



Fighting for love

Sth Qld Pastors
Meetings, 2015



And this is my prayer: that your love
may abound more and more in
knowledge and depth of insight, so that
you may be able to discern what is best
. . . to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9-11 NIV

SOLID ADVICE ON MARRIAGE FROM KIDS!



What is the Proper Age to Get Married?

Eighty-four, because at that age, you don't have to work anymore, and you can spend all your time loving each other in your bedroom."

Carolyn, age 8



What is the Proper Age to
Get Married?

"Once I'm done with kindergarten,
I'm going to find me a wife."



Bert, age 5

Is it Better to be Single or Married?

"It gives me a headache to think about that stuff. I'm just a kid. I don't need that kind of trouble."

Will, age 7



How important are good

“If you want to be loved by somebody who isn't already in your family, it doesn't hurt to be beautiful.”

Jeanne, age 8



How important are good looks in love?

"It isn't always just how you look. Look at me, I'm handsome like anything and I haven't got anybody to marry me yet."



Gary, age 7

Confidential opinions about love:

"I'm not rushing into being in love. I'm finding fourth grade hard enough."

Regina, age 10



Confidential opinions about love:

"Love will find you, even if you are trying to hide from it. I have been trying to hide from it since I was five, but the girls keep finding me."

Bobby, age 7



How do you make love endure?:

“Tell your wife that she looks pretty
even if she looks like a truck.”

Ricky, age 10





BUILDING A SAFE-HAVEN MARRIAGE

Three Building Blocks:



1. TRUS



a. Truthfulness Trust

Your partner can be relied on to always tell the truth.

TRUST



b. Judgement Trust

Your spouse can be relied upon to make good judgement calls.

TRUST



c. Reliability Trust

Your spouse will be dependable, honest and truthful. He/she will be respectful, responsible and reliable.

TRUST



d. Heart Trust

You know that no matter what, your spouse will always value you and care for you. (This is the deepest level of trust the human heart can give or receive).

2. EMOTIONAL AVAILABILITY



In healthy marriages, spouses are not only physically available, but they make their hearts available to each other as well.

Research shows that marital satisfaction is highly correlated with whether a person perceives a spouse to be emotionally or psychologically available to them.



In 1939, women ranked love fifth as a factor in choosing a mate. By the 1990s, it topped the list for both women *and* men. And college students now say that their key expectation from marriage is “emotional security.”

Emotional Intimacy



Emotional intimacy speaks to the very heart of the marital union. While a couple may share creative intimacy, recreational intimacy or spiritual intimacy, it is the emotional connections that especially hold and unite a couple together.



EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

Terms such as ‘becoming one,’ unity, closeness, belonging and emotional connection start to describe ‘intimacy.’

Intimacy is much more than just a physical union - it has to do with all the various ways couples ‘know’ each other (Gen 2).

It is the emotional union that allows a couple to expose their loneliness, open up their hearts, express their fears, and reveal their dreams.

J and J Balswick.





Experience teaches us that we all experience emotions differently - some of us are expressive and very verbal, while others more reserved and quieter. Despite these differences, deep down, we all want the same thing - to have a close, emotionally safe relationship, and to feel loved, respected, and understood.

Sue Johnson



The longing for emotional connection with those nearest to us is *the* emotional priority, overshadowing even the drive for food or sex.

The drama of love is all about this hunger for safe emotional connection, a survival-imperative we experience from the cradle to the grave.

Sue Johnson

3. SENSITIVE RESPONSIVENESS



A sensitive spouse is one who responds in such a way that you feel understood, validated, and cared about. You know you can share what's on your heart, your thoughts, feelings, needs and desires, readily and without fear of criticism, rejection, or disinterest.

When marriages fail, it is not increasing conflict that is the cause. It is decreasing affection and emotional responsiveness.



The lack of emotional responsiveness rather than the level of conflict is the best predictor of how solid a marriage will be five years into it.

The demise of marriages begins with a growing absence of responsive intimate reactions. The conflict comes later.

Sue Johnson, *Hold Me Tight*



“We put everybody else first, our customers and children - we gave everything to them, always assuming we had a strong relationship. We were a good team as we handled all the ups and downs in our lives but we were more like business partners running our family and the restaurant. As I look back now, I can see that our lives had gotten more and more separated. We had settled into a comfortable routine and the intimacy got lost along the way.”

Annemarie

50 Something October/November, 2012. p 23



60% of all divorces occur, not because of fighting all the time, but because of loneliness.

Loneliness leads to a parallel marriage.

John Gottman



In our national survey of long-term marriages, we found three common strands in those marriages that are alive and healthy:

1. The marriage relationship comes before other relationships;
2. Both spouses are committed to growing and changing together;
3. They work at staying close



D and C Arp, 10 Great Dates to Energise Your Marriage, p. 21



Most marriages can survive "better or
worse." The tester is all the years of "exactly the
same."

Robert Brault

Couples marry in hope of having an emotionally connected relationship. All couples fight for this connection.

Husbands and wives so long and thirst for this kind of relationship that they will do anything for one - bitterly argue and fight, even divorce, in hopes of finding one with someone new.

Sharon Morris-May



A desperate need for an emotional response that ends in blaming and a desperate fear of rejection and loss that ends in withdrawal - this is the scaffolding underneath all endless conflicts.

Sue Johnson, *Hold Me Tight*

God has given us a “relationship system.”

It has one objective: to help us stay connected with others.



It is an intricate mechanism that causes us to feel powerful emotions and respond in a particular manner when our connection with others is not optimal.

It keeps us close and connected to our spouse, and very alert when we are not!

If you get into an argument, you can be certain that your relationship system was somehow involved

Your relationship system is a complex alarm system that alerts you when your connections are not safe, comfortable or certain

The relationship system is not only an emotional system, it is a neurobiological system (like your physical pain system)

Your “relationship system” has four functions:

- Helps you keep *close proximity*
- Help you keep a *safe haven*
- Helps you keep a *secure base*
- Provides you with an *alarm system*

These four functions help us form a close relationship, keep the relationship close and connected, and repair the relationship when it’s disconnected

Close Proximity - we turn to our loved one when sad, lonely, hurting, and when we're happy, excited.

When we're close, we feel a sense of peace, security, contentment.

A Safe Haven - we turn to each other for love, safety and care.

Based on:

- ***Trust, love and commitment***
- ***Emotional availability***
- ***Sensitive responsiveness***
- ***Repair of disconnections***

A Secure Base - a solid base from which to venture - we feel loved and supported

Alarm System - the mission of the Alarm System is to maintain a sense of security that our loved one will be a safe haven

We make an assessment: Are you my Safe Haven?

The essential assurances:

- Can I trust that you will be there when I need you?
- Do you love, respect, and care about me?
- Can I trust you to be committed to me and to us?
- Will you be emotionally and physically available?
- Will you respond to me in a caring and considerate manner?

When Your Safe Haven Doesn't Feel So Safe

The Relationship System appraises the encounter, asking:
“Are you my safe haven?”



Are you listening?
Are you there for me?
Do you love and respect
me?
Are you available and
responsive?
Do you understand me?



“NO”



Your Relationship System
sounds the alarm.

- **Situations that Sound the Alarm**

- Tone of voice
- Rolling of the eyes
- Delay in answering
- Frown, or curled-up lip
- Folded arms
- An exhale

These trigger the Relationship Alarm System - “all is not safe”

- **Emotions that arise when the alarm system sounds:**
 - Anger
 - Hurt
 - Rejection
 - Sadness
 - Fear
 - Frustration
 - Loss

- **How do we respond?**

Protest



Sadness and despair



Detachment

The dragons in our lives

The tender places in our hearts left by past hurts, fears, and vulnerabilities

“Experiences we’ve had over the course of our lives create and shape what our vulnerabilities are today.”

“When experiences in your relationships today are similar to the hurtful experiences you had over the course of your life, they trigger the same hurts, fears, and responses.”

Sharon Morris May

“Most often we argue with our spouse about every day events. What happens, though, is that these everyday events often touch our vulnerable places, our soft spots, our fears, and old hurts. And when they do, our dragons rise up, warning us that our haven of safety is not so safe, and our relationship alarm systems sounds off. We are then ready to react in a way that protects and defends our hearts, and attempts to restore our relationship.”

Sharon Morris May

- **Emotions and Your Brain**

In the heat of the moment, emotions, not logic, have more power over your mind, body, thoughts, and reactions

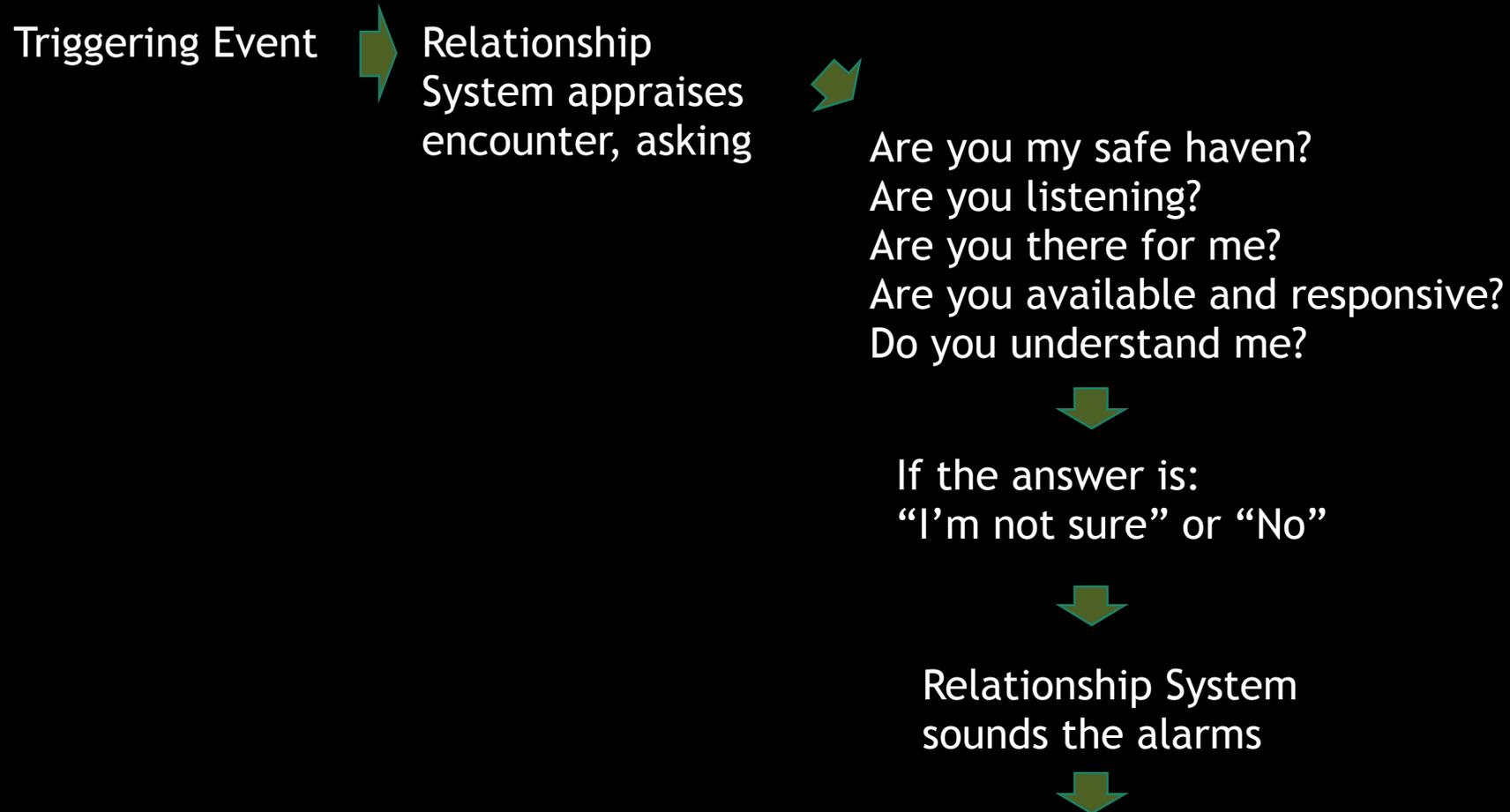
The High Road, The Low Road

Information coming in from our senses travels down two different pathways in our brain.

1. – the traditional, slower, yet surer, “High Road” that leads to our “thinking brain”.
2. – the quick-and-easy “Low Road” that leads to the “emotional brain.”

Your emotional brain responds to a situation twice as quickly as your thinking brain!

When Your Safe Haven Doesn't Feel So Safe



When Your Safe Haven Doesn't Feel So Safe



Dragons are raised



Emotional brain is triggered:
Heart rate goes up
Blood pressure rises
Stress hormones are released
Muscles tense
Become focused on “danger”



Stress/fear Response:
Fight (attack or defend)
Flee (withdraw or shut down)
Freeze (go numb or do nothing)

When Your Safe Haven Doesn't Feel So Safe

Your reaction:

Causes your spouse to
appraise whether you are
a safe haven



You react:

Criticize, blame, defend,
High negativity
Don't turn toward s the
partner
Fail to repair hurts



Emotions arise:

Core primary emotions (high road)
(e.g. sadness, fear, hurt)
Secondary emotions (low road)
(e.g. anger, frustration)



Our Complex Emotions



When safe connection seems lost, partners go into fight-or-flight mode. They blame and get aggressive to get a response, any response, or they close down and try not to care. Both are terrified: they are just dealing with it differently. Trouble is, once they start this blame-distance loop, it confirms all their fears and adds to their sense of isolation.

Most of the blaming in these dialogues is a desperate attachment cry, a *protest against disconnection*. It can only be quieted by a lover moving emotionally close to hold and reassure. Nothing else will do. . . .



If this reconnection does not occur, the struggle goes on. One partner will frantically try to get an emotional response from the other. The other, hearing that he or she has failed at love, will freeze up. Immobility in the face of danger is a wired-in way to deal with a sense of hopelessness.

When Your Safe Haven Doesn't Feel So Safe



The Negative Spin Cycle of your Argument



The Destructive Way Couples Respond

1. Harsh start-up
2. Criticism
3. Demean (contempt)
4. Defensiveness
5. Withdraw, and 'stonewall'

PRINCIPLE 1

ENHANCE YOUR LOVE MAPS

Emotionally intelligent couples are intimately familiar with each other's world. They have a richly detailed "love map" – that part of the brain where you store all the relevant information about your partner's life. They remember the major events in each other's history, and they keep updating their information as the facts and feelings of their spouse's world change. They know each other's goals in life, each other's worries, each other's hopes.

From knowledge springs not only love but the fortitude to weather marital storms. Couples who have detailed love maps of each other's world are far better prepared to cope with stressful events and conflict.

PRINCIPLE 2

NURTURE YOUR FONDNESS
AND ADMIRATION

Fondness and admiration are two of the most critical elements in a rewarding and long-lasting romance. Although happily married couples may feel driven to distraction at times by their partner's personality flaws, they still feel that the person they married is worthy of honour and respect. When this sense is completely missing from a marriage, the relationship cannot be revived.

Having a fundamentally positive view of your spouse and your marriage is a powerful buffer when bad times hit. Couples who have this reserve of good feelings will not have cataclysmic thoughts about separation and divorce each time they have an argument.

PRINCIPLE 3

TURN TOWARDS EACH
OTHER INSTEAD OF AWAY

In marriage people periodically make “bids” for their partner’s attention, affection, humour, or support. People either turn toward one another after these bids or they turn away. Turning toward is the basis of emotional connection, romance, passion, and a good sex life.

Couples who turn toward each other remain emotionally engaged and stay married. Those who don't eventually lose their way. Partners who characteristically turn toward each other are 'putting money in the bank.' They are building up emotional savings that can serve as a cushion when times get rough, when they're faced with a major life stress or conflict. Because they have stored up all this goodwill, they are better able to make allowances for each other when a conflict arises. They can maintain a positive sense of each other and their marriage even during hard times.

The biggest pay-off from this emotional bank account isn't only the cushion it offers when the couple are stressed: turning towards your partner in the little ways is also the key to a long-lasting romance. The secret to reconnecting isn't the candles and by-the-sea holiday, but turning toward each other in little ways every day. A romantic night out really turns up the heat only when a couple has kept the pilot-light burning by staying in touch in the little ways.



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