

ACT FOR LIFE: IMPROVING YOUR INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

“Relationships are both wonderful and terrible. They can give us the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, send us soaring into the stratosphere on wings of love, or drop us from on high to splat in the mud” (Dr. Russ Harris, p. 1. “ACT with Love”)



Myths about Relationships

- Myth 1: The perfect partner
- Myth 2: You complete me
- Myth 3: Love should be easy
- Myth 4: Everlasting love

Unhelpful processes that DRAIN relationships

- D – Disconnection
- R – Reactivity
- A – Avoidance
- I – Inside your mind
- N – Neglecting values

So what can I do?

- L – Letting go (of resentment, blaming, criticising, demanding)
- O – Opening up (allowing difficult thoughts and feelings)
- V – Valuing (i.e. taking action guided by your values such as caring, contribution and connection)
- E – Engaging (being psychologically present and available)

Be your best self with loved ones!

Next time you are upset by something your partner has said or done consider this: imagine when you speak with your partner that someone you greatly admire is listening in. Would you approach it differently? Even when we are hurt, mad or scared we can remember our values and communicate from these rather than from our upsetting thoughts and feelings.

How effective are you in getting your needs met?!?

Do what works not what's easy or reactive!! How many times have you tried the same strategy with your partner (or family member or friend) hoping to get a different result? Maybe it is time to recognise that no matter how much you think this approach “should” work it isn't very effective. For example, if your partner often runs late to meet you and your usual reaction is to get annoyed or sulk quietly it might be good to reflect on how well this actually works in changing your partner's behaviour!

Remember to **BREATHE** – a few slow mindful breaths may be all we need to switch from reacting in unhelpful ways to listening and responding to people we love in a considered way.

Breathe in..... breathe out & notice your mind chatter before opening your mouth 😊

The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention – Oscar Wilde

Resources

This handout is largely based on a great book called ACT with Love by Russ Harris. See <http://www.act-with-love.com/>.

See also: “The Mindful Couple” by Robyn D. Walser & Darrah Westrup