

Babyproofing Your Relationship

Many of us are quite surprised when we realize the profound effect having a baby has on our marriage. It seems like just yesterday we were ecstatically happy anticipating the birth of our baby. We looked forward to the increased joy and fulfillment the baby would bring to our marriage. Within 6 short months many of us found instead that there is not only less intimacy but also more conflict and even hostility. As a matter of fact John Gottman found that 67% of people report they are less satisfied with their marriages and partners since having children. Only 33% of people say they remain as happy in their marriage. Most people are confused about how this happened and even more confused about how to repair the relationship.

We know is that during the perinatal period conflict and hostility increase and emotional intimacy deteriorates. Couples become bewildered and exhausted, as a result passion, sex and romance plummet.

The following are the major factors in the deterioration of these relationships:

- 1) Become critical, defensive and disrespectful of each other
- 2) Say things they will later regret.
- 3) Not consider their partner's point of view and not compromise.
- 4) Have elevated heart rates during arguments.
- 5) Feel as though their partners are enemies instead of allies.
- 6) Often feel they don't like or respect their partners anymore.
- 7) Eventually both partners report feeling unappreciated, neglected and lonely.

Six important factors for maintaining marital satisfaction and happiness are:

- 1) Realizing that both partners are experiencing new and different stressors. It is important to realize that it is the situation that is causing the problems, not your partner.
- 2) Delight in your baby. Love, hold, and play with your baby together and separately.
- 3) Cool down your conflicts! Keep fights respectful and constructive. BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL OF CRITICISM, CONTEMPT, DEFENSIVENESS AND STONEWALLING. These are the traits that are the strongest predictors of divorce.
- 4) Start your conversations gently. Conversations that are begun with anger, end with anger, 96% of the time.
- 5) Accept influence from your partner. Compromise, compromise, compromise.
- 6) Calm down by self-soothing. Take breaks when necessary or mutually negotiate a time out.

Jacki has been a Marriage Family Therapist for over 15 years. Her passion is helping parents to feel good within themselves and their marriages. As well as fully experiencing the joy of parenthood.

Jacki Silber

Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist

Sequoia Counseling Services, Redwood City, California

Phone: (650) 363-0383 X119 jackisilber@gmail.com