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## Spring Newsletter 2025

### *The Ultimate Killer of Marriages*

One of my nicknames is "Fun Fact Mike" I do love fun facts! I'm also passionate about reading research on relationships and I enjoy learning actual, research-based facts rather than just hearing opinions. One researcher I highly respect is Susan Johnson. Here's an insightful quote from her:

"When marriages fail, it is not increasing conflict that is the cause. It is decreasing affection and emotional responsiveness. The demise of marriages begins with a growing absence of responsive intimate interactions."

— Hold Me Tight, p. 38

It might seem like common sense that the decline of a marriage is due to increasing conflict, that couples fight more as things go wrong. But interestingly, the real issue is actually the decrease in affection and emotional responsiveness. In other words, as verbal and physical expressions of love fade, and when partners stop showing up for each other in ways that communicate, "I am here for you," the relationship begins to decay and may eventually fail.

Gary Chapman also has valuable insights. He explains that early in a relationship, we are often "in love with love" a phase he calls the infatuation stage. But within six months to two years, this infatuation fades, and we no longer feel in love with love. Instead, we need to receive love from our partners in ways that speak to our individual love languages to continue feeling loved and connected.

One struggle I often see in marriages is that we see it as one of our many check list items. We might think, "I've got the marriage thing checked off, my list, now I can focus on other things like having and raising kids, buying a house, or advancing in my career." The problem with this mindset is that we stop being attentive to our partner. After all, we know we're in it for the long haul, "for better or for worse", and so we excuse ourselves from putting in effort.

But the truth is, affection and emotional responsiveness really matter! Simple acts like hugging, holding, caressing, and kissing are essential ways to show physical affection. John Gottman, another expert in relationships, emphasizes that for a kiss to make an impact on our brain, it can't just be a quick peck it needs to last at least 7 seconds.

Emotional responsiveness is just as important. It means being present when your partner talks, actively listening, putting away distractions, and focusing on them. It's about looking for ways to make their life easier and better. Smile when they walk into the room. Greet them when they get home. Make time every day to talk for at least 20 minutes, 10 minutes each, and focus on the things that matter to your partner. Let them know they matter to you. Their thoughts, dreams, and ideas are important to you.

**By: Mike Ayers MA, RCC**



We wish to thank everyone who donated to our Fall 2024 Annual Drive. Thanks to your generosity, we are able to offer affordable counselling services, ensuring that support is accessible to all who need it. Without this sliding scale, many people would not be able to get the help they need. We gratefully accept donations all year long. If you would like to support the work we do by making a donation, please contact the office @ **604-585-1411.**



**ALL of our therapists offer ONLINE Counselling sessions. We are finding more often clients are wishing for online sessions as life gets even busier. For some it is because they don't have a local Christian counsellor available to them, for others it is the convenience of being able to meet anytime, anywhere.**



***When going through a tough time; remind yourself that it won't last forever, you'll overcome it , you'll become a better person, you will live a better life.***

## **Tools for Trying Times**

The past few weeks have brought turmoil, uncertainty, and economic and existential fear into the world around us. Decisions made by powerful figures in distant places are affecting us. These are times we did not ask for, don't want, and may feel powerless to navigate.

How do we face this challenge to our economic and national security, and to our minds and souls?

If you have children, your instinct may be to protect them from the news of threats and uncertainty, keeping their routine as normal as possible. This is wise. However, they may hear stories or opinions from others that stir fear and anxiety. Address these calmly and directly: "We don't know what others may do, but we know what we will do."

As adults, it's important to stay informed, about world events, but given how quickly things are changing, it's impossible to track every update and nuance. I recommend reducing your news exposure to one or two trusted, reliable sources and checking in just once or twice a day. If TV news feels overwhelming, listen to reliable radio journalists or read factual, well-researched journalism. Avoid opinion pieces from people without journalism credentials or those you don't personally trust. It's essential to gather factual information so you can make informed decisions for yourself, your family, and your community. Don't let others, especially those who aim to make you fearful, tell you what to think and believe. As Christians, we know that any solution that isn't grounded in "Love God and love your neighbor" is the wrong answer.

We seem to be entering a prolonged period of economic uncertainty. As an individual or family, sit down, review your budget, and differentiate between needs and wants. If you have teens, involve them in these discussions. It's a valuable life skill they'll carry forward for the rest of their lives.

While we may feel helpless in influencing the global situation, what we *can* control is our local actions. Support those in your community who may be struggling due to the world situation. Shop locally to support farmers and businesses. Buy Canadian to support companies that employ people across the country. You can write letters of encouragement or suggestions to local and federal politicians. Are there local food banks, shelters, or organizations that could use donations or volunteers? Are there families in your neighborhood or church community who need assistance? Connecting with others to do good is uplifting.

Consider planting a garden. Even if you only have a balcony, vertical space can grow peas, beans, cherry tomatoes, herbs, and fresh greens. Buy local seeds where possible. West Coast Seeds are ideal for our BC conditions. Swap plants with neighbors or seek out community sales.

We need hope and faith that better days lie ahead. As much as possible, make your home and workplace spaces of peace, calm, and support. Spend less time on social media and more time in God's creation. For children, time spent outdoors doing activities they lead and control, what I call "mucking about"—can build wonder and a deeper connection to God's great world. Visit a beach, turn over rocks in a tide pool, skip stones, or build a sandcastle. Find a forest or field to observe plants and animals. Find some mud you can poke at with a stick. It is a physical and soul reminder that this is God's world and His hand is on it.

When you or your children feel anxious, remember that "This too shall pass." Anxious people seek to control everything, but no one can. Control what you can, do the good you can, connect with each other in love, and hand everything else over to God in prayer.

In Africa, there's a saying: "Things are as they are because of prayer. Our mothers and grandmothers, the women of old, they pray for us."

**By: Jan Bryant MA, RCC**