Two Simple Techniques That Can Radically Change Your Relationship
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In any relationship, communication plays a vital role. However, when a relationship is struggling, it’s essential to employ effective techniques to foster understanding, empathy, and connection. In this guide, we will explore two powerful techniques derived from cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) that can radically transform your relationship. If you practice and use them consistently, they will help you create a safe and supportive environment where you can discuss concerns openly, develop a deeper understanding of each other, and create a stronger bond.

In long-term relationships, interactions and behavior patterns have become deeply ingrained due to the numerous interactions over an extended period of time. As a result, it can be challenging for partners to give each other the benefit of the doubt and believe that change is possible.

To ensure the effectiveness of the techniques mentioned in this guide, it is important to give yourself and your partner some time. Ideally, share this guide with your partner so that both of you can work on implementing these techniques together. However, even if you decide to try these techniques on your own, it is crucial to give your partner the time and opportunity to notice the changes in your behavior and interactions.

By consistently changing your interactions, you will gradually start to see significant differences in how you communicate and connect with your partner. Patience and persistence are key in this process, as it takes time for new patterns of behavior to be recognized and appreciated.
Technique 1: Mindful Listening

How often are you caught up in your own thoughts when your partner is talking with you? Maybe you’re already plotting your reply, you’re dealing with the emotions that arise within you, or you feel tempted to jump in and add your own thoughts.

Mindful listening is a practice that involves being fully present and attentive to the speaker without judgment or interruption. It allows for a deeper connection and understanding between partners.

When you listen mindfully, you refrain from
- getting lost in your own thoughts,
- judging your partner,
- jumping to conclusions, or
- listening with the goal of giving advice or voicing your opinion.
How to Practice Mindful Listening

1. **Focus your entire attention** on your partner and what they’re saying.

2. **Show your partner you’re listening** with non-verbal cues:
   - Maintain eye contact
   - Nod
   - Use facial expressions to show you’re listening

3. **Do not interrupt** your partner. Let them fully express their thoughts and emotions. Listening without interrupting is hard. If you feel like you have to jump in, breathe in and out deeply.

4. **Focus on your partner:**
   - What’s their tone of voice?
   - How fast are they speaking?
   - How do you think they’re feeling?
   - What does their facial expression communicate to you?

5. After your partner is done speaking, **repeat back to them what you heard**. You can use phrases like “What I heard you say is...” or “It sounds like you’re feeling...”

6. **Acknowledge your partner’s emotions.** Show them you understand how they feel by saying things like “I can understand why you might feel that way.”

7. **Ask follow-up questions** if you have any.

8. **Respond with compassion.** Offer your partner support, encouragement, and reassurance.
Technique 2: Asking “What Matters to You?”

Once we’ve been in a relationship with someone for a while, we often begin to make the mistake of assuming we know what they need without asking. But the truth is, we can’t read other people’s minds. We interpret our partner’s words and actions based on our own perspective (and insecurities).

Asking "What matters to you?" is a powerful way to uncover the underlying values, needs, and desires of your partner. By understanding what truly matters to them, you can foster a deeper connection and create a more fulfilling relationship.

Practical Tips for Asking What Really Matters

• Ask questions like “What matters to you?” Or “How can I help you?”

• Listen intently (and mindfully — practice what you’ve learned above!)

• Follow up with open-ended questions: “Can you tell me more about why that matters to you?” Or “How do you want me to do this?”

• Reflect back on what your partner has shared and validate their feelings and values. Let them know that you understand and appreciate their perspective.

• Suggest that your partner ask you questions as well. Or just share with them how you feel they could help you best. You might be surprised how eager they are to help once they understand how!

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By incorporating mindful listening and putting effort into finding out what really matters to your partner, you can transform struggling dynamics into a more harmonious and fulfilling connection. These techniques promote open communication, empathy, and understanding, allowing you and your partner to build a stronger bond.

Remember, practice and consistency are key. Embrace these techniques as ongoing tools for growth and transformation in your relationship.

I wish you all the best for your relationship and your future. If you have any questions or would like to learn more, please get in touch anytime at karin@lovemultiverse.com. I’d love to hear from you!

All my best,

Dr. Karin