Little Hints For Contributing To A Secure Bond With Your Partner

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Research about couples shows that those with a sense of a secure bond experience arguments that are shorter in duration, lower in intensity, and easier to recover from. You might be thinking that this seems obvious. And yet it highlights the importance of emotional security.

Building and maintaining a secure bond with your partner requires mindful intention and consistent action. You could think of caring for this bond as you would for a plant: offering it regular, consistent, caring attention according to its needs. If you often forget to water it, or expose it to more sun than it needs, or accidentally trample on it… your plant won't thrive and may eventually shrivel away. This is not so easy in a world that is colluding to keep you distracted and sleepwalking through life. For example, you might find yourself sitting at your computer engrossed in answering work emails as your partner gets home for the evening. If the emails have become your world, you have fallen into a trance that insists those emails must be answered right now and you mustn't get up until you're all done. In this trance-like state, the simple act of pausing what you are doing to get up and greet your partner feels equivalent to moving a mountain.

The opposite of living in a trance is responding to what's needed or supportive in a given moment. Noticing what is true in one moment requires letting go of what was happening in the previous moment. This is called wieldiness of mind. It means, for example, that you redirect your attention easily— that you really can choose how and where you direct your attention. You are not prisoner to an invented sense of urgency around to do lists and what you think should happen. Making an agreement with your partner to greet each other within 5-10 minutes of arriving home shows that the connection is a priority. In that greeting you can exchange warmth and care and offer clarity about whether and how you will connect more that evening.

In the big picture, this wieldiness of mind allows you to respond to needs as they arise. This creates a sense of security in any relationship, because your responses will make sense and be coherent with the in-the-moment reality.

In the smaller picture of daily life with your partner, simple acts of presence go a long way. Asking how the day went, greeting each other upon arrival, or offering some extra kindness or comfort are important ways of contributing to a secure bond with your partner. Simple things like these communicate care, consideration, mattering, and being seen.

If you're noticing resistance to these ideas, you might be longing for reassurance that your needs will be taken into account too, and that you matter. You might be feeling pain around not having these needs met and so don't have inspiration to extend yourself to meet them for your partner.

The principles of Mindful Compassionate Dialogue hold that needs are not in competition. Rather, in this painful situation of unmet needs, the strategies in place for mutuality are not working. Feeling resistance to extending care to your partner is often a sign that it's time to re-examine them.

Other simple ways to foster and maintain a secure bond, which might offer easier access to mutuality, include silent eye-gazing, cuddling, empathy dates, and exchanging daily appreciations of each other.

Practice

This week, each time you are coming back together with your partner, practice giving them your full attention and affection in a spacious greeting.

If you notice resistance in you around doing this, or are imagining doing it from a sense of obligation, I invite you to sit down with them first and agree on a “coming back together” routine that would meet both your needs.