Level Up Your Relationship!

Tips, Tools, and Strategies for Creating a Character Champion Relationship.

(Special Note:  We use the gender-neutral pronouns “they” to connote all genders, instead of “he” and “she”.)

Communication Tip #4:  **What’s Your Conflict Style?**

What do you do if you and your partner are in the middle of a heated argument, and all you want to do is run away and hide? Your partner needs to resolve an issue right *now,* and you just don’t want to talk!  In frustration you tell your partner “leave me alone,” but that makes your partner even angrier, and even more persistent.

You wonder …why on earth is my partner torturing me?

Often when this is happening, your partner is feeling very anxious.  They are not trying to harass you for no reason…they want to resolve the issue on the spot, because they feel that this moment in time is your and their only chance to talk everything out, to resolve the issue.  If you tell them at that moment to leave you alone, your partner will feel that their concerns may *never* get addressed, causing their anxiety to redouble.  So the more you run away, the more they pursue you.

So… what can you do in this situation? How can you handle this situation using a Character Champion Mindset?

Some people are what are called internal processors. What this means is that instead of processing their thoughts on the spot with others, they need or prefer to go within, to process internally, and *then* process verbally with others.  In the heat of conflict, they really may have no idea what they are actually thinking or feeling.  If they’re overwhelmed with strong emotions, they may shut down mentally and be unable to process…or even be physically unable to talk.

When this happens, and you’re the one who needs to talk, you’ll probably feel that your partner is deliberately shutting you out. You might even take it as a sign your partner doesn’t care about your or the issue at hand. But often this is the opposite of what’s actually going on. Your partner cares a whole lot, which is why they get so emotionally flooded.

Your partner often needs time to calm down.  And your partner also may need time to figure things out.

On the other hand, some people tend to be more of what are called external processors. If you’re the one chasing down your partner to talk it out *right now*, you might be one of those people.  Often, these people tend to talk in the rough draft; they formulate their feelings as they figure them out through the process of talking. The talking process helps clarify what they actually think. They often feel like the sooner it can all be resolved, the sooner their awful anxiety will go away.  In their anxious state they feel that if they don’t get the chance to discuss their thoughts and feelings just as they’re experiencing them, that they won’t be able to express those same thoughts and feelings as clearly, for a conversation later on.  …So time is of the essence, for external processors.

So, if you’re an *external* processor and your partner is more of an *internal* processor—or it’s the other way around, in your relationship—you can see where, Houston, we may have a problem?

If you’re an internal processor who may not be ready to talk about your feelings at the moment, you need to let your partner know that you need a time out, but also make sure to give them a time frame of when you’re likely to be ready to talk. By giving a time frame, this often reduces anxiety.

If you’re the external processor waiting for your partner to come back to communicate with you, make sure you go do something relaxing to take your mind off of the issue, if you can. Watch a funny show, read a book, listen to music, take a walk, exercise, breathe, meditate. Do anything, but don’t sit there and ruminate and get yourself even more wound up. Use your Champion Mindset to try to see things from your partner's perspective.  The time out that you both take, will be useful for both of you.

And if you’re the internal processor who’s off thinking things through, you do need to follow through and talk things out later, when you said you would. If you simply ignore the issue and sweep it under the rug, this strategy won’t work out at all.  The next time a conflict issue arises the situation will only be more difficult, because your partner will only be more upset, remembering that you didn’t keep your promise.

So bottom line:  If you’re too flooded to talk – ask your partner for a time out. Give them a time frame of when you will be ready to talk.  Stick to that time frame.  If you’re the one who’s anxious to talk, understand that it’s fair to give your partner time to think and respond.  Time outs are a good thing.  Do something relaxing and wait.  Then discuss your issue when you’ve both calmed down.