

Thriving Beyond Surviving Calming Your Marital Conflict

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So encourage each other and build each other up just as you are already doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

In the midst of the current COVID-19 health crisis, couples are finding that their anxiety levels have increased. Although this is a normal reaction in uncertain times, it can cause stress on the marital relationship, especially if the couple or entire family is isolated or under quarantine. Couples may find themselves on edge with each other. Tempers may flare a little more easily. How do we combat the intruder of stress into our homes?

- 1. Take a breath or time out.** In the heat of the moment, it's good to take a time out. You might say to your partner, "Hey, I want to work this out but right now I need to cool off a little, I'll come back and talk when I'm able."
- 2. Realize your spouse is stressed too.** Remember that your partner is likely responding to the same tensions that are also weighing on you. Seeing things through his/her eyes may create a space of grace.
- 3. Talk about how you are feeling.** Are the pressures taking their toll? Do you need to feel your partner's presence or reassurance? Or conversely, are you feeling overwhelmed and need some quiet time? Ask for it! And give it in return!
- 4. Respond to your partner with patience.** Does your spouse need some space? Let them have it. Are you tempted to think the worst when things feel edgy? Refer to number 2.
- 5. Apologize.** It is possible one or both of you may say something sharp at some point. Admitting you blew it, asking for, and receiving forgiveness will keep your relationship free of resentment.
- 6. Look your partner in the eyes.** Looking into the eyes of the person you love can diffuse tempers, especially if you see a reflection of their feelings there.
- 7. Create time together.** Turn off the electronics, put the kids to bed, and spend some time connecting. Read a book together, pray together, take a bubble bath for two, or sit on the porch holding hands. Turn isolation into intimacy!