

11th October Couples Talk

Relational Absence with Dermot & Tara Purcell

Takeaways

Whilst the specifics of Tara and Dermot's story may not relate to some, we will probably be able to relate to periods of distance and absence in our relationships. For whatever reason these occur, we would encourage you to think about your own relationship and how external pressures can often play out in negative ways in a marriage.

For Dermot & Tara, these pressures resulted in illness and addiction. Tara was determined to persevere with their marriage through those seven very difficult years. She couldn't have done this without her christian faith and friends to support her and pray with her. Tara's faith journey then became a part of Dermot's own rescue journey.

Below are some reflection questions for you to work through as a couple, whatever your own story. If you have been affected by the specific issues raised in this Couples Talk there are some steps to take at the end as mentioned by Tara and Dermot. There are also some websites you may find useful.

Reflection

Find a time to sit down together with no distractions and reflect together on the following points.

1. Take time to each share the thing that struck you most about Dermot and Tara's story?
2. Tell each other where you see your partner engaging well in your relationship right now and what you are appreciating most.
3. Chat about the concept of 'relational absence' or 'checking out of your relationship' at times (it can be intentional or unintentional) and the potential consequences.
4. We asked you during the webinar in what areas of your life together has 'relational absence' been a challenge either in the present or the past. Take a minute to remind yourselves of your answers or do this for the first time now if you did not answer at the time.

Tick those you have experienced in your relationship (or continue to) ...

Partner 1	Partner 2	Area
		Shallow communication
		Unresolved conflict
		Preoccupation with work
		Priority of sport or a hobby
		Excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol
		Putting the kids before your partner
		Over attention to parents
		Imbalance of other friendships
		Over attention to technology or social media
		Other

5. Decide together which one of those you ticked is most important for your relationship looking forward, either because it is still an issue, or because there are lessons you need to learn that you don't feel you are yet on top of.

6. Discuss the one you decided on in point 4
 - i. Take care to actively listen to each other's perspectives (for some helpful pointers on listening well click [here](#))
 - ii. Ask for forgiveness for your part in it if that's appropriate
 - iii. Agree some next steps that would be helpful
 - iv. Commit to take action

7. Dermot & Tara shared how looking back they can see the importance of
 - having people that they let into their relationships to ask them the difficult questions
 - the difference it makes in your life to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Consider as a couple how you can develop these trusting relationships individually with a friend of the same sex and decide how you will take this forward.

If you would like to find out more about how to discover a relationship with Jesus [take a look here](#)
If you think getting some professional help would be good for your relationship [take a look here](#)

Dealing with addiction in a relationship

- Don't ignore the warning signs, get help sooner rather than later.
- Remember that it is an illness and needs professional care.
- Remember your commitment – remember the promises you made to each other on your wedding day.
- Trust your instincts – be careful who you listen to – don't be too quick to be persuaded by someone not in your situation that the best thing is to leave. Every marriage relationship requires work and compromise. You know your situation the best.
- Don't give up, have patience – you have the power to turn it around.

Other helpful websites:

- <https://www.celebraterecovery.co.uk> A 12-step Bible-based recovery programme to help people address a variety of hurts, hang-ups and habits.
- <https://www.al-anonuk.org.uk> - website for family/friends living with someone with alcoholism.
- <https://www.everyperson.com> A website to explore the christian faith.
- <https://alpha.org.uk> A course to explore the christian faith
- <https://stepscourse.org> Steps is a course to help you with unhelpful habits and explore the christian faith.

And finally, if you want to listen to the song which Dermot & Tara mentioned, [click here](#)