

Conversation Guide for Couples Stuck at Home

By Neil Josephson



“*It takes two to speak the truth: one to speak and another to hear.*”

— Henry David Thoreau

As we have worked with thousands of couples, we've seen the power of an honest conversation. It opens the door for understanding and strength to flow into a relationship. But we also know it can be difficult to have such conversations... maybe especially in these days during the coronavirus pandemic.

FamilyLife Canada cares about you, your marriage and your family, and so we've prepared this simple guide for you to have a great, helpful and maybe even healing conversation. We encourage you as a couple to invest some time in this. When you have, please send us a quick note (info@familylifecanada.com). We'd love to hear how it went, how you are doing, and how we can pray for you!

Prepare to Have a Great Conversation

- **Set aside some time — we would suggest 60 minutes.** Choose a time of day that works well for both of you to have a lengthy conversation.
- **Choose a setting that is conducive to good conversation.** For some, it's over coffee/tea and for others it might be as you take a walk.
- **Commit to asking the questions just as they are.** It may seem artificial at first, but it will help to spark and to guide your conversation.

Follow These Guidelines as You Communicate

Here are the guidelines we share whenever we teach on communication. *Please follow them.*

- **After you have asked a question, your one and only job is to listen.** Research says that the average person only waits 17 seconds before they interrupt... and they spend most of those 17 seconds preparing their interruption! Give your partner time, especially if they are an internal processor. They are just taking time to organize their thoughts before they speak.
- **Ask exploratory questions, but don't debate or challenge what they are saying.** Ask questions or probe to increase your understanding or to help your partner go a bit deeper. Your goal is to try and understand more fully how they are thinking and feeling in this moment.
- **Don't miss the last question.** After you've both had time to speak and listen (don't worry about getting through all of the questions) and it is time to wrap up, make sure to leave a few minutes to jump ahead and share your responses to the last question. It's a really important one and we don't want you to miss it.
- **We encourage you to pray together at the end of the conversation.** Ask God to give you His peace, and His strength to trust and to love well. Pray for our world, for the hurting, and for those providing care in these difficult days.
- **If complicated issues arise or if emotions overwhelm, please reach out to a third party for help and support.** Many mentors, pastors, and counsellors are available online to assist.

Ask These Conversation Questions

1. On a scale between 1 to 10 (10 being the max), how stressed are you feeling right now? What are the biggest contributors to the way you are feeling? What can I do (or we do) to make things just a bit better?
2. What gives you joy these days?
3. Are there things in your life or in our life together that you are actually feeling better about right now? If so, what are they and in what ways are they better?
4. What do you miss the most in these days of social-isolation, working from home and all? Are there any ways we could fill those gaps even a little bit?
5. How are you feeling about our routine these days? Any suggestions that might make it work better for you and for us?
6. What do you need most from me at this time?