



Learning Intimacy in a Lonely World

Safe Place Chart

Overview

Although we will focus our attention on marriage, this chart relates to all our close, bonded relationships, including:

- Our relationship with God
- Our relationship with our Parents
- Our relationship with our Spouse
- Others...?

We all need others who we see as a place of *safety* and *security* (see Genesis 2:24-25). And our relationships deepen as we experience others' compassion, love, and solidarity in our times of need.

Yet we often prefer to *hide* rather than really show our true self (see Genesis 3). That's why our times of distress can lead us one of two directions: toward a healthy relationship, or toward an unhealthy / unsustainable way of coping.

What Grows and Deepens our Marriage Relationship:

Our relationship grows and deepens as we share our "storms" with our spouse, and find in them the understanding, support, and companionship we need. We run to them versus running elsewhere.

The skills required are not rocket science but usually we have one or two to work on! Here are a few of them:

1. Naming Our Storm: Self-Understanding.

- Do we have self awareness?
- Can we name our emotions?

Some examples of "storms" include:

- Guilt. Maybe we need to ask forgiveness of our spouse but that feels risky.
- Anxiety about something outside our relationship.
- A need within the relationship that we don't know how to discuss.

2. Taking the Risk: Vulnerability.

Are we willing to open up?

Our we willing to give our spouse the *opportunity* to be there for us?

Just as importantly, *can we do so honestly and vulnerably—without accusation?*

Anger and anxiety can pose problems here.

3. Being a Safe Place.

Do I lead with compassion and seek understanding?

Or, does our spouse have good reason to expect criticism or dismissiveness?

4. Knowing our “False Refuge” (unsafe place).

All false refuges are where we go besides the Lord, our spouse, or someone else trustworthy God has placed in our life. They only create new, usually worse, storms—usually not immediately.

Everyday examples: Holding it in, beating myself up, just trying harder, wearing masks, distracting myself with more work, hobbies, etc. Also patterns of control or anxious peacekeeping.

More extreme: Addictions, affairs.