

Stress-Reducing Conversation

- (1) One of the biggest things you can do in your relationship is ask your partner how their day was. The following are some guidelines for having such a conversation.
 1. Invite your partner to tell you about his or her day. Remember you are not the target of any hostile words that come from him or her releasing the built up pressure. A good suggestion is to allow each partner 15 minutes to vent.
 2. Don't give unsolicited advice. By quickly suggesting a solution to your partner's problem you send a message that his or her problems are trivial. Understanding must always precede advice. Often times your partner does not want a solution only a person whom he or she knows is listening.
 3. Show genuine interest. Do not let your mind or eyes wander. Make sure to focus on your partner and make eye contact.
 4. Communicate your understanding. Let your partner know that you understand what he or she has just said.
 5. Take your partner side. Be supportive even if you think his or her perspective is unreasonable. Do not side with the opposition. The point here is not to be dishonest but rather this is a time to be emotionally supportive of you partner.
 6. Express a "we against others" attitude. Make sure you express to your partner that he or she is not alone. You are with them.
 7. Express affection. Show some kind of affection. Holding hands often works best.
 8. Validate emotions. Let your partner know that his or her feelings make sense to you.

Gottman, John and Nan Silver: **The Seven Principles For Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide From the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert** (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999).

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