4 Quick Tips for Sheltering Your Relationship While You Shelter in Place

Start by communicating your feelings clearly and without absolutes.

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For entrepreneurs, working from home is not new. What may be new is having your spouse home. And your kids. Having less privacy and little to no quiet time. Add some extra stress and anxiety to this unexpected scenario, and sheltering in place is the perfect fuel for frustrations and fights.

What you need most right now: support and time. Support for the understandable mix of emotions and shifting priorities, and time to ideate, innovate and adapt to a changing environment. But unless you consciously prioritize them, these needs could be the last things you get as you and your bestie navigate a new day-by-day reality. Here are four quick tips to help you fan the flames of intimacy and connection so you can be a dynamite duo during this time.

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1. Communicate your feelings

clearly and without absolutes.

When you get frustrated or annoyed or the news starts to heighten your anxiety levels, use the magical phrase, “A part of me is [insert emotion word here].” For example: “A part of me is upset. A part of me is concerned. A part of me is frustrated.” This phrase is a smart way to express a negative emotion you are feeling while simultaneously creating space for other emotions and possible solutions. Whether you’re upset with a partner, frustrated with one of your kids or dealing with the impact of coronavirus on your business, it’s important to not speak in absolutes.

When you say, “I’m frustrated” or “I’m disappointed,” the other person hears an absolute. There’s no wiggle room for other emotions. It’s as if you just said, “I’m 100 percent frustrated” or “I’m 100 percent disappointed.” Whereas, when you say, “A part of me is frustrated…” or “A part of me is disappointed…” you’re communicating that it’s not your only emotion. You’re leaving room for respect, hope, love and connection. Tension deescalates because you’ve opened the door for other, more positive feelings, and you’ve created space for dialogue instead of defensiveness.

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2. Validate feelings first, then do problem-solving.

It’s tempting to want to feel in control, to fix and problem-solve quickly during a crisis. With the right intentions but the wrong tactic, you can unknowingly trigger your partner. When your partner says, “I’m stressed” or “I’m scared,” you might be tempted to react too quickly with, “Don’t be scared. Don’t worry. No need to be stressed. You’re overreacting. Stay

calm.” Yep, not helpful. Not helpful at all. The first thing you should do is validate your partner’s feelings: Try “I get it,” “That makes sense” or “I understand.” These are excellent first response phrases. They allow you to lean in so your partner feels understood, respected and accepted. Full stop. Breathe. Now ask, “What can I do?” or “How can I help?” Let your partner tell you what she or he wants. Communicating clearly and meeting your partner’s wants and needs will set you both up for success.

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3. Flirt.

I get it – there’s a lot of stress and tension in the household. You’ve barely got time to redesign a web page or send out critical communication emails, and now you’re supposed to send a flirty text to your spouse? WTF? (What the flirt?) Yes. Take one minute every day to send an endearing text or to whisper a sweet sentiment in your spouse’s ear. Taking a few seconds to connect, to remind yourselves that you are a team, getting through this together, goes a long way toward keeping intimacy, connectivity and respect within your most important relationship during stressful times.

4. Schedule alone time.

If you have kids, it’s imperative that each parent get a break from the little ones. Whether it’s so you can focus on work, take a walk or a shower, or do whatever, put it on the daily schedule. Yep, block it out. Respect that you are each a better parent and partner when you get some time to refuel. If kids aren’t a part of the equation, this tip still applies. Blocking out time to be alone simultaneously communicates that there will be shared time later. It implies that you will come

back together at another point in the day to reconnect. For families, it puts boundaries in place so everyone can focus on their individual responsibilities, from homework to household duties, and it gives siblings a needed time-out from each other.

Sheltering in place will require some adjustments. However, when you prioritize your partnership, you might just be pleasantly surprised by how fabulously blessed you are to be hunkering down with your favorite playmate.

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