

**CENTERSTONE****Wellness Program**

Every Marriage is a Fixer-Upper: 7 tools to tune yours up!

Every marriage is a work in progress, and wise couples realize that an occasional relationship remodeling is necessary to stay happy together. Here are seven tools to keep polished in your relationship toolbox:

Beware of foundation failure

A home's strong foundation keeps it standing firm through all seasons. Many times couples forget to maintain the foundation of their relationship, and that can lead to break downs and built up bitterness. Qualities such as kindness, respect, compassion, honesty and friendship are at the core of all great relationships. Values such as faith, family and commitment can help steady a couple when times are tough and unexpected problems pop up. Beware of foundation failure by focusing on what helped you build a genuine friendship in the first place.

Reduce toxins

Some relationships need an extreme makeover due to toxic patterns and behaviors. Angry outbursts, name-calling and other forms of emotional abuse can be lethal to a marriage. Lacking an effective conflict resolution plan is like spreading toxic smoke throughout the home. Parents who fight in front of their children contaminate their sense of safety and love. Holding grudges and carrying lists of your partner's wrongs is like putting poison in your own morning coffee! Eliminate the toxicity of your attitudes and behaviors to enjoy the richness of a healthy relationship.

Keep it fresh

Value your marriage investment by keeping it fresh and fun! Break boring patterns, and kick up the fun factor for your family. Think of ways you can upgrade your time together. Be creative, and try new things. Visit new places. Dine at different restaurants. Meet new friends. Just as a fresh coat of paint can revive a room, and new carpet can revamp the whole appearance, keeping a relationship fresh can revitalize stale habits into stimulating times!

Measure your words

People in the construction industry commonly say, "measure twice, cut once!" By rechecking their measurements, they avoid costly mistakes. Couples who speak before they think can cause costly damages as well. Everyone has days of frustration or disappointment that can lead to negative thoughts about their partner. It is crucial to calm down before speaking with words of mass destruction. In the heat of any crisis, measure your words first.

Do preventative repairs

You wouldn't wait until the roof blew off your house before addressing falling shingles, would you? Don't wait until your relationship has completely fallen apart before addressing problem areas. Perhaps you have ongoing quarrels about who is responsible for particular household chores. Or, you have become less patient with each other. Or, maybe one partner has a new work schedule that has been a challenge for the whole family. Ignoring problems and trivializing your partner's needs can only lead to a slow erosion of love in the relationship.

Know when to hire a professional

Sometimes we get in over our heads when it comes to life's traumas and challenges, and sometimes we can't fix it on our own. I am sure you would hire an automobile professional to restore your car after a minor crash. Or, you'd call a plumber if you were drowning in your basement sewage. We all go through personal and relational difficulties that can put too much pressure on the best of relationships. Parenting your children or caring for aging parents can cause much stress. Grieving the loss of a friend, a job or even a dream can be a debilitating process when going through it alone. You can partner with a professional counselor to help restore your relationship or recover from the potholes of life.

Go green

Always remember your natural resources and the assets you bring to the relationship. Focus on your strengths, your skills and your resilience! Each partner is unique and individual and offers abundant value in the power they have within. Focus on each other's internal greatness before looking for external fillers to boost the growth your relationship. Maximize the energy of your marriage by going "green" today. Recycle great memories, traditions and healthy relationship patterns.

If you or someone you love needs help, contact Centerstone at 888-291- HELP (4357) or visit www.centerstone.org.

If you are in crisis, call Centerstone's 24-Hour Crisis Intervention Hotline at 800-681-7444.

About Centerstone

Centerstone, a not-for-profit organization, has provided a wide range of mental health and addiction services to people of all ages for more than 50 years. Through more than 60 facilities and 170 partnership locations across Middle Tennessee, Centerstone serves more than 50,000 children, adolescents, adults and seniors each year. Centerstone is accredited by The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). For more information about Centerstone, please call 888-291-4357 or visit www.centerstone.org.

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.

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.