
Staying Connected through the Holidays

Thoughts of the Month: December 2007

It is the holiday season for most folks in the Western World. And while this can be a time of celebration and family connection, I've noticed some holiday hazards for couples. Here are a few:

- The holiday season can be stressful, especially for women who usually wind up doing the shopping, cooking, arranging family stuff, worrying about how drunk Uncle Bill will get, etc. I notice that men tend to escape or avoid these extra stresses, which can, in itself, lead to conflict.
- Extended families and in-laws usually come into the picture which, for many couples is a built-in source of conflict.
- The extra business and effort to be with the larger family can take a couple away from each other, even if all the families get along.
- Spending, debt, and other stress about money seem to peak around this time of year which adds another potential conflict ("opportunity", I mean) for couples.

Here are some tips:

- Men...for heaven's sake, help her out with stuff, even if you are not that much into it! You will be her HERO!
- Women...for heaven's sake, tell him thank you and that you appreciate that is willing to help, even if he doesn't do it exactly the way you would have done it.
- Use dialogue to strategize and plan for the visits with extended families. Learn about each others desires and fears ahead of time. Also, strategize ways you can "check in" with each other throughout the time and stay connected.
- Develop some simple rituals or traditions for you as a couples and/or your nuclear family. Slow it down and really connect meaningfully with those you live with.
- Dialogue again about gifts and spending expectations. You know by now that you, as a couple, are probably at opposite ends of the galaxy from each other. Also, remember that generosity and giving does not have to involve just money. (And be sure to show up and tell each other clearly what gifts you may want so your partner doesn't have to guess and get it wrong!)

Donna and I wish for you joyful, relaxed, blessed and connected holidays.

With great encouragement and hope,
David and Donna

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