



## **How to Tune Up Your Marriage!**

### ***8 Essential Tools of a Successful Relationship***

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Have you ever lost your keys and felt helpless to go anywhere? Then when you find them you are relieved that you are no longer stuck. Sometimes we can feel stuck in our relationships too, as if there is no one in the driver's seat and no one knows where the keys are. Feelings of frustration and despair soon follow.

All marriages go through some shifts, bumps and curves. But when left unattended, they can depreciate in value and in fulfillment for both people involved. Instead of an attempt at a hasty trade-in, why not give your marriage a long overdue tune up? Pull over to the side. Fuel up. Use these eight powerful tools to get you going:

#### **Get out of neutral**

In a car or in a marriage, remaining in neutral will not get you very far. To get moving forward and out of that rut, shift your relationship into overdrive. To do this, you must be active, involved and fully participating. Oftentimes couples become too comfortable in their relationship, and just give to it whatever is left over at the end of the day. They fall asleep at the wheel, so to speak. To excel and to grow together, you must first get out of neutral – neutral in attitude and in actions.

#### **Be a responsible driver**

What if you were the only family member who knew about the faulty transmission? Would you keep cruising around, stubbornly not taking responsibility for the needed engine adjustment? If you wait for the other person in your partnership to fix a problem, you may be waiting a long time, especially if they don't even know there is a problem. Be a responsible and accountable co-driver in your marriage by seeking solutions to repair problems as they arise. If you ignore the rattles, they will not likely just go away on their own.

#### **Use your turn signal**

If you don't indicate your needs, desires or intentions, how will anyone know where you want to go? Communication is the "oil" in any relationship. Communicate openly with your spouse. Don't assume he or she knows what direction you want to go. Share your need for more closeness, or more alone time, or more family road trips. Using your "turn signal" may also be an encourager for others to do the same.

#### **Fix the small dents**

If you wait until all the tires are flat before you take your car in, you could cause more damage. Address little misunderstandings and disagreements before they turn into major issues. A small glass chip from the rocks of the road left un-patched can cause the breakage to branch out in all directions, and over time, may even cause a collapse. In some cases, the lack of resolve in the minor dents and dilemma's of relationship problems can lead to downhill deterioration of the friendship. Address the squeaky breaks before all control is lost.

### **Protect your investment**

If you allow outside stormy forces like meddling in-laws, work stress, high-maintenance friends, or other demands, to affect your relationship you are more likely to crash. Some environments can be toxic to a healthy marriage. Protect your investment. Protect the unity of your marriage like it was a prized collection piece. Be aware of how other things outside the home can invade and infect a healthy home and family.

### **Schedule ongoing maintenance**

It is essential to establish an ongoing maintenance plan for a strong marriage. If you never got tune-ups for your car, your time, energy and money would be drained for relentless repairs. It would slowly deteriorate and just take up space. Likewise, not being preventative with the direction of your marriage sets the stage for dissatisfaction and complacency, and possibly resentment. Make it a priority to schedule regular time to focus on just the two of you. Then when major challenges arise, you will be more prepared to deal with them and get back on track.

### **Give the right of way**

Just because drivers may have the right of way on any given road does not mean there are times they don't need to yield to others, in order to prevent a collision. Being "right" about any issue in marriage does not override the fact that there must be some yielding in order to safely share the "road" – yielding to compromise or appreciate his or her perspective, or need. Give the right of way and focus on the overall partnership trip.

### **Take it to the shop when needed**

If the road has become too rocky for the two of you, seek a professional. Pull over to the side for a little while to refuel. Ask for directions. Just because you're a car-owner doesn't mean you can resolve any and all auto breakdowns. Some common issues in life leave us feeling like we're in a blizzard and have driven off a cliff - like illness, accidents, job loss, or testing teenagers. Know when you need help as a couple and ask for it. Know when you need more tools to tune up your marriage, and a smoother journey is right around the corner.

If you have a question you would like Susan to address on an upcoming show, email her at [AskSusan@Centerstone.org](mailto:AskSusan@Centerstone.org) or visit [www.Centerstone.org](http://www.Centerstone.org)

For information about scheduling an appointment to tune up your life or relationships, call (615) 460-HELP (4357).

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### **About Centerstone**

Centerstone ([www.centerstone.org](http://www.centerstone.org)), a not-for-profit organization, is the largest behavioral healthcare provider in Tennessee and the ninth largest in the nation. Serving the community for more than fifty years, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to individuals of all ages and their families. Centerstone is devoted to research that seeks to identify, treat and eliminate mental illness. Centerstone provides services to more than 50,000 individuals annually. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs at more than 65 facilities and 140 partnership locations throughout the region. For more information about Centerstone, please call (615) 460-4357 or toll free at (888) 291-4357.

More at Midday May 9, 2007

**About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS**

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.

To request Susan Gillpatrick to speak with your group or organization about complete wellness in living, contact her at (615) 460-4445 or [susan.gillpatrick@centerstone.org](mailto:susan.gillpatrick@centerstone.org).