

Approaching Your Spouse

Non-threatening approaches take some of the pressure and blame off the other partner.

by Mitch Temple

Common Mistakes in Approaching Your Spouse

Showing disrespect. As Sharon realized, you can't change a person by tearing him or her down. There's only one response for that kind of approach: negative. Think about it. How do you feel when others treat you disrespectfully?

Does it make you want to do something for them? Does it make you want to show affection? No. Showing disrespect will only alienate your spouse to the idea of seeking help.

Losing control of your anger. Anger is often a way of punishing your spouse when he or she does not give you what you want. It's not only ineffective in producing a long-term change in how your spouse behaves, it also destroys any threads of love or feelings that may still be evident. Sure, if your spouse doesn't respond to your requests, the temptation exists to respond in anger; but if you don't get the response you want, getting angry and sparking a heated argument won't help.

Blaming your spouse. Don't accuse or point fingers. Don't resort to exaggerated or over-generalized language such as: "You always act like this! You never do what I ask you to do. You just don't care anymore. It's always your fault. You always do this or always do that." That type of language isn't valuable in solving the problem. It only creates more issues to deal with and more wounds to heal in the future.

Approaching Your Spouse the Right Way

Begin by approaching your spouse at the right time and in the right manner. Choose a time when he or she is not distracted or too stressed or tired.

Approach your spouse in a non-confrontational manner. An angry tone of voice or condescending "parent to child" approach will only cause him or her to shut down.

Make sure you bring up the topic in a non-threatening way. If your communication pattern has digressed to the point that when you bring up this topic, your spouse becomes defensive and "blows up," you may consider writing him or her a letter to be read when you are not present. This gives your spouse time to think about what was said and respond without all the emotions.

Don't say, "You need counseling." Recognize and admit that "we" have a problem, and it must be addressed as a team.

You may try statements like the following to encourage your mate to join you in getting help for your marriage: I'm concerned that if we allow this problem to continue, it will only get worse. I can't go on like we have been. I need the help more than anything. I know you are uncomfortable with this, but so am I. It's embarrassing and even frightening to me. I realize, however, that if we keep doing the same things in our marriage, we'll get the same results.

We need outside intervention and direction. It's like being in a strange city and asking others for directions. Locals know the area. They know the correct path to take, and which roads are easy ones and which roads are dangerous and difficult. A trained Christian therapist knows the way around, has been trained and is capable of helping with issues and dangers that we can't deal with on our own.

I know God wants us to do better in our marriage, and our children deserve a more stable home environment than this. It's obvious that if we don't get help, we are making the decision to continue in a painful marriage. I believe there is hope for us and it is possible to have a healthy marriage like we used to.

I love you with all my heart, but I am tired and need your help and support on this. If you won't go for yourself, would you go with me? Let's talk about it after dinner tonight.

These non-threatening approaches take some of the pressure and blame off the other partner. They typically open doors to the possibility of getting help instead of closing doors by using negative approaches.

Source:

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