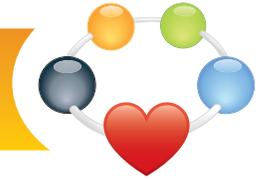




CONNECT



Engaging Support as a Couple

“It Takes a Village”

We hear this phrase a lot, but what does it actually mean? It means that children develop in a complex system of family, friends, and experiences. Parents and couples need others that they can ask for help when raising children – don’t try to go it alone and don’t be afraid to ask friends and family for help.



Why Connect?

The concept of CONNECT is about developing social support. Strong social connections help you to build strength, develop strong personal relationships, and most importantly, they provide support for you as a couple.

Couples who have strong relationships with the people around them report stronger, healthier, and more durable relationships.

When couples feel alone in their relationship (without friends to talk with) that is often when conflict arises. Having friends and family to confide in and to go to for advice relieves stress and can be an important resource for you.



Finding meaning and purpose

Another part of connecting is finding a greater meaning and purpose in life. Think about what the greater purpose may be for your life, both individually, and as a couple.

For some, that might mean joining a church or synagogue. Faith-based groups can offer support and other resources. For others, it may mean joining a community or support group. Finding meaning and contributing to the community have been found to work wonders for relationships. Try to get out into the community and lend a hand every now and then!

Finding support

Support comes from friends, family, and the community. Some examples of social support are:

- Your partner
- Friends & family
- Neighbors & the community
- Faith-based center
- Social organizations
- Schools
- Division of Social Services



Can you think of other examples of support in your own life? Are you making the most of your support by letting others help you?

The more you try to go at it alone, the harder life can be. We all need help from time to time; it doesn't make you a bad partner or a bad parent. In fact, you can be an even better mom/dad/partner just by asking for help!

Gender differences

Women may need different types of support than men. Women tend to talk about their friendships more often than men. They depend on both their partner and their friends for emotional support. Men, on the other hand, tend to rely on their partner for emotional support and their friends for companionship. Do you see this trend in your own relationship?

Steps to take to connect

- Let others help you.
- Keep up close relationships with your extended family. If they don't live close, talk on the phone, send text messages or email.
- Get involved with community groups that are supportive of your relationship.
- Think about what gives your life meaning – Your faith? Values? Community service? Find groups in your area with similar values and get involved.
- Take part together in activities and organizations outside of the family.
- Be a support for others in your life, including your external family members. Has someone you know just had a baby? Take them a meal. Or show a friend going through a hard time that you care by offering to babysit.
- Create traditions that add meaning to your relationship. Attend faith-based services or arrange weekly play dates to connect with other parents.



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