

Relationship Reflections

Introduction

You may have heard the phrase we are all in the same storm but not in the same boat. Whilst there are plenty of shared experiences of the past 15 months, each of us will have our own experiences too. Some of these you may have expressed to your spouse, some you may not have processed. This debrief is a way for you to think and talk about the impact of this global pandemic on you and your relationship.

What is a debrief?

In the broadest sense, debriefing is just a time to pause, remember, and tell the story about a particular event or season.

It's a time to connect with your own soul and, if you're a christian, with Jesus.

Don't rush this. Ideally set aside an evening or afternoon to work through the following questions and activities. You don't have to do it all in one go. Revisit the conversation in the weeks ahead.

As you work through this debrief guide, try to consider these five areas with some questions to start you thinking.

Relational. Are we relationally supported or isolated? Do we have people in our lives we can be honest with?

Emotional. How emotionally well are we? How are we doing at understanding our emotions and regulating them?

Physical. Are we allowing each other the opportunity to take care of ourselves physically? Do we need to change anything about our priorities in this area?

Cognitive. Is your mind busy or quiet? How able are we to share our thought life with each other? Are we aware of each other's mental health?

Spiritual. Has the past year brought up any questions for you spiritually?

Create a Timeline

The purpose of this is really to help you remember the general episodes of the past 15 months, from the first lockdown in March 2020 to the final easing of restrictions in July 2021.

You may want to do this as a list, a map or some elaborate flow-chart! It's really up to you, but make it is something you can add to as you go along.

Think about events, turning points, emotions, thoughts, reactions, stressors, feelings, beliefs and disappointments.

If you are a person of faith, where has God's faithfulness been evident and tangible?

Grief and Loss

Grief is: "This is not the way the world is any more and I need to adapt."

Naming our losses.

Allow for a range of losses- big and small, don't judge, don't compare
Consider people, places, your work, position, role, plans, loss of identity,
belonging, safety, security, finances.

Consider ambiguous losses- when you're unsure what you're grieving, take
time to talk this through.

Grieving well means remembering well. It means that when that grief comes
up, you allow yourself to name it and feel the emotions that come with it.

In time, we come to accept our losses and integrate who we are now after
that loss.

Affirmations & Blessings

We don't use affirmations and blessings as a tool to deny or minimize pain or grief.
We hold them both together.

What has gone well, what is to be celebrated?

What have been the challenges?

What habits, routine, activities do you want to keep or change for you or for your family?

What have you learned about yourself and each other?

What have you most appreciated about your partner?

What area of your relationship would you most like to invest in?

Has this past year brought up any questions spiritually?

Where have you seen God at work?

Additional Questions for Parents

If you are a parent, particularly of young children, well done for getting here!

Lockdown will have brought with it a whole extra set of challenges. It is good to acknowledge this and not to put the same set of expectations on yourself as in 'normal' times.

What have been the particular challenges for you?

What are your particular losses and griefs?

What are your particular blessings?

Have you been able to articulate these to your spouse?

Add the highs and lows to your timeline.

What changes do you need to make to adapt to these in the months ahead?

Memorialising and Looking Ahead

What is memorialising?

This is marking a significant person or event by connecting the past to the present and the future.

It helps us to tell a story and can give us hope and comfort.

It can be a reminder of a personal experience with God.

How do we memorialise?

We often do this naturally without calling it memorialising.

Looking at the past 15 months, here are some ideas to memorialise:

Create a photo-memory book or write a story.

Incorporate a new tradition into everyday life.

Create a music playlist of lockdown songs.

Make your timeline into a work of art!

"From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as
my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock
that is higher than I."
Psalm 61:2

We hope you have found this debrief a blessing to
you and your relationship.

For further relationship resources visit
www.familylife.org.uk

With thanks to Sandy Fernandez Trzcinski, some material taken from her
Pandemic Debrief Journey

For more information, visit Sandy's blog:
www.sparkwhatmatters.com