

The Gottman Institute : a research-based approach to relationships

Dr Edwards- Skadowska curated reading/blog

The Art of Paying Attention

There are so many small changes you can make this year to refocus and renew your relationship.

Today's small change: pay attention.

Successful couples are mindful of bids for connection and pay attention to them. These bids might be a look, a question, or an affectionate stroke on the cheek, anything that says, "Hey, I want to be connected with you."

Pay attention to your partner more than you pay attention to your phone & TV. Less screen time, more face time.

Pay attention to a look, a sigh, or a comment. Most bids happen in simple, mundane ways, and if you're not receptive, you'll miss them.

Pay attention for the sake of passion in your relationship. Couples who notice more moments of connection report more feelings of love and contentment.

When we pay attention, we practice compassionate communication-calling a time-out when feel overflooded, listen deeply and validate each other.

To be a great lover, you must pay attention and notice your partner trying to connect with you. It takes presence to notice your partner glancing your way during a dinner party. According to John Gottman, master of marriage research, successful couples are mindful of **bids for connection** and pay attention to them. These bids might be a look, a question, or an affectionate stroke on the cheek, anything that says, "Hey, I want to be connected with you."

Most bids happen in simple, mundane ways, and if you are mindless, you miss the overture. Gottman's studies indicate that couples on the road to divorce ignore their spouse's bids for connection 50 to 80 percent of the time, while those in happy marriages catch most of these emotional cues and respond kindly. So, paying attention predicts relationship success.

Couples who notice more moments of connection report more feelings of love and contentment. What's more, connection and intimacy buffer against emotional burnout. If you are not paying attention, you won't notice your distressed partner reaching out with a sigh or a question, and you sure can't respond to the bids you miss. And it turns out these failed intimacies are as harmful as active rejection—simply not acknowledging your mate hurts as much as a harsh word.

One of my clients calls being unnoticed by his wife the "death by a thousand cuts." A bid for attention is a request, and paying attention so you can catch and respond to the bid is a gift given with an open heart.