

Relationships

Surviving the Tensions

Some things to ponder in marriage, family & church

1. **All relationships get into difficulty!** None of us is easy to live with at times. We bring our best *and* our worst into marriage, family & church relationships. Someone wrote that “relationship requires shared compassion on the pain of not having arrived yet”.
2. **Notice when you are being reactive.** Reactivity is knee-jerk functioning and almost *never* leads to good movement towards deeper closeness or resolving difficulties. Typically, reactivity brings out our worst. When we’re reacting we’re not choosing. Learn to take yourself on and lessen your reactivity, *whatever* that involves (the list is as varied as each individual, but includes things like anger, control, ‘niceness’, withdrawal, talking too much or too little, being either arrogant or timid, conflict avoidance—name yours and make changes).
3. **Learn to self-soothe.** Like, for a lifetime! Many adults never learn this, and it’s wonderful growth to learn and keep learning inner quietness, and to *calm way down*.
4. **Confront yourself for the sake of your own integrity and personal growth.** After all, the only person you can be sure to change is yourself, and you know that’s not easy! Really taking yourself on is darned hard to do, especially in the long term. But you can get better at it! And it will make a significant difference to you and those you relate to.
5. **Stop taking other people’s responses personally.** He or she is a work in progress too. Their behavior is about *them*, not about you, and he or she needs to learn their own lessons, and take responsibility for their own growth.
6. **Don’t count on the other person to confront himself or herself in return.** “I will if you will” is not healthy maturity, but infantile dependence.
7. **In marriage, keep your mouth shut about your partner’s issues—especially concerning things you’re certain are true.** So, if he or she *does* change, you’ll know it came from them, not from your pressure. (If someone changes because of your nagging, you’ll have to keep it up for the rest of your life together!)
8. **Stop trying to make anyone listen, accept, and validate you. Prayerfully listen to yourself.** This doesn’t mean not caring about them. It does mean that pressuring the other person actually reduces the pressure on *both* of you to change.
9. **When you’re looking for solutions, look in different directions from where you’ve looked in the past.** Learn to think outside the box. Remember, one definition of madness is doing the same things over and over, and hoping for a different result. Most couples and families tend to have the same arguments over and over again.
10. **Let the best in you do the thinking, listening and talking.** Means taking care to build and nurture strong emotional bonds.