

# Spiritual Tip

## Wise People Consider Other People's Feelings

By Rick Warren

Two of the biggest mistakes we make in relationships are when we react to what people say and not how they feel — or when we invalidate someone else's feelings because we don't feel that way ourselves.

Do you know what the antidote is for both of these? Simply being considerate.

### Mistake #1: We react without trying to understand

We pay too much attention to someone's words and not enough attention to the emotions behind the words. People say stuff when they're angry that they don't even mean. They use words they don't even intend to use. They exaggerate things. But you need to look behind the words at the emotion because people don't always say what they mean, but they always feel what they feel.

So if you're wise in a relationship, you stop focusing on what your kids or your boyfriend or your husband or your wife or your boss says that just ticks you off, and you start being considerate. That simply means you are mindful of the feelings of others. Unkind people are those who need your kindness the most. When people are rude and unkind, they are screaming to the world, "I'm in pain!" Hurt people always hurt people.

### Mistake #2: We invalidate any feelings that we don't feel ourselves

This is when you believe something is dumb or irrational or illogical because it's not what you feel, and you dismiss it. Let me ask you this, can one person be cold and another be warm at the same time? Yes. So why try to argue people out of what they feel?

When we invalidate someone else's feelings because we don't feel it, we minimize the other person. Guys, if your girlfriend or your wife says to you, "I feel ugly," don't dismiss it and say, "You're not ugly!" That doesn't help at all. What you need to do is say, "Why would you feel that? What would make you say that?" because you need to look beyond the words and get to the real issue.

Feelings are neither right nor wrong. They're just there. She shouldn't have to defend her feelings. She just needs you to say, "I hear you." And the same is true for anyone, male or female.

The Bible says, ***"The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere"*** (James 3:17 NIV).

With Heaven's wisdom, you'll stop minimizing other people's feelings. You will let her feel tired when she's tired and not try to talk her out of it. You will let him feel depressed when he's depressed and not try to talk him out of it. Wise people are considerate of other people's feelings.

Talk About It

- What effect do you see in people when you show kindness to them when they are hurting?
- What habits do you need to change or adopt to become more considerate of people's feelings and not just their words?

# Marriage Tip

## Why Women Never Forget an Argument

By Dr. John Gray

Understanding our different thought patterns helps us to better appreciate our partners.

Women's brains are wired to feel and recall emotions far more intensely than the brains of men. The process of experiencing emotion and then storing that emotion as a memory occurs more readily in a woman's brain than in that of a man.

Although scientists have not yet been able to identify the exact neural basis for this difference, studies consistently indicate that women tend to have more vivid memories of emotional events than men. Under stress, during an argument for example, a woman's mind often becomes flooded with these memories.

What researchers have discovered is that men and women store emotional memories in two different areas of the brain. Men in the right amygdala and women in the left amygdala of the brain. The connections that women have between emotional memories and emotional reactions are closely associated. For men that same process is performed in two different hemispheres of the brain.

Here as in many of the differences between the functioning of the male and female brains, the connections that women have between feelings, thoughts, and actions can be better explained as examples of whole brain function, whereas males evidence the compartmentalization of many of these functions where connections are not clearly made.

All of this is more easily understood in terms of males hunting while females performed a variety of functions back at home, not the least of which was raising the children. While a male may focus on one object for hours on end (think hunting) a female is wired to juggle three different things at the same time (dinner is cooking, two of the boys are wandering off from the encampment, and the two girls are fighting over a stick.)

The male focus on one particular object or point to the exclusion of most everything else has long been considered a possible reason why modern males enjoy games centered around a moving object: a baseball, a hockey puck, a golf ball.

Women have the capacity to remember the negative and the positive things that their mate did in the past with much greater clarity than a man will. That doesn't mean that a man will not remember a hurtful act, but as a rule he will not be able to recall good and bad moments with the clear and vivid response that a woman will have.

Just as men don't like to hear their mates say, "This is the same mistake you made last year," they love to hear about times when they did something kind and pleased their partner. As for their failures to do that, men tend to filter this out and leave it forgotten in the past.

Women who expect men to express the same degree of intensity and accuracy about personal issues and events are inevitably disappointed. When a woman lowers her expectations of what she believes her partner should recall it lessens the tension between them. She is not lowering her expectations, she is realizing the difference in how they both store and recall emotional memories.

Obviously it is disappointing to a woman that her partner won't recall a particular moment, but it's important to remember that we're not living out a carefully scripted Hollywood romance. In real life we simply function in our own unique way with the intellectual capacity that nature has given us.

# Parenting Tip

## Are You Raising Nice Kids?

By Amy Joyce

Earlier this year, I wrote about teaching empathy, and whether you are a parent who does so. This is from Richard Weissbourd, a Harvard psychologist, who runs the Making Caring Common project, aimed to help teach kids to be kind.

I know, you'd think that parents are teaching that themselves, right? Not so, according to a new study released by the group.

About 80 percent of the youth in the study said their parents were more concerned with their achievement or happiness than whether they cared for others. The interviewees were also three times more likely to agree that "My parents are prouder if I get good grades in my classes than if I'm a caring community member in class and school."

Weissbourd and his cohorts have come up with recommendations about how to raise children to become caring, respectful and responsible adults.

"Children are not born simply good or bad and we should never give up on them. They need adults who will help them become caring, respectful, and responsible for their communities at every stage of their childhood," the researchers write.

The five strategies to raise moral, caring children, from Making Caring Common:

### 1. Make caring for others a priority

**Why?** Parents tend to prioritize their children's happiness and achievements over their children's concern for others. But children need to learn to balance their needs with the needs of others, whether it's passing the ball to a teammate or deciding to stand up for friend who is being bullied.

**How?** Children need to hear from parents that caring for others is a top priority. A big part of that is holding children to high ethical expectations, such as honoring their commitments, even if it makes them unhappy. For example, before kids quit a sports team, band, or a friendship, we should ask them to consider their obligations to the group or the

friend and encourage them to work out problems before quitting.

*Try this*

- Instead of saying to your kids: "The most important thing is that you're happy," say "The most important thing is that you're kind."
- Make sure that your older children always address others respectfully, even when they're tired, distracted, or angry.
- Emphasize caring when you interact with other key adults in your children's lives. For example, ask teachers whether your children are good community members at school.

### 2. Provide opportunities for children to practice caring and gratitude

**Why?** It's never too late to become a good person, but it won't happen on its own. Children need to practice caring for others and expressing gratitude for those who care for them and contribute to others' lives. Studies show that people who are in the habit of expressing gratitude are more likely to be helpful, generous, compassionate, and forgiving - and they're also more likely to be happy and healthy.

**How?** Learning to be caring is like learning to play a sport or an instrument. Daily repetition - whether it's a helping a friend with homework, pitching in around the house, or having a classroom job - make caring second nature and develop and hone youth's caregiving capacities. Learning gratitude similarly involves regularly practicing it.

*Try this*

- Don't reward your child for every act of helpfulness, such as clearing the dinner table. We should expect our kids to help around the house, with siblings, and with neighbors and only reward uncommon acts of kindness.
- Talk to your child about caring and uncaring acts they see on television and about acts of justice and injustice they might witness or hear about in the news.

- Make gratitude a daily ritual at dinnertime, bedtime, in the car, or on the subway. Express thanks for those who contribute to us and others in large and small ways.

### 3. Expand your child's circle of concern.

**Why?** Almost all children care about a small circle of their families and friends. Our challenge is help our children learn to care about someone outside that circle, such as the new kid in class, someone who doesn't speak their language, the school custodian, or someone who lives in a distant country.

**How?** Children need to learn to zoom in, by listening closely and attending to those in their immediate circle, and to zoom out, by taking in the big picture and considering the many perspectives of the people they interact with daily, including those who are vulnerable. They also need to consider how their decisions, such as quitting a sports team or a band, can ripple out and harm various members of their communities. Especially in our more global world, children need to develop concern for people who live in very different cultures and communities than their own.

*Try this*

- Make sure your children are friendly and grateful with all the people in their daily lives, such as a bus driver or a waitress.
- Encourage children to care for those who are vulnerable. Give children some simple ideas for stepping into the "caring and courage zone," like comforting a classmate who was teased.
- Use a newspaper or TV story to encourage your child to think about hardships faced by children in another country.

### 4. Be a strong moral role model and mentor.

**Why?** Children learn ethical values by watching the actions of adults they respect. They also learn values by thinking through ethical dilemmas with adults, e.g. "Should I invite a new neighbor to my birthday party when my best friend doesn't like her?"

**How?** Being a moral role model and mentor means that we need to practice honesty, fairness, and caring ourselves. But it doesn't mean being perfect all the time. For our children to respect and trust us, we need to acknowledge our mistakes and flaws. We also need to respect children's thinking and listen to their perspectives, demonstrating to them how we want them to engage others.

*Try this:*

- Model caring for others by doing community service at least once a month. Even better, do this service with your child.
- Give your child an ethical dilemma at dinner or ask your child about dilemmas they've faced.

### 5. Guide children in managing destructive feelings

**Why?** Often the ability to care for others is overwhelmed by anger, shame, envy, or other negative feelings.

**How?** We need to teach children that all feelings are okay, but some ways of dealing with them are not helpful. Children need our help learning to cope with these feelings in productive ways.

*Try this:*

Here's a simple way to teach your kids to calm down: ask your child to stop, take a deep breath through the nose and exhale through the mouth, and count to five. Practice when your child is calm. Then, when you see her getting upset, remind her about the steps and do them with her. After a while she'll start to do it on her own so that she can express her feelings in a helpful and appropriate way.

### Compliments of the District 1 Marriage and Family Ministry, FFWPU

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