



Relationships

The Adlerian Team

Make an investment in your couple relationship – the returns are priceless

By Susan Prossor

At this time of the year we are all thinking about taxes and making RRSP investments to maximize our finances and prepare for a healthy retirement. If I could, I would create an annual process of assessing our couple-relationship portfolios so that we would have an opportunity to measure our success and seek advice on investing in the present and future wealth afforded by a healthy relationship.

The fundamental psychological need of human beings throughout the lifespan is to be securely connected to significant others. The latest brain research has discovered that secure human connections are necessary for healthy growth and development of the brain. Men and women in satisfying relationships have healthier immune systems and heal better following illness or injury. Research also shows that one of the most potent parenting tools is a healthy relationship between parents. The evidence is mounting and it is clear that our attention needs to turn from what we might believe to be daily urgent demands to investing in creating a loving, sustaining relationship with our partner. This means a relationship that is fed and nurtured and treated as a high priority in life.

Let me guess what you might be thinking: “that is all well and good but there is no time – I would love to have more time with my spouse but I couldn’t possibly fit it in – well, I could fit it in but it would feel like one more thing that I have to do – anyway, when we get together we end up talking about all the problems – besides we like to spend our free time with the children...”

What is it that makes us think that the relationship with our significant other is a given? Why do we think that nurturing children is a daily commitment but that our partner can wait? I want to propose to you that if you put a little more energy into your couple relationship and a little less into so many other “urgent” matters, then a new balance would be achieved that may give you and your family greater returns now and in the future.

This is how it can work:

- Take a look at your children’s schedules. Many children are over-programmed and are not only too busy to play and relax, but keep their parents running and driving and waiting for them. Remember, children need lots of unstructured time for healthy growth and development.
- Take a look at how much you are doing for your children and what your children could be doing for themselves. Letting your children manage parts of their lives frees up a little time for you, builds life skills that they need and gives them a sense of competence.



- If your life is busy much of the time, take a look at the impact the frantic pace has on your children and family lifestyle. What can you eliminate and what would be the benefits of doing so?
- Take a look at how often your children see you and your partner making special time for each other and enjoying each other. This gives your children a sense of security and it also provides an excellent model for their future relationships,
 - Treat couple time as sacred and non-negotiable. Time with our significant other needs to be at the top of the list. If we don’t feed our relationships they cannot thrive.
 - Nurturing a strong bond helps you, your partner and your children to feel a sense of confidence that the ups and downs of life are manageable. When a couple is thriving, the relationship becomes more of a haven rather than another demand. You come together to support each other, believe in each other and problem solve together, thus creating a sense of harmony that everyone benefits from.

Take time to:

- Treat each other with great care, kindness and respect.
- Greet each other each morning and say goodnight each evening in a meaningful way.
- Pay attention to each other’s concerns and interests.
- Touch each other often.
- Go on regular dates.
- Laugh together.
- Make love.
- Understand each other even when you cannot agree.
- Buy little gifts or create little surprises.
- Send each other emails or love notes.
- Phone each other during the work day.
- Give to the other what is hard to give.

Alfred Adler put it very simply when he outlined what we need to know about ourselves in a healthy relationship, and that is “the feeling that we are worthwhile, that we cannot be replaced, that our partner needs us, that we are acting well and that we are a fellow human and a true friend.” Talk to your partner today and find out what each of you can do differently to create this level of security in your relationship. It will pay priceless dividends.

Susan offers counselling to individuals, families, and couples, and conducts workshops and courses on parenting, relationship issues, self esteem and communication at the Adlerian Counselling and Consulting Group, Inc. The holistic approach of the Centre is congruent with Susan’s approach to working with people.