

Three Tools to Help Relationships: Time, Talk, and Touch

Time

Intentional time apart

- Give yourselves permission for self-care and time alone
- Taking care of the relationship is only possible when you first take care of yourself
- To take this time apart you will need to support each other and help ensure it happens
- Have a hobby or ritual that helps you create that space—doing yard work, listening to music, cooking, exercising by yourself, shower/bath time being uninterrupted

Intentional time together

- Create some boundaries around your work (i.e., when you stop checking email or being available for calls)
- Plan some time when you will each be off devices and work for at least 20 minutes each day
- Plan something special at least once each week—virtual date night with another couple where you watch a movie or play games together; order from a favorite restaurant to recreate that a date night at home

Talk

Share appreciations every day—be able to name at least one thing you have noticed, admired, or appreciate about your partner

- Focusing on the good helps you both-- it lowers stress and strengthens connections and fills our emotional bank accounts
- For every negative interaction (criticism, negative body language, insults or slights) we need 5 positive interactions (like appreciations) to counter that

Practice safe communication to help avoid blow-ups

- Make an appointment—"I'd like to talk about something. Is now a good time?"
- Be patient and be willing to wait until your partner is ready for a difficult conversation.
- Approach a difficult conversation in a calm way.
- Suspend your need to be right. Present your perspective and feelings, but listen to theirs too.
- You can either be right or be in a relationship.
- Keep it clean. Remove negativity, shame, blame, and criticism. These are toxins.

Touch

- Turn towards each other. If you catch your partner's eye, smile. If you see your partner smiling at you, return that.
- Greet your partner twice a day with a strong hug and no words. This allows your regulation systems to link up. It reduces stress hormones and boosts "feel good" hormones.
- Focus on pleasure. Pleasure is a powerful antidote to fear and stress. It gets us out of our heads and grounds us in ourselves and the present moment.
- Focus on maintaining physical touch to promote closeness and connection.