

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for February 15, 2021
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about relationships and look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

Since yesterday was Valentine's Day, it seems natural to talk about a healthy relationship topic today. Maybe it's just me, but I think there are some things in life we naturally assume we should inherently know how to do well. Two of the biggest roles that come to my mind are marriage and parenting. Almost everyone who is or has been married or is a parent would most likely say they are constantly learning and could always improve.

University of Georgia Extension published a "Marriage Matters" series as part of the National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Network. These brief yet helpful one-pagers cover a wide variety of topics from pre-marital questions to second marriages, first baby to empty nest, and how to better communicate about common challenges in marriages.

Two topics I found extremely practical are "Bids for Connection: Creating Positive Interactions in Your Marriage" and "Knowing Your Partner." The first encourages married couples to invest in their spouse's bids. Bids are expressions one partner offers that requests a connection. Some examples of bids are:

- A question like "How was your day?"
- A facial expression like a smile
- A gesture such as reaching out to hold hands
- A touch such as hugging

Dr. John Gottman is clinical psychologist from the University of Washington and author of "The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work." In his research he studied couples' dinner-hour conversations. The results showed that happily married partners tended to engage each other at least 100 times in just 10 minutes. In contrast, he found that couples who would eventually divorce engaged one another only 65 times in 10 minutes. Dr. Gottman has called this process of responding positively "turning toward" one's spouse.

The "Knowing Your Partner" activity suggests that you regularly check-in with your spouse and interview them. It may sound strange, but we typically ask our spouse questions anyways.

Instead of questions about grocery lists, garbage pick-up, and basketball practice, intentional inquisitive questions help us to connect. Some of the questions could include:

- What makes you feel most competent?
- Other than your partner, who is your greatest source of support?
- What is your favorite way to spend an evening? A weekend?
- What personal improvements do you want to make in your life?

This isn't rocket science, right? It all sounds very simple. Why then does a lack of connection develop in way too many marriages? What makes it difficult to turn toward our spouse when they offer a bid for connection or to take time to ask them questions and genuinely care about the answers our spouse gives?

I think we are all turning toward something. Depending on our stage in life, we may be turning toward small children or large children. We could be turning toward social media or television or hobbies. We may be experiencing a legitimate crisis that we do need to turn toward. Thankfully, crises do not last forever. We have the opportunity each day to make an intentional and deliberate choice. In view of my values and goals in life, what deserves my time and my "turning toward"?

If you detect a bid from your spouse this week, turn toward him or her with a positive response. This is like investing in their emotional bank account. And then be sure to express your bids as well. Expect that not every bid will be recognized by your spouse. But do your best to turn toward your marriage this week.

The "East Ohio Women in Agriculture Program Series" continues next Thursday with an insurance program featuring Kim Davis, who grew up around these parts as Kim Balo. A total of 10 webinars and 3 field days will be held through May on a variety of financial, production, and home-related topics to help women in agriculture. Some of these upcoming topics include insurance, hands-on tractor operation skills, loans, fruit tree pruning and much more. Visit our website to register for one or more of these free programs.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!