

## Tips to a Healthy Marriage

### Gratitude

- Change your focus from what's not being done, what's being done wrong, and what you're not getting that you deserve/want/need to one of gratitude
- Search for reasons to be grateful
- What's being done by your spouse that you take for granted?
- What can you intentionally say "thank you" for?
- Seek out and recognize what is good

### Rules for Fair Fighting:

- Don't bring up the past – stick to right now
- Don't yell or raise your voice. If you can't speak calmly, take a time out and come back.
- No name calling or shaming. Would you want to be spoken to that way?
- Don't use "always" and "never"
- Don't threaten divorce or threaten to leave. Take a time out if you need to, but promise to come back and resolve it – and then come back!

### What Men Need:

- All men have a nagging doubt about whether they're good enough, capable, and have what it takes
- Men need their spouse to believe in them and respect them
- Men don't need you to correct their stories.
- Tell him he's got what it takes, he'll figure it out, and you believe in him
- Read The Five Love Languages – what is his love language? Practice it!

### What Women Need:

- Women want to know if they can trust you. Am I safe with him?
- Women want to be celebrated. Just like men doubt if they have what it takes, women doubt if they're enough. Pretty enough, loving enough, good enough.
- Study your wife, treasure her heart, and communicate to her the beauty you see in her.
- Tell her how much you love her and why
- Read The Five Love Languages – what is her love language? Practice it!

### Healthy Communication:

- Speak to what's going on underneath their reaction – if you see anger, is it from being hurt? Scared? Anxious? Sad? Respond to that emotion and what caused it, either the situation or your actions, rather than responding to the “up front” negative emotion
- Communicate with I messages (no blaming!):
  - When you \_\_\_\_\_
  - I feel \_\_\_\_\_
  - Because \_\_\_\_\_
  - I wish/would like \_\_\_\_\_
- What do you do when you don't know what to do?
  - Ask, “Can you please help me with something?”
  - Example: “I don't know what to do when you are upset with me. I love you and don't want to make it worse. What can I do that would help?”
- Validate
  - When someone shares an I message with you, rather than defending yourself, personalizing their statement as an attack or trying to solve their problem, validate the emotion
  - “I'm sorry to hear that”
  - “That must be really upsetting”
  - “That's so frustrating!”
  - Oftentimes when you validate their feelings, they will calm down and be able to solve the problem
- Practice Reflective Listening:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> person: Use an I message
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> person: What I hear you saying is \_\_\_\_\_
  - 1<sup>st</sup> person: Correct what was heard if that's not what you meant
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> person: If you misunderstood them, accept their correction and **let go** of your misunderstanding – hanging on to that and insisting they meant what you think they meant creates resentment, not healing