

# *How to Talk with Your Spouse About Getting Help for Your Relationship*



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*"Wherever you go,  
go with all your heart."*

*-Confucius*





# Sharing From the Heart

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## **You are the guardian of your relationship.**

It's important to speak your heart, even when it's hard. If you shy away from speaking your heart, your partner cannot know what's going on for you (and also, by implication, for the relationship).

Perhaps you've tried and been met with resistance; perhaps you value keeping the peace and are afraid to rock the boat; perhaps you wonder whether you're being too picky and are making a big deal out of nothing...

Even still, if you are feeling ill-at-ease, your relationship is ill-at-ease. If you are feeling off-kilter, your relationship is off-kilter.

Your partner may not get the message the first few times you bring it up. Continue to be assertive, clear, loving, and consistent. It's up to you to stand up for the health of your marriage. Your relationship deserves your continued protection.

Of course, you cannot force your spouse to participate in therapy or relationship programs with you, but you *can* let them know what you see happening in the relationship; you *can* continue to engage with them about building a solid foundation for your future.

As such, instead of making it your goal to convince them to go to therapy with you, consider making it your goal to explore together how you can best acquire education and tools that will help set your relationship up for success.

I am here to help you. You are in the right place!  
Together, we can do this!

In love and light,

*Stephanie*

# Preparation

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You might feel like you've tried everything and are now in a sort of 'numb' phase, yet your partner might still think everything is fine. It is important to get clear about exactly what you're feeling, what you fear might happen if you don't get help, and what you are hoping will happen. Use these journaling prompts to help you get more clarity around how you feel.

*What is happening in your marriage right now that is causing you to want to get help?*

*How are you contributing to those dynamics?*



# Preparation

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*What are you scared of might happen if you don't get help?*

*How is your current situation impacting your family?*

# Preparation

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*What are you longing to say, but afraid to say?*

*What future do you hope to create with your partner?*

# Plan Your Approach

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## ***Focus on teamwork and positivity***

When you come from the mindset that you need help because your relationship is broken, needs fixing, and is not doing well, your partner might feel threatened—like you're blaming them or implying they did something wrong. They also might imagine that if they agree to go to therapy with you, they'll be cornered, ganged up against, or put on the hot seat, risking emotional exposure!

To mitigate those possible reactions, come not from the perspective that your relationship is failing, broken, injured, or struggling, but from the perspective that *you are a team and are to working together to get the tools you need to create the best relationship possible*. You want to reach out to a therapist, coach, or relationship trainer so that they can help both of you learn new skills that will foster connection, stability and intimacy between you.

## ***Highlight the benefits of having a coach***

Use a sports team metaphor and ask your partner about the importance of having a coach for a football team. After hearing their answer, point out the similarities of a relationship coach: they have an outsider's perspective, they help you utilize your strengths and improve the weakness with training and skill building, they can help you plan effective plays together, and they can suggest strategies for you to try.

## ***Invite them to do it with you; do not make it a demand***

Dr. Marshal Rosenberg, the author of Nonviolent Communication, points out that when you phrase something as a demand instead of a request, your partner feels as if they'll be blamed or punished if they don't comply. It will seem as if they only have two options: rebellion or submission, neither of which are healthy.

Instead, let them know that you are excited to work with a teacher who can help you grow in love and intimacy again together so that you can fight less, have more sex, and rekindle the spark you had before. Offer that you could do it yourself, but would love to do it together because it will make your teamwork so much more effective if you train in these skills and strategies together, just like it's helpful to have all players on a sports team train together using the same tactics and methodologies.

# Optimize Your Mindset

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In order to help your partner warm to the idea, try shifting your mindset—  
not only in conversation with them,  
but also in how you think about your relationship  
and your reasons for seeking help!

## ***Your partner is not "the problem"***

You both have actions, inactions, and beliefs that are affecting your dynamics. What have you been doing and saying—or *not* doing and saying—that is contributing to your problematic dynamics? It takes two to tango!

## ***Stay open, curious, and non-judgmental***

You might feel like you've given it everything you have and your partner is just not engaging. This can be so frustrating!! It can also be easy to assume that this means your partner doesn't care. However, this is rarely the case.

There are likely many things going on internally for your partner that you do not yet know about: internal struggles, feelings of shame or incompetence, fear that maybe your relationship is headed for divorce, or prior negative experiences with a therapist they haven't told you about. Be patient and respect where they're coming from, even if you don't understand it.

Share with them the stories you're making up about why they're hesitant and check out whether these are accurate or not!



# Optimize Your Mindset

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## ***You are more similar than different!***

You might feel like you've given it everything you have and your partner is just not engaging. This can be so frustrating, and it can be easy to assume that means your partner doesn't care. However, this is rarely the case.

Notice all the ways you're similar: You both want to be happy, healthy and loved, you both want to be in a fulfilling relationship, you both work hard in life, you both want to be free of pain and struggle, you both want to feel valued and loved,... This will help you approach your partner as allies, not as enemies.

## ***In advertising, people need to see something 7 times before they are ready to buy***

Likewise, don't be discouraged if you are initially met with resistance; your partner might just need to warm up to the idea. Many times, your partner may not really understand how important this is for you and for the family. They may be struggling with their own demons, fears, or ego. They may not be able to hear where you're coming from the first few times you bring it up—their defenses might be automatically up and their brain might automatically tune out because it feels too threatening.

## ***You are the best advocate for your relationship***

It can be scary to take a stand for what matters to you, particularly if you feel timid about talking about it, if you're unsure of how your partner is going to respond, and if you've tried before and it's not gone well.

But it matters. Stick up for your relationship. Try your best to be heard and to not give up.

# Have the Conversation

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## ***Timing is everything***

Ask your partner whether this is a good time to connect for a few minutes. If it's not, ask when a better time would be. Make sure you have the spaciousness to talk about it calmly together...and definitely do NOT bring it up during an argument!

## ***Start the conversation with love, teamwork, and alignment***

According to relationship expert Dr. John Gottman: 94% of the time, the way a discussion starts will determine how it will end. Review the previous page just before talking with them and keep your similarities forefront in your mind. Google "soft start ups" to get tips about how to begin the conversation effectively.

## ***Put the focus on how you want to learn to be a better partner***

In order to not trigger your partner into feeling blamed, attacked, or at-fault, consider a conversation like this: "Babe, I'm so glad you're in my life and I really appreciate our relationship together. Life is so crazy right now and it seems like we've both been busy and overwhelmed. I would love to work with a relationship coach to help me learn how to be a better partner for you during these crazy periods of life. Would you come with me so I make sure what I'm doing would mean the most to you? I'm really excited about it because I think it could help us fight less, have sex more, and feel closer together again."

Make this an authentic goal for yourself. After all, going to therapy is not just about changing your partner! Suppose your partner doesn't change. You could still learn a few tips about how to behave differently towards them—that will change your relationship dynamics in and of itself, which is what you're looking for, right?! For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

# Have the Conversation

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## ***Be factual and stay away from absolutes***

Do not blame or criticize. Rather, talk about what you see without adding your own interpretation or judgment about it—just state the facts. Avoid using words like "always" or "never."

For example, instead of saying *We never spend time together anymore*, you could say *We often turn on the tv after putting the kids go to bed and I miss connecting with you.*

## ***Take ownership of your feelings***

Your partner does not "make" you feel a certain way. In the example above, they are not *making* you feel ignored by watching tv; you might *feel* ignored...but you could also feel compassion about them being exhausted working long days, or you could feel liberation for having the evenings to yourself. Your feelings are yours to own, so don't blame your partner for how you feel. (That's not to say your feelings are not valid or justified; it is simply a way of owning your part in the dynamics by recognizing that your feelings stem from within and are colored by your thoughts and the story you're telling yourself about what's happening.)

## ***Courageously share your heart***

Stay open, honest, and loving while you share your observations and feelings. Focus on your aching desire and hopes about what kind of relationship you want to build with your partner—not their shortcomings or unhelpful behaviors.

Don't pussyfoot around your feelings though: Be crystal clear when you express them. It's important that your partner hears exactly how this is affecting you. They deserve to know and when they more fully understand how it's impacting you, they may be more motivated to engage around it.

# Have the Conversation

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## ***Be curious***

Of course, it is your partner's choice whether to participate or not. If they remain obstinate about not getting help with you, try your best not to feel frustrated or dejected. Instead, lean into curiosity. You could ask:

"Would you be willing to share why you're choosing not to do couple's therapy or enrichment programs? I think it could really be helpful for us, and it seems like you're not interested, so I'd like to understand your perspective more."

## ***Listen for how they feel***

As you listen, try to listen for how they *feel*, not just what they're saying. After they have expressed themselves, you can reflect back to them in your own words what you heard them say and feel. Then check it out by asking, "Am I getting it right?"

Continue cycling through this part until they confirm you've gotten it right. Then ask: "Is there more?" or "Is there anything else that I could know about that would help me understand what you're feeling around it?"

## ***Aim to understand, not to convince***

Remember, you are not trying to persuade them—you are trying to get a full understanding of where your partner is coming from and what is influencing their reaction or decision. When you each understand each other fully, you can then have more effective conversation together about what you want to do about it.

## ***Look for alignment***

What do you both agree on? Maybe say: "I would love figure out how to rekindle the love, joy and connection we used to feel. I really care about us and want to keep our relationship strong. What would you like for us?"

When you start by creating alignment, you create alliance because now you both are working toward the same goal.



# Brainstorm Together

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Once you have alignment about what you both are looking for, brainstorm what you want to do about it.

Use this tool to explore your feelings of "Must Have", "Would Like" and "Could Let Go Of". After you each complete the tool separately, share with each other and continue to brainstorm around it.

The image shows two identical circular templates for brainstorming. Each template consists of a large outer circle and a smaller inner circle. The inner circle is labeled "Must Have". The space between the inner and outer circles is divided into two sections: the top section is labeled "Would Like" and the bottom section is labeled "Could Let Go Of".

For example, if you you have "Get outside help" on your Must Have list and your partner has "Don't go to therapy" on their Must Have list, you could explore these possible solutions:

- Go on a couple's retreat
- Attend a couple's enrichment workshop or course
- Work through a relationship course on Udemy
- Regularly watch YouTube videos on relationship advice together
- Read a relationship self-help book together
- Find a couple's workbook and go through the exercises together
- Use an intimacy card deck or conversation starter deck to inspire deeper conversation

# Still Stuck?

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## ***Write a letter***

Share your feelings and motivations, and ask to have a discussion with your partner. Do not make the letter a replacement for a conversation, but rather, use it to get your thoughts out and start a conversation.

## ***Be patient***

Remember, these things take time, and sometimes your partner needs to warm up to the idea. Do your best to authentically remain unattached to hoping your partner will agree to get help with you. Be careful not to make assumptions about what their resistance means.

If they end up going with you because they feel forced or cornered, it probably won't be that productive anyway. If instead, they decide to participate out of their own desire and free will, you'll get much better engagement.

## ***Don't make assumptions***

Sometimes if your partner says no to your request, you might feel like they don't care about your relationship. If that's the case, ask them if you're interpreting it correctly or not! Share with them how you're feeling and explore where to go from there. You might say:

"Honey, I hear what you're saying and that this is something you choose not to do. When you choose not to go to therapy, the message I make up about that is that you don't care about doing whatever it takes to keep our relationship strong and healthy. I don't think that's probably how you feel, but that's the the story I'm making up about it. I wanted to let you know that that's how it hits me, and I would be curious to hear your thoughts on it."

# Still Stuck?

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## ***Be steadfast in your assertion***

There is a fine balance between being assertive and being nagging:

- *Nagging* happens when you're pestering your spouse to do something. It typically has a whiny or begging tone to it. *Assertion* means stating your needs and desires clearly. Providing the reasoning behind it can also be helpful, particularly if it adds nuance each time you express it.
- *Nagging* comes with the expectation that your request will be fulfilled. *Assertiveness* does not assume your request will automatically be fulfilled, but is shared so that your partner is aware of your desires and the things that are impacting you.

Your partner is not a mind-reader. It is your responsibility to share with them what's going on for you: your thoughts, your emotions, your fears, your hesitations, your hopes,... The more clear you are in expressing these with your partner (in a non-judgmental way), the more likely they are to understand where you're coming from.

You may need to revisit the topic multiple times. Don't let that deter you—the future of your relationship is at stake.

Instead, remember the principles from this guide and approach your partner with love, hope, assertiveness, and confidence that together, you can build a bright future for your family.





## *Want More Resources?*

**Join our free Facebook group**  
**Our Luminous Love:**  
**Couples on a Journey of Mindfulness, Intimacy & Growth**



You don't have to go to therapy to feel love, joy, and connection again together.

Take a stand for your marriage and reach out.

I am here for you. Together, we've got this!

In love & light,  
*Stephanie*