

Creating a Safe Place to Talk

WHAT IS THE STATE OF YOUR HEART?

- a. Is it *open or closed*
 - 1. Signs of a closed heart
 - a. Harsh, mean, cruel
 - b. Is insensitive or uncaring (heartless)
 - c. Distant or unavailable (wall)
 - d. Apathetic or lack of interest
 - e. Numb, lethargic, lifeless
 - 2. Signs of an open heart
 - a. Gentle, kind, tender
 - b. Sensitive, compassionate, caring or empathic
 - c. Connected or involved
 - d. Interested, focused, attentive
 - e. Energetic, passionate or full
 - f. Unselfish, considerate or thoughtful
 - g. Transparent

WHY DOES A HEART CLOSE?

- a. When we don't feel *emotionally safe* in a relationship, *our heart will close* and we will disconnect from that person.
 - 1. Unsafe \rightarrow Closed \rightarrow Disconnected \rightarrow No Intimacy
- b. When people feel safe, they are naturally inclined to open their heart. *Intimacy occurs effortlessly and naturally* when hearts and spirits open to one another.
 - 1. Safety \rightarrow Openness \rightarrow Intimacy (*intimacy happens when hearts are open*)

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL SAFETY?

a. Feeling free to open up and reveal who you really are and *know that your spouse will still love, understand, accept, and value you.*

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE FEEL UNSAFE?

- a. Number 1 item that makes people feel unsafe in a survey of 1,000 couples...Criticism
- b. Listed in order of what makes people feel unsafe:
 - 1. Criticism
- 7. Attacked
- 13. Disrespected
 14. Won't share feelings

- 2. Withdrawal
- 8. Controlled
- 3. Belittled
- 9. Gossip 10. Not listened to
- 4. Sarcasm 5. Judged
 - ged 11. Anger
- 6. Ignored 12. Rejected

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE FEEL SAFE?

- a. Attitude: (*Cherish*) Recognize your mate's incredible value 1. Gen. 1:27, Eph. 1:11-12, Ps. 139:15-16, Ps. 139:14, Ex. 19:5
- b. Action: (*Nurture*) Treat your spouse in valuable ways handle their heart (their deepest feelings, thoughts and desires) with genuine interest, curiosity, honor and care.

Product of survey of 1,000 couples – Gary Smalley

I Feel Emotionally Safe When You...

Express gratitude – *the opposite of criticism* Don't judge my feelings, thoughts and opinions Love and accept me unconditionally Practice healthy communication Share your feelings and thoughts Listen – show genuine interest in what I share Validate my feelings Act curious about me Provide affection Spend time with me Serve me in ways that are meaningful to me Be honest Provide positive affirmation Have fun and laugh with me

EXERCISE

I Feel Emotionally Safe When You...