



3 Great Mindfulness Exercises for Couples to Do Together

Craig Lambert | Tuesday, May 20th, 2014

Quick . . .

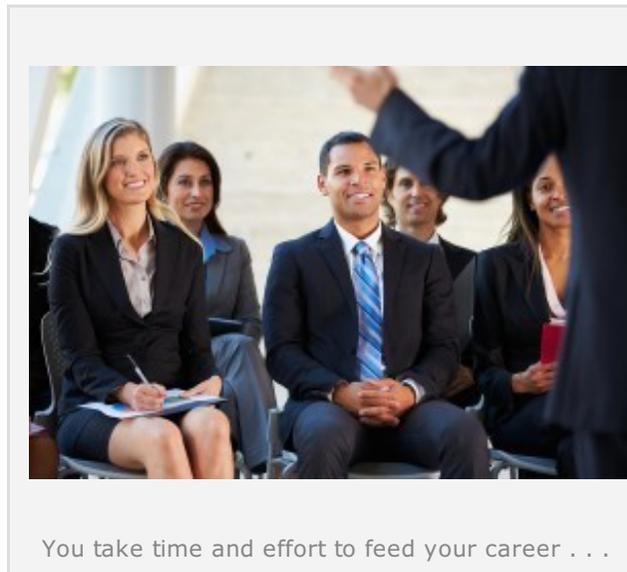
- Which golfing/gardening/photography magazines or blogs do you get to fuel your favorite hobby?
- How many hikes, bike rides or swims did you do or take this month to stay in shape?
- How many professional articles have you read in the last 3 months to keep current in your field?

Now . . .

- How many activities have you planned with/for your spouse this month?
- Which relationship workshops have you attended in the last 3 months?
- When was the last time you looked—no, gazed—into each others eyes?

You get it. Your relationship deserves at least half as much care and feeding as your fitness, your career and your hobby.

Most Americans, however, don't realize that relationships



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don't flourish naturally, with no care and feeding whatsoever. The relationship is a fragile beast, but when bolstered with practical, mindfulness exercises, it provides great returns not only for partners individually, but the entire family system and the children. Consider how you will incorporate the following mindfulness exercises into your schedule:



mindfulness exercises bring the same intention to your primary relationship

1. Create a “Relationship Vision”

Most couples never consciously clarify what they believe a happy, healthy relationship entails . . . for their partner OR, more alarmingly, for themselves. My clients find the Relationship Vision to be one of the best mindfulness exercises because it makes clear each partner's perception of loving actions and statements. You don't have to be an excellent writer to create a powerful relationship vision. Simply list 10 -20 statements about how you see the two of you interacting going forward. **Some statements include:**

- We keep negative emotions and words out of our relationship.
- We support each other's individual growth, whether that's through career, classes or hobbies.
- We make time to plan and take part in novel, fun experiences together at a frequency of once every _____.
- We plan experiences to meet the other's primary interests rather than our own once every _____.
- We cultivate a large, loving group of family and friends to support our relationship.

2. Develop and Practice Caring Behaviors

Ask your partner to tell you one thing you can do to know what he or she needs to feel loved and cared for. We must *create* caring, just as you did during your dating days when you would spend hours planning of special

things to do for your beloved. Examples of caring behavior requests include:

- flowers once a month,
- hold my hand as we walk every morning,
- tell me you love me once a day,
- massage my back,
- bring me surprise presents

If you're not sure what your partner would like . . . ASK. Make your relationship "intentional" and mindful by getting clear on what he or she wants/expects.

3. Daily Appreciation Affirmation

Every day or every other day, get your partner's attention and say, "I would like to share an appreciation I have for you. Is this a good time?" If not, make a date for a later time. Even when your partner can't be present immediately, imagine how much both your moods will improve while anticipating the impending Daily Appreciation. When you are both free of distraction and able to focus on each other, sit down and look into each other's eyes. Then:

1. describe your partner's behavior or words that touched you; e.g. "one thing you did this week that I appreciate is _____"
2. state: "what makes that so significant in me is _____"
3. include how it made you feel: "and when you did that it made me feel _____"
4. ask your partner to summarize what you've just said so that you'll both be clear about what was shared.

Consider engaging in this practice daily or at least several times each week. Simply paying closer attention to what your spouse is doing for you improves the relationship. You'll see, too, that sharing it feels as great as hearing it! That it takes just five minutes to complete makes it one of the most efficient mindfulness exercises for couples. If you are interested in mindfulness exploration and training for your relationship or marriage, contact me at craig@craiglamberttherapy.com or consider attending one of the **Mindful Couples Workshops** my colleague therapist Nichole Kahn and I hold 4 times per year. Keep in mind, too, that I post daily reminders of mindfulness in relationship on my **Facebook** and **Google+** pages. You'll receive these in your newsfeed when you "like" or "plus" the Craig Lambert Therapy page.

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