

Relationship Intelligence – With Heart and Soul

Ritual-Maintenance-Repair

A Three Part Series

Connecting the Heart and Soul Through Daily Rituals

When it comes to relationships, regardless of what kind – romantic, family, friend, co-worker or even customers - if you care about the relationship, if the relationship is important to you, then you are going to have to do things to keep it in good working condition. It's what you do, not what you say that counts. Relationships that go the distance require ritual, maintenance and repair. This is a three part series. This month's article is about relationships rituals and how they can impact your relationships in a positive and relationship strengthening way.

Simply taking advantage of what a relationship provides, that is, enjoying the benefits without attending to the care and maintenance of that relationship is going to cost you misery or at the very least disappointment, in the short run and the relationship itself in the long run.

It's like living in a house and never cleaning the gutters, painting the exterior or interior, seldom vacuuming the carpets, letting dust accumulate on the furniture and leaving grease and grim build up in the kitchen. It also means that when a some kind of disaster hits whether large or small, if you do not actually fix and repair the damage this is like putting a bucket under the leak caused by a hail storm and living with the mess or like buying yourself a cheap \$10 dollar hot plate when all the burners on your stove go out rather than fixing the stove or purchasing a new one. Eventually this kind of make do approach is going to undermine the whole structure.

Unless you want your relationships to go to *wrack and ruin* as my mama used to say about people and houses, then it's going to require action on your part to keep it up. Whether it's a sanctuary for you or simply one you would like to keep, then it's what you do and not what you say that will make all the difference in the world.

Relationship Rituals

Daily rituals call attention to the bond and the commitment to that bond in a way that reinforces it and maintains it in a spirit enriching way. It also soothes the soul and makes us feel both consciously and unconsciously connected to the people in our lives.

Friends and Others

For relationships with friends and others, ritual still plays a part. The hug when you meet and then say goodbye to your friend for lunch, the morning rounds you make at the office to start the day, or the coffee break when you catch up on a favorite topic. Talking about a sports team can be a ritual for some people. So can a daily chat about a TV show. What the ritual is is less important than that you have one. It's a touchstone, a way to connect and let the person know they are important to you.

Even with work meetings, it's good to have some non-agenda item rituals. Refreshments and a time to chat a bit before the meeting starts is a good way to pave the way to for getting down to business. I had a great boss once who always brought something positive and uplifting to our weekly staff meeting to share with us.

Sometimes it was an article from a newspaper or magazine, sometimes it was an activity that the group did that helped us feel connected and positive towards each other, but she always had something and the group was very cohesive and I believe her attention to ritual helped foster this cohesiveness.

Families and Couples

Comings and Goings – Make sure you establish rituals for coming and going. A kiss and a goodbye or hello, are the most simple and common ways. But you could have a favorite catch phrase too. I often say, *I'm off to see the lizard* – a reference to a Jimmy Buffet story I once read. "*Honey, I'm Home*" is another one. But ones you come up with that are unique to you and your relationship will have more power – so think about a catch phrase you could use that would be meaningful to you and your significant others. Begin using them every time you leave the house and when you come back home. It's important too, to find your significant other and your family members – if they are in a different part of the house when you come home – letting them know you are home is a way of letting them know you care - this takes a little more effort but pays off in the long run.

Remember, to just walk out the door even if your significant other knows you are leaving or to walk in the door without comment even though you are seen coming in the door, sends a message and the message is not a positive one. Communication is more than just words, it's telepathic, we speak volumes when we say nothing.

Meal Time – Meals are a perfect time for rituals. First of all, simply making sure you have meals together on a regular basis is an important and powerful aspect of relationship maintenance. Even when we are busy, everyone has to eat, make sure you have at least three to four or more meals together every week. During those meals I recommend no television. Some people start their meals with a prayer – but if you are not religious rituals at meals are still very important and powerful. I also recommend:

The Three Questions Ritual

1. What made you smile today?
2. What was frustrating or challenging today and how did you handle it?
3. What did you do today that made you feel proud?

Or you can come up with your own questions, just make sure you ask them each time so they become a ritual.

Bed-time and wake-up time rituals are similar to the coming and going rituals because in a sense it's the same thing, only these are usually more intimate. This of course is a perfect time to say "*I love you*" and other terms of endearment. Again, find one's that are unique to you and your significant other and they will hold more power. I know a couple where the man is an early riser and so he always gets up before his wife but then he makes her a fresh cup of coffee and brings it up to her every morning as a way of letting her know that she is important to him. I also think bed-time is an especially good time to do a gratitude/blessings ritual.

The Three Blessings Ritual

Today I feel blessed that...

My wife/husband/significant other blessed me today with...

I feel blessed to be...

The same is true of children and other family members – make sure you have bed-time and wake-up time rituals for them as well. Also, one's unique to your family will hold much more power than ones that are common and ubiquitous, but even these hold power if used consistently because all repetitious chants are essentially prayers, satisfying a primal human need.

Committed Dating Couples

If you are a dating couple and consider yourselves in a committed relationship then you may use The Three Blessings ritual with a final call of the day. Make sure however, that all other communication has been handled and you don't get into a situation where one person makes this call, but has failed to handle other communications issues ahead of time. If this is the case, but time does not permit a discussion now, then prior to the good night, let your significant other know that you know there are issues to be discussed or that time needs to be set aside simply to communicate and agree to a time to do this.

This last is part of relationship maintenance, which I will talk about next month. For now remember that rituals help build the foundation of a relationship. Rituals are primal and all cultures have them. Once a ritual is established it becomes sacred. When we develop our own unique rituals it's like we belong to a secret club and in a way we do. Our rituals help us move emotionally from one place to another and create a sense of connection and belonging. Rituals are like anchors too, they remind us that we belong and that other people care about us.

So begin today to develop your relationship rituals or to reinforce and practice the ones you already have in place.

Next Time — *Relationship Maintenance*

Happy Relating, *Lorraine*