



# MATTERS OF THE MIND

## Improve your Relation

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“Relate” is a verb. That means action and being intentional about our relationships if they are to flourish.

Often, our most important relationships—with our kids, our friends and family, our romantic partners---are the ones with which we can be most complacent.

So what happens? Well, too often we simply don't pay attention to, or respond positively to, someone attempting to connect. Psychologist John Gottman, Ph.D., says we respond to these bids for connection either by turning toward and engaging positively, turning away from the connection (think: being distracted or too busy to respond) or by turning against the bid which often means some type of negative response or hostility. Positive relationships generally have a ratio of 8:1 positive to negative responses to bids for connection.

So how to respond to bids for connection more positively? First, you need to be aware the other person is attempting to connect. One of the most common attempts from children is some version of “Mom/Dad, look at this.” Positive responses involve answering with some verbal or nonverbal response indicating you are aware of the statement and are indeed looking at

that. A common negative response, especially from busy parents, might be “Can't you see I'm busy right now?” or simply ignoring the statement and looking distracted.

The problem with turning away is that it decreases the chance the person even makes the attempt to connect at a later time. We want to avoid shutting our important people down.

Besides turning toward connection, what else can you do? Dr. Gary Chapman talks about the use of “love languages”. These five ways of showing love include: words of affirmation, gifts, acts of service, physical touch, and quality time together.

Often people act out the love language they would most prefer to receive rather than the language their partner, or friend, or child would prefer to receive. When someone speaks the “affirmation” language to someone who speaks “acts of service” (or vice versa), each can feel like the other just misses the boat. The Acts of Service person would really feel loved and appreciated if his/her partner would just do the dishes regularly. If that doesn't happen, he or she might complain which is the opposite of feeling loved for the Words of Affirmation person! You can see how speaking the wrong language can really back fire! Learning the love language and

Research shows that when people are connected to something larger, and when they are consciously being grateful for their own blessings, there is less depression. Intentional family serve days can bind members together in positive feeling and accomplishment.

## MANAGING YOUR TIME WISELY

Life is hectic, especially with the changes fall brings, such as school starting anew. In addition to the demands of work, family and activities such as sports and other classes, there is the draw of email, television, Facebook or some other social media.

One of the most important aspects of effective time management is prioritizing tasks. Tasks must be assigned to a priority category within AND across types of time demands. What that means is that your job might seem like it's always higher priority than, for example, leisure time but that's not necessarily true. Without any priority on leisure, there is not only no work-life balance, but the temptation to surf the web at work in order to blow off steam is too great and thus wastes more time.

What does this look like in practice? Let's say there is a very important project with a specific deadline at work. That is clearly a "high importance" task. Maybe there are several emails that aren't pressing but your child does have an important soccer game. The soccer game becomes "high importance" while the email at work becomes "medium or low importance".

Multi-tasking often gets negative press, and certainly it can't happen all the time or a person gets burned out. However, part of effective time management is recognizing where multi-

tasking makes sense. For example, if you have a long commute to work and are trying to learn a foreign language, listening to language CDs on the commute instead of the radio or some other CD is a very effective use of time. Attempting to juggle two or three different things while writing that important grant proposal is not an effective use of time. Then sustained focus is key.

Limiting distractions is important in completing tasks. Know what time of day is your most productive and assign your highest priority tasks to that time while limiting your access to people and things that distract you. That might mean closing your office door or muting the notification on your texts or emails. If possible, try to schedule meetings for another time of day.

Procrastination is a major impediment to time management. There is a set point where too much procrastination creates anxiety that limits output instead of creating the spur to get moving. Being honest with yourself about how much time you really need to complete a task and planning for it is a much better time management strategy and decreases unnecessary stress.

Finally, take a lunch and indulge in your fun email and social media. You will be more refreshed and ready to tackle those high importance tasks again.

### Sleep, it does a person good.

Some people not only love to sleep but they have no trouble getting enough of it. For others, sleep is valued but elusive. Sleep hygiene is the practice of using tested strategies to make sure sleep habits help a person achieve the needed and desired amounts.

If you are one of the many tossing and turning night after night, maybe some of these strategies are for you.

- Beds (and preferably bedrooms) are for sleep and sex ONLY. No TV, no work, no folding the laundry.
- Keep a set bedtime and wake up time, even on weekends.
- Limit caffeine intake after 3 pm. Be aware that alcohol intake can also disrupt sleep cycles.
- Dark, quiet and cool rooms are most conducive to sleep.
- Keep cell phones, TVs and other devices that emit blue light away from the bedroom. Turn off the notification bells for all devices that receive texts and emails.