand that when they make mistakes, they can learn from them. This takes the focus off failure and provides opportunities for growth. Children can learn to view challenges as opportunities. They will understand that through hard work and effort they can gain new skills and abilities. Children with a growth mindset feel pride in their accomplishments even if they have not won. They take responsibility for mistakes and successes, and most importantly feel respected by the adults in their life (Cunningham, 2022).

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By Tiffany Sanderson, Intern, & Christina Pay, Extension Assistant Professor

6 Simple Ways to Strengthen Your Relationship



School is almost back in session, you're running your kids around for activities, you're trying to make time for yourself, and the list of to-dos goes on and on. Having children is great, but about 67% of new parents experience a drop in marital satisfaction after a new birth of a child (Shellenbarger, 2005). So, with so many things going on, what can you do to nourish your relationship with your spouse?

Seeking to connect is incredibly beneficial but it can be daunting to try and find time to do so. However, creating moments of connection does not have to be a huge part of your to-do list and can be done through very simple means.

Here are 6 simple ways to start strengthening your relationship:

1. Set aside time together.

Spending time together is important in building any connection. As your family grows, the time you can spend with your partner seems to decrease. You can make this priority by setting aside 20 minutes each day just for the two of you, no distractions. You may want to schedule a weekly date night so you can leave the house and spend one-on-one time together. Creating moments just for the two of you can make such a world of difference (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2022).

2. Make ordinary things feel more special.

You can make ordinary things special by using them as a vessel to help you spend time together. Maybe you can weed the garden together or you can help your partner work on the car (Harris et al., 2016).

3. Find a hobby or interest that you both can get on board with.

Planning time to invest in a hobby together can help you find another avenue through which you can spend time together alone (Tenginkai et al., 2017).

4. Remind yourself that no family or relationship is perfect.

Every person you know has gone through some sort of stressor in their personal and family lives. It's important to remember you aren't the only one who may struggle (Tenginkai et al., 2017).

5. Take time to remember and talk about special moments in your relationship.

Take time to reminisce on all the good memories you have. Share those memories with your partner (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2022).

6. Be kind to each other and express love for each other in front of your children.

Expressing love can be as simple as complimenting the breakfast your partner made. Doing so in front of your children helps them see how others should be treated. It also helps your partner feel appreciated (Harris et al., 2016).

Try taking a few minutes out of each day to work on a few of these simple methods. Be patient with yourself and your partner and look for results over time.

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Opioid Facts for Parents



According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, opioids are the most commonly misused drugs by Americans over age 14. Opioids can be natural, such as heroin; semi-synthetic, such as oxycodone; and synthetic, such as fentanyl. Opiates, including morphine, heroin, and codeine, are opioids from natural plants.

Opioids bind to receptors in the brain that help relax the body and dampen pain signals. In addition to lessening pain, opioids can make a person feel relaxed, euphoric, and “high.” However, they can also cause dizziness, constipation, nausea, and slowed breathing. When opioid levels are too high, breathing can slow to the point that an overdose occurs. In 2019, 12 people in Utah died every week from an opioid overdose.

Consider these commonly asked questions parents have regarding opioids.

Q. What are street names for opioids?

A. Several street names include happy pills, OC, oxy, oxycotton, percs, vikes, and fentanyl (a synthetic opioid 50–100 times more potent than morphine).

Q. Why do teens misuse opioids?

A. Teens misuse opioids for various reasons, some of which they may not even realize.

Reasons can include: a negative coping strategy (self-medicating), an escape from problems to avoid facing them, pressure to fit in, lack of confidence or self-worth, lack of correct information, knowledge regarding consequences, and an act of rebellion.

Q. Should I allow my doctor to prescribe opioids for my child?

A. Opioids can be safely prescribed for youth under 18 for surgery or significant injuries. However, it is important to ask the prescribing physician about risks and possible alternatives such as heating pads, ice packs, or over-the-counter pain medications.

Don't be afraid to ask questions to help determine if opioids are necessary for your child. Some may include: 1) Do most patients experience low, moderate, or severe pain after the procedure?

2) What are non-opioid methods that can treat pain after the procedure? 3) If we have unused opioid medication, where can we safely dispose of it?

Q. How can I be prepared in case there is an emergency?

A. Overdoses are the number one injury cause of death in Utah, so it's important to

have a plan in place. Include the Utah Poison Control number (800-222-1222) on all family members' cell phones. If anyone in your household is taking prescription opioids or using illicit opioids such as heroin, make sure to have naloxone (Narcan®) in your home. Naloxone can safely reverse an opioid overdose short-term so a patient can access emergency

services. It is available from your pharmacy, physician, or health department.

Q. How can I prevent opioid misuse in my family?

A. According to youth.gov, there are two key factors surrounding opioid dependency: risk factors and protective factors. A risk factor is a biological, psychological, family, or community characteristic that can bring about negative outcomes. Protective factors are those things that can reduce the negative impact of a risk factor.

Building strong family connections is a key protective factor. Let your children know you value their safety. Provide tools to help them make healthy decisions, including meditating, establishing boundaries, and asking for support. Set aside time when your child has your full attention and can feel comfortable discussing problems. Be involved in your child's life, and help him or her feel a connection with you.

Though opioid misuse is a concerning topic, the positive news is that teenagers in Utah are 28.16% less likely than the average American teen to have used drugs in the last month.

For citations and links, [click here](#) and [here](#).

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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.

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By David Schramm, Extension Associate Professor

Five Tips for Using Grocery Store and Fuel Apps to Combat Inflation



Inflation has increased 8.6% since May 2021, according to data released this month from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. An average family of four is spending about \$700 more per month on the same things they purchased a year ago. Inflation is most noticeable at the gas pump and grocery store. While price increases affect each family differently, most consumers are feeling the pinch and changing the way they spend to

accommodate surging costs.

One way to tackle increased food and gas prices is to take advantage of grocery shopping apps and fuel rewards programs. Consider these tips.

1. Stay within budget. Download grocery store apps on your smartphone to plan shopping trips or place a pick-up or delivery order. The apps can help monitor grocery bill totals and help you stick to your spending limit. In addition, they can help you avoid adding more than you need to your grocery cart since you don't see the enticing items on aisles or end caps. These items are usually the culprits for pushing shoppers over their spending limit.

2. Use all coupons for stackable savings. Many grocery store apps include in-app coupons or specials where coupons are loaded onto your account, saving you money on often-purchased items. These savings are in addition to manufacturer deals and promotions. The key is adding these coupons or savings to your account before checking out. Shoppers can often use digital and traditional paper coupons, so remember to use both if they are available.

3. Earn points for gift cards and other perks. Some shopping apps provide opportunities to accrue points that can be cashed in for gift cards to grocery stores, restaurants, or even PayPal. Apps such as Ibotta, Shopkick, and Fetch help shoppers earn points by adding coupons or promotions before shopping. Many can be used in addition to paper or digital coupons from grocery store apps. These apps allow shoppers to use their phone camera to scan items while in a store looking for promotions or bonus points and can also provide paper receipts after a shopping trip. Over time, shoppers can redeem these points for gift cards or PayPal credit, helping offset spending in other budget categories. An average user could earn \$10-\$20 a month or more, and frequent users could earn up to \$100 per month.

4. Use the app consistently. Grocery and shopping apps work best when used consistently. Choose an easy-to-navigate app you can remember to use. Also, choose one that will transfer points to gift cards or credits that align with your spending habits.

5. Join a fuel rewards program. Fuel rewards programs connected to grocery or warehouse stores provide one of the best ways to reduce spending at the pump, aside from carpooling or reduced driving. Join a fuel rewards program for a gas station that is convenient for you. When comparing fuel rewards debit or credit cards, be sure to read the terms of use carefully and pay off the card in full each month.

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Co-Parenting During the Summer: Tips for a Successful Summer



With the arrival of summer, stepfamilies may be gearing up for visits from stepchildren. Often children living with one parent during the school year will spend time with their other parent for extended periods of time throughout the summer months. Extra complications may arise within the stepfamily due to changes in routines and schedules, but by incorporating a few strategies, summer transitions can run smoothly for all family members (Bonnell & Papernow, 2019).

1. Provide structure and routine for children

During the school year, children have routines and scheduled activities, so by making a summer schedule, including planned summer camps and events, children will have some consistency between both households. The schedule should also include pick-up and drop-off times and locations, so all parents are prepared. Scheduled pick-up and drop-off times also provide clarity for children about where they will be and when (Papernow, 2013). Communicating the summer plan with the other parent helps to keep them in the loop and provides important information about their children. Finally, it is helpful to give the children a copy of the calendar, whether it's a hard copy or electronic copy. This will provide consistency and predictability for children as they transition between

households.

2. Be consistent about rules and expectations at both houses

Parenting expectations and family rules are common areas of disagreements that can cause stress and tension among parents. Although children do not need both households to have the exact same set of rules, agreements on basics such as bedtimes, screen time, and curfews create consistency for children (Bonnell & Papernow, 2019). Keeping expectations similar at both houses not only instills good habits in children, but it also helps with the transition between households.

3. Create a living space for the children

Every child needs a space that they can call their own, especially if they are spending an extended amount of time in a different home. Creating a personal space for children, including a bed, closet, dresser, etc., helps them to deal with the transitions between households.

4. Create memories with your children

Co-parenting during the summer months can be stressful, but it provides opportunities for children to strengthen their relationship and create memories with their non-residential parent. Spending quality time with both parents provides reassurance for children and helps to strengthen and reinforce family customs and traditions (Ahrons, 2004).

The summer months often provide opportunities for children to

visit their non-residential parent, and the transitions between households can be complicated. By focusing on co-parenting strategies, the summer experiences can also serve as an opportunity to make life-long memories for all family members.

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By Shannon Cromwell, Extension Associate Professor

Working Through Religious Differences in Marriage



Have you ever had a conversation with someone that you love and disagreed with them? These conversations can be very uncomfortable, especially about firmly held beliefs. Differences in religious beliefs or spirituality can be a source of pain and discontent if not addressed in a respectful and accepting manner.

According to the Pew Research Center, the religious landscape of the U.S continues to change at a rapid rate. With adults who identify as non-affiliated, atheist, or agnostic increasing yearly, changes and differences in religiosity and spirituality have the potential to negatively impact intimate relationships. This is further complicated because religiosity and spirituality affect more than Sunday worship, such as decisions on parenting, finances, and friendships. Even couples who practice the same religion may not agree on religious or spiritual practices. For example, a couple who belong to the same church may disagree on how often to attend service or engage in church activities. It is important for couples to recognize the pitfalls and potential for hurt when either engaging in a mixed faith relationship or when one partner's beliefs change and are no longer in alignment with their spouse's beliefs.

There are many mixed faith marriages and relationships that are able to thrive despite having significantly different beliefs. Here are some tips from relationship expert Dr. John Gottman to help you navigate religious differences (or any type of conflict) in intimate relationships.

1. Explore your own relationship with your faith.

There is a difference between identifying with a religion or spiritual practice and how you engage in that faith. Explore your religious or spiritual identity and what that means to you. It is necessary to understand your own faith identity to be able to navigate the differences with your partner. Here are some questions that Gottman recommends to help you with this process of exploration

- Did you grow up in a religious or spiritual household? If so, what was practiced? What was your experience like?
- What brings you peace? What helps you get through tough times?
- What aspects of your religious or spiritual beliefs do you hold onto tightly?
- Which ones are you more flexible with?

2. Acknowledge the difference and what they will mean for your life together.

Recognizing the differences and how they may affect your life together is an important step. Avoidance is not a sustainable option, identify the ways that may affect you so you can make a plan together for how to deal with these differences as a couple.

According to Dr. Gottman, 69% of problems in relationships are perpetual, meaning they are not solvable. While that number sounds high it is reassuring to know that this is normal and includes happily functioning couples. Instead of trying to change the other person's mind/belief, approach these conversations with curiosity and interest, try to understand your partner's point and realize that this is an opportunity to increase your love for them.

The way that you start a conversation can predict how the rest of the conversation will go or be perceived by your partner. Be intentional in your tone of voice and the words you use to initiate a conversation. Using soft start up techniques such as 'I messages' and positive statements to start conversations allows for your partner to better receive and understand what you are saying.

3. Share stories

Sharing stories is a great way for you and your partner to get to know each other and this aspect of who you are. Stories can share your cultural and religious experiences with them in a

way that is not threatening and invites understanding.

4. Participate before negotiating.

It's important to show genuine interest and curiosity in your partners beliefs and practices. Go with them to their religious events services and as they observe rituals. This is not a promise to leave your own beliefs and convert, this is a powerful way to communicate that you value them and are embracing who they are.

5. Make Repairs.

We will inevitably mess up. Don't beat yourself up over mistakes, apologize and move forward. Well used humor (not sarcasm) can help ease these tense moments. The main goal with a repair attempt is to determine what went wrong (not blame our partner) and resume being on the same team to address an issue together instead of treating each other as the issue that needs to be fixed.

6. Therapy is a helpful support.

Talking about faith is deeply personal, it can be hard despite our best efforts. Some differences might seem impossible to figure out. Seeking the help of a professional can provide relief. Find a therapist who specializes in helping interfaith couples.

It is unlikely that you will change someone else's views, feelings, or beliefs on the topic of religion or spirituality, but you can practice respecting each other's beliefs and purposely refrain from criticizing or attempting to sway them. Dr. Gottman maintains that disagreements provide an opportunity for increased intimacy and connection, and religious differences provide an opportunity for increased respect, understanding, and love.

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