

Skat, jeg er hjemme: Styrk dit ægteskab ti minutter ad gangen



Forskningsbaseret målsætning

Styrk dit ægteskabsforhold ved at gøre de første ti minutter af jeres interaktioner sammen til en positiv oplevelse. Lær hvordan du kan føre en stress reducerende samtale, følelsesmæssigt støtte hinanden og berolige dig selv og partner i positive kommunikationsmønstre.

Ansøgning/aktivitet

Gør de første ti minutter sammen til en positiv oplevelse. Tag ikke problemer, kritik, klager op i denne tid.

Introduktion

Doug og Amy har været gift i seks år og har to børn sammen på fire og 18 måneder. Torsdag aften omkring kl. 17.25 finder vi følgende scenarie udspillet i denne husstand.

Amy jagter efter sin energiske fire-årige, Daniel, der med sin karakteristiske ubekymrede attitude har trukket hvert eneste stykke nyligt foldede vasketøj op af kurven og strøet rundt i stuen. I mellemtiden er et-årige Adam sulten og græder, hvilket øger støjnen og tumulten i hjemmet. Amy føler sig slidt, især i dag, og frustreret over, at de planer, hun havde til middag, ikke vil være klar, når Doug når hjem om et par minutter. Doug har arbejdet så hårdt på det seneste, og hun ønskede, at huset skulle være i orden, og en dejlig middag klar til ham, da han trådte ind af døren.

Doug er en hårdarbejdende og ved, at hans vejleder sætter pris på ham. Han mærker dog yderligere stress fra et teamprojekt, han leder. I dag fandt han ud af, at en kritisk del af det projekt, han troede, Joe lavede, ikke var blevet startet, og hans vejleder var vred på Doug. Da han drejer om hjørnet mod hjemmet, planlægger han spændt, hvad han skal gøre næste dag for at få projektet tilbage til tidsplanen. Han håber, når han kommer hjem, at han kan slappe af med Amy og børnene, nyde en dejlig middag og lidt familietid og så starte frisk den følgende dag.

Overvej nu dine egne kommende-hjem-begivenheder. Hvilke følelser og tanker oplever du, når du forbereder dig på at se din ægtefælle? Er de positive, negative eller blandede? Føler du ro, ekstra stress eller begejstring? Mange par har lignende oplevelser som Doug og Amy, nogle gange flere gange om ugen. Dette kan forekomme, når den ene eller begge ægtefæller kommer hjem fra arbejde, skole eller andre aktiviteter, eller endda når de står op om morgenens. Vi er ofte ikke klar over, at disse første ti minutters interaktion er en mulighed for at sætte scenen for resten af den tid, vi tilbringer sammen den dag.

Følgende er grunde til, hvorfor disse første ti minutter er afgørende for at udvikle et sundere, stærkere ægtefælleforhold samt specifikke ideer til at gøre denne tid sammen til en positiv oplevelse.

Støtte i stressede tider

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øjeblikke og/eller udfordringer, du har oplevet. For eksempel kan det reducere Dougs arbejdsrelaterede stress at tale med Amy om hans udfordringer med Joe og hans vejleder. Han kan også vælge at fortælle den sjove historie om den spøg, Steve og Linda spillede på Sam på arbejdet. Amy, som den lyttende ægtefælle, behøver kun at være opmærksom og reagere som en ven, der er på deres ægtefælles side (Gottman & Silver, 1999). I Amys tilfælde, selvom hun er frustreret over, at hendes dag ikke er gået som planlagt, kan hun fortælle Doug, hvor sjovt det var at se Daniel tage sin fars skjorter på (hver enkelt!) og løbe rundt. Det er dog vigtigt for Amy ikke at give Doug skylden for den stress, hun oplever. Dette vil skabe yderligere spændinger for begge ægtefæller. Selvom hun er frustreret over, at hendes dag ikke er gået som planlagt, kan hun fortælle Doug, hvor sjovt det var at se Daniel tage sin fars skjorter på (hver enkelt!) og løbe rundt. Det er dog vigtigt for Amy ikke at give Doug skylden for den stress, hun oplever. Dette vil skabe yderligere spændinger for begge ægtefæller. Selvom hun er frustreret over, at se Daniel tage sin fars skjorter på (hver enkelt!) og løbe rundt. Det er dog vigtigt for Amy ikke at give Doug skylden for den stress, hun oplever. Dette vil skabe yderligere spændinger for begge ægtefæller.

Additionally, activities such as helping a spouse finish the dishes, refold the laundry, or giving a quick back rub may also promote positive feelings. The specific activities depend on what each spouse enjoys or their needs at the time. This will help each partner unwind and de-escalate from the pressures of the day, making stress more manageable and allowing continued interactions that are less influenced by the earlier stressors.

Positive Communication Fosters Positive Emotions

By spending more time in positive communication patterns, you can increase the positive emotions you feel toward your spouse. When individuals anticipate feeling positive emotions around their partner they are more likely to look forward to being together; but in contrast, unfavorable anticipation of being together can actually create negative emotions and diminish or eliminate the desire to be together (Gottman & Silver, 1999). When couples create patterns of positive hellos and healthy initial interactions, positive feelings of friendship and love grow. Spouses look forward to being together as allies and sources of strength in the struggles of life.

Friendship, healthy partnerships, and alliances are built on trust. As spouses develop habits of turning towards each other for stress reduction, relationships of trust will be strengthened. This provides a strong foundation for creating healthier and stronger marriages (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

As you consider your own situation, you may wonder how you can best utilize these ten important minutes. The following are suggestions:

1. Prepare yourself mentally. When anticipating seeing your spouse after an absence, mentally prepare to give your spouse and family the best of yourself. There are likely problems and challenges that need to be discussed, but the problems and challenges will still be there later. During the first ten minutes, focus on having a positive initial greeting (i.e., starting off on the right foot) with your spouse. Later as a team, you will be able to address any problems and challenges more constructively because the negative emotions of the day will be decreased and the positive emotions of being together will be increased. Think of specific things you can say and/or do that will help make those first minutes a positive experience.
2. Understand the power in a smile (Gladstone & Parker, 2002). Smiling in and of itself can have a powerful impact on others' reactions (Mackey, 1976) and their desires to connect with you (Guéguen, 2008). Even though the house may be a mess, you are exhausted from running after the children, and dinner isn't ready yet, prepare to give a glowing smile to your partner. Your spouse will be better able to put aside his or her own stresses and focus on a positive connection with you. And you just might find that you feel better and can see the humor in the situation if you smile (even when you don't exactly feel like it)!
3. Focus on the needs of your spouse first. Genuine interest in your spouse's daily stresses will foster greater love and emotional connection (Gottman & Silver, 1999). Attempt to put aside your own issues for the moment and focus on reconnecting with your spouse, asking about his or her day, listening and responding positively. If both partners willingly commit to do this for their spouse, everyone will end up a winner!
4. Be prepared to help your spouse. Inevitably there will be times when your spouse is not prepared to optimistically greet you because of emotions associated with their specific life challenges. It can be easy to get angry, pull away, or become critical, but these are actually the best times to build trust and strengthen your relationship. You can do this by helping your spouse calm the overwhelming emotions (Gottman & Silver, 1999). Although you cannot fix all the struggles or change the negative emotions your partner may be experiencing (nor would your spouse probably want you to), you can provide key support by listening, empathizing and letting your spouse know you are on their side (Gottman & Silver). The daily struggles of life are rarely pleasant, but they can provide opportunities to develop patterns of turning towards each other, supporting each other (Voydanoff, 2005), and building trust and reliance in the relationship.

Conclusion

When Doug walks through the door, Amy calls, "Hello dear" and comes around the corner with a smile. Doug responds with a smile, tousles Daniel's hair (who is still wearing Daddy's shirts), picks up Adam and says, "It was a little frustrating. It sure looks like you've been having some fun here. How can I help, honey?" Amy gives him a hug and says, "Sounds like we need to chat about your day first," and pulls him to the couch to sit and chat. After briefly explaining about his day, Doug says, "What can I do to help you?" Amy asks him to begin refolding laundry while she gets dinner on the table.

Creating a positive interaction in the first ten minutes of being together is not the only answer for creating healthier and stronger marriages, but it can have an important influence. As patterns and habits are created to make the first ten minutes of being together a positive experience, couples can look forward to being together, better support and trust each other through times of stress, and create a stronger, healthier marriage.

It makes good sense to get input from each other on what you feel builds an emotional connection and reduces stress (Gottman & Silver, 1999) during the first ten minutes. Each spouse should individually make a list of the activities you currently do (or have done) together that you enjoy. These can range from a simple hug or kiss to helping to make dinner. Next, add to the list activities you wish you would do during the first ten minutes, or wish was a more emotionally connecting activity. Finally, choose three that you most wish your partner would do with you and discuss them together – but not during the first ten minutes! Sometimes this activity can generate conflict. Remember the purpose of this exercise is to express to your partner the fact that you love and appreciate him or her, so communicate these ideas with this in mind. Together, you can generate a list of positive ideas to help make the first ten-minutes with your spouse a wonderful experience.

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