Strengthening Emotional and Physical Intimacy: Creating a Mindful Marriage

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Chris and Ginny were struggling and had come to me (Jason) for therapeutic help. Her first explanation for their problems was that Chris was always busy. "He works hard for us," she admitted, "But we never see him. Even when he is home he is often texting or surfing social media."

"I am a one-man show," he said. "She said she would be supportive of me starting my own lending company, but now that I am trying to keep track of clients and deals, she resents it. Also, I have busy church responsibilities, and that cuts into our evenings." They have three young children, and Ginny worked part time as an aide in her son's special needs kindergarten class. As we set goals together, Ginny said she wanted to have more time with Chris where they could talk about important things. "He hates to talk and gets really defensive if I am upset. He is always worn out from work and says that we should talk another time, but we never do. I need his help with the kids, and I want to have someone to talk with."

"She is the one that is always too tired," Chris responded. "We rarely have sex, and if we do, she acts like it is just something to endure. I don't want to be intimate if she is grudgingly going along with it." It became clear that despite their commitment to each other, there were some significant barriers getting in their way of deep connection. Ginny had a sexual abuse history and was often uncomfortable with touch and intimacy, and Chris had come from a highly critical family and habitually shuts down at any perceived emotional attack. It came to a head one day as Ginny had felt backed into a corner about their sex life. "You don't have to have sex! You don't need it to survive, and it is usually selfish!" Chris responded with frustration, "Well, you don't have to have all these deep talks! We can live without those and be

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just fine." After stopping this exchange, I suggested that while it was true that while neither technically needed these things to survive, just staying physically alive together was a pretty low standard for marriage. These two needed to slow down, connect, and learn what intimacy was—in all aspects of their relationship. One of the ways we began working on this was through mindfulness.

Mindfulness can be defined as "the direction of attention toward one's ongoing experience, in a manner that is characterized by openness and acceptance" (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 231). It is an attitude of being in the present moment without getting caught up in reactions to situations (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Mindfulness originated from Eastern traditions of meditation and has been adapted to therapeutic treatments for addiction (Brewer, Elwafi, & Davis, 2014), trauma (Follette, Palm, & Pearson, 2006), eating disorders, depression, and anxiety (Baer, 2014). Mindfulness has also been found to be helpful in romantic relationships by boosting relationship functioning and stress-coping skills (Barnes, Brown, Krusemark, Campbell, & Rogge, 2007). In one study, researchers taught couples mindfulness skills and techniques and followed up with them 3 months after the training. Couples who implemented these skills experienced more relationship satisfaction, emotional closeness, acceptance of one another, and less emotional distress. They also experienced optimism, relaxation, and less psychological stress (Carson, Carson, Gil, & Baucom, 2004). With Ginny and Chris, we worked together to become more present and nonjudgmental, strengthen their compassion, deepen their emotional connection, and become more sexually mindful.

Presence and Connection in Couples

Chris and Ginny were often in the same room but worlds apart. They were distracted by business interruptions, children, church and community responsibilities, and constant alerts on their devices. Our brains are skilled at monitoring the surroundings and making connections, but this works against us in a world of bombarding stimuli and useless distractions. Although we are naturally social, our ability to connect to others often gets pushed to the back burner because the brain can't pay attention to multiple things. It can jump quickly around but can't focus on two processes at the same time (Goleman, 2013). A common emphasis of mindfulness is to be in the present moment. This occurs when outer distractions are shut off and thoughts (including past regrets or future worries) are set aside as attention is gently brought back to what, or who, is right here, right now.

One of the most common barriers in relationships occurs from the devices that are now attached to seemingly every living person. When someone is checking an alert, surfing a post, or picking up their phone in the presence of a loved one, it instantly puts a barrier between them. Researchers have labeled this phenomenon "phubbing" or phone snubbing, and it happens a lot. Have you ever seen a spouse surfing the web while the other is talking to them or checking their Instagram at dinner or surfing Facebook in the bedroom? When this happens, the relationship

vanishes because the surfer is not with the person nearby. Researchers have found that phubs damage relationships and increase dissatisfaction and depression. About 25% of couples have fought over phubs (Goldberg, 2018). Other researchers have labeled this problem "technoference," because technology interference clogs up conversations, dates, and intimate lives (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016).

When spouses are distracted, it causes not only distance but also resentment. It feels devaluing to be pushed aside in favor of cat videos or texts. Ginny felt hurt and deflated when Chris stopped listening to her to respond to another buzz on his phone. "That is fair," Chris agreed, "But sometimes I call her during the day. and it is obvious that she is half-listening, and she won't remember what we talked about later. I give up because she acts like the kids are more interesting than me."

Being present takes effort in a world of distractions. One study estimated that partners are distracted about 70% of the time, meaning that they are potentially aware of each other about 30% of the time, leaving the chance that they both are available at the *same* time about 9% (Gottman, 2011). For Chris and Ginny, learning to connect required some basic agreements to stop, put away devices, and become good listeners, like they were when first dating. They realized that in their early relationship, they would look into each other's eyes, follow body language, and ask personal questions. They didn't roll their eyes and interrupt, but instead were engaged and eager, and the phones were typically put away. To get back to this quality of presence, they chose to do what had come naturally when they were first in love. But in doing so, they became more appreciative of each other and were reminded that "In a world of inner and outer distractions, it is a gift to give the present to your partner" (Whiting, 2016, p. 118).

A Nonjudgmental Relationship

Another principle of mindfulness is to take a nonjudgmental stance. In marriage, it is easy to become opinionated, moralizing, or impatient with differences. Sanctimonious spouses are annoying but common because it feels good to be superior. As author and scientist David Brin has said, "Self-righteousness can also be heady, seductive, and even…addictive. Any truly honest person will admit that the state *feels good*. The pleasure of knowing, with subjective certainty, that you are *right* and your opponents are deeply, despicably *wrong*" (Brin, 2005). However, since all couples have different opinions, preferences, and values, there will be clashes if each person insists that their way is the right way. Healthy relationships are open to differences and include accommodation and acceptance. When couples deal with these differences in a kind way, they will be more successful than those who are threatened or make snide comments. Rather, healthy couples have a balance of compromise as they work out differences and alternate making suggestions and accommodations (Smith, Whiting, Crane, Felderhoff, & Stapp, 2015).

Relationships with high judgment tend to have either a lot of conflict or a lot of conflict avoidance, and both of these styles lead to resentment. In marriage, both

should be able to share opinions without criticism regardless of whether they agree. Chris realized that he had become judgmental about Gina's use of time, and she realized she had become critical of the way he was around the house, like how he put the dishes away or played with their children. They both had become sarcastic, and this led to further distance (Whiting, Harris, Oka, & Cravens, 2016). Both worked on becoming more accepting and less judgmental, and this made their conversations more free and friendly. This was an important step in strengthening the compassion and love they once had enjoyed.

Developing Mindful Compassion

Some couples become discouraged when their strong feelings of love seem to fade, but mindful principles can help here as well. Psychologist Barbara Fredrickson has found that love can be rekindled through mindful practices. She studies the vagus nerve, which is a connector between the brain and heart that triggers tiny facial muscles associated with eye contact and facial expressions. Fredrickson asked volunteers to practice feelings of love and kindness in a meditation. They reflected upon thoughtful phrases and wished others peace, well-being, and happiness. This reinforced vagal tone, which improved participants' capacity to track moods and feel love (Fredrickson, 2013). Stronger vagal tone helped partners self-soothe, control their moods, and have empathy, and these results were so impressive that the Dali Lama took an interest in the project.

It is important for couples to deliberately choose to be loving, because compassion is the adhesive that keeps a relationship safe and strong after the initial headiness if infatuation fades. Ongoing intimacy takes investment in the well-being of the spouse and a willingness to be open to their joys, as well as their pain. The term "compassion" is derived from Latin words that mean "to suffer together." In this sense, compassion is more than sympathy. It is taking on a spouse's burdens and feeling what they feel. It keeps couples connected and also acts as a healing influence. In one study, patients with irritable bowel syndrome signed up for an "acupuncture treatment." One group was welcomed by a caring, friendly researcher who asked each participant about his or her life, pain, and symptoms. After this introduction, they received the treatment. However, the acupuncture needles were a sham and didn't pierce the skin. Then, came the comparison group. Patients got the same trick needles but were treated abruptly by the assistant—no kind inquiry and no sympathy—just a quick in and out. Neither got any actual medical help for their painful bowels. However, the symptoms of those who received kindness and compassion got significantly better than those who were treated brusquely (Kaptchuk et al., 2008). It wasn't the treatment that helped, but the presence of a caring person. This is one reason spouses in a healthy marriage live longer than those alone or in unhealthy relationships. This isn't just because wives insist husbands get to the doctor. It is also because compassionate love lowers stress, soothes pain, and creates an intimate connection that promotes wellness in both.

This was found in another study examining the brain responses of those in new and still passionate relationships as they looked at pictures of either (1) their partner, (2) an attractive person of the same age and gender as the partner, or (3) a neutral word association designed to distract from pain. Viewers watched these pictures while being shocked on their hand, but as they were looking at their lover, their brains had a unique response. Not only was there less pain (the word distraction also had that effect), but there was a "pharmacologic activation of reward systems." In other words, the partner acted as medicine, with their face triggering the reward centers of the brain that light up from other pleasures like cocaine or winning money (Younger, Aron, Parke, Chatterjee, & Mackey, 2010). A similar study found that love stimulates the brain's cannabinoid neurotransmitters. The buzz you get from touching and connecting with your lover really is like medical marijuana (Wei et al., 2015). Care for the relationship is good for soul and the body.

Gina and Chris began to practice loving-kindness meditations that emphasize gratitude for life and for others, and they focused on things that they appreciated about each other. They chose to share blessings each day through text or conversations, and this further softened their resentment and helped them laugh and enjoy time together.

Emotional Intimacy and Connection

Humans are hardwired to connect in intimate ways. Infants do this with caregivers, and adults do it with significant others (Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1998). When people are unable to connect to one another, the brain senses danger and goes into what has been termed a "primal panic" (Panksepp, 1998). It is deeply uncomfortable and painful to be isolated, and consistently, being alone emotionally and physically is tortuous and can even be deadly (Hawkley, Masi, Berry, & Cacioppo, 2006).

Unfortunately, many couples feel alone, even when they are in the same house. This happens when they fail to connect intimately. Although many couples complain of poor communication, this doesn't mean that they are not sending any messages to each other. Rather, it means that the messages are shallow, harsh, or dismissing. Most couples are able to communicate these negative messages just fine, but many lose their ability to share meaningful things that generate love and closeness. This is not usually a matter of skill, but a willingness to be open and take risks. When couples are able to be honest and share from a place of vulnerability, they can find intimacy and emotional closeness (Greenman & Johnson, 2013). The ability to share real emotions is also the best way to reconnect after disconnection, especially if there has been a rupture in the relationship.

In one session, Ginny was frustrated that Chris had gone out with his friends and got home later than she thought was reasonable. After some back-and-forth blaming and criticizing, we stopped and posed the question to Ginny: "When Chris was out so long with his friends, what was underneath your hurt feelings?" Ginny looked down at her hands and said, "I just wanted to be included. I'm never included in his

life. He has all his important clients, church people, and even his buddies. I get the leftovers." Like most people, Ginny wanted to know that she mattered. Admitting this took courage for her, but after her confession, Chris softened, moved closer, and said, "I wish you would say it like that instead of telling me I'm selfish." To which she responded, "I guess I was scared you would make fun of me or criticize me even more for needing you." Behind her anger, blame, and criticism was a wife who wanted to know that she was a priority in his life. Underneath his frustration and withdrawal was someone who felt like he was a failing husband and was scared she wouldn't love him back.

The Depth of Emotions

Anyone can be taught skills, but without safety and emotional intimacy, skills are mechanical and can even be manipulative. A used-car salesman may be a skilled communicator but can also be selfish and pushy in using those skills. In marriage, the underlying virtues are more important than the skills. If the heart is good, then attempts to connect through listening and talking will be beneficial, but if the attitude is negative, then skills will not work. In a virtuous marriage, both partners try to do the right thing by being kind and understanding the other person, as well as themselves (Goodsell & Whiting, 2016). One of the best ways for individuals to start understanding their relationships and themselves is to get in touch with their own and their partners' emotions.

Our feelings are powerful and drive couples to connect, as well as stir up conflict. The word emotion comes from the Latin root *movere* which means *to move*. Emotions propel partners to take action, and it is helpful to be aware of how this happens. For Ginny and Chris, it was important to help them settle into their own feelings and identify the difference between *secondary* emotions and *primary* emotions. Primary emotions are experienced as automatic and include deep feelings of sadness or fear. Secondary or reactionary emotions are usually a "reaction" to these primary emotions. For example, when Ginny laughed at something one of Chris's colleagues did, Chris felt anger, but this was fed by his insecurity about his difficult professional tasks. It took some work for him to realize this, so his first reaction was to become frustrated and pull away from Gina. After he realized that his reaction was based on fear, he stepped back from his blame of Ginny and was able to talk about it.

The more couples work on emotional awareness and expression, the better they get at it. Relationships get into ruts, but spouses can, with effort, get out of them and on a better track. Brains can be rewired and new habits can be created. Better choices are healing and reinforcing, and new safety leads to more meaningful words and less tension, which then increases intimacy and more safety.

Mindful practices are designed to increase awareness of self, and while this can be uncomfortable, it is part of growth. One evening Chris and Ginny were listening to a spiritual mindfulness podcast, and Chris became overcome with emotion. Gina

was able to hear him as he expressed his feelings without trying to interpret or block them. She at first was threatened to see him with such strong sensations, but she chose to hold his hand and just focus on his experience. It was a turning point for them in their ability to share strong feelings together. As they became more attuned to themselves and each other, they became more accepting and more empathetic as well (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), and this helped them feel more connected as friends and lovers.

Creating Mindful Sexuality

Gina and Chris's sexual connection had not only fizzled; it had become a place of tension and frustration. Their sex life symbolized their whole relationship, and incorporating mindful principles of awareness, presence, and nonjudgment in the bedroom was very helpful in their relationship as a whole. Although applying sexual mindfulness was met with some tentativeness, with education and practice, it became natural.

Sexual mindfulness is the ability to remain aware and nonjudgmental within a sexual experience. For many, this is challenging because sex can include distractions of anxiety and judgment. Men are often socialized to be the initiator of sex and be an ever-ready partner (Siann, 2013). Women can be socialized to feel cheap or slutty when enjoying sexuality or pressure to be hyper-attentive to a partner's pleasure and not her own (Sanchez, Kiefer, & Ybarra, 2006). The effect of these messages is sexual distraction and a loop of self-evaluation of sexual identity and experience. In the case of Gina, she had been mistreated and forced when she was young, which left her fearful about being taken advantage of and uncomfortable with many aspects of sexual responses. Chris felt her anxiety, which fed his own sense of frustration about not being desired and increased his worry about meeting her needs in a safe way. Sexual mindfulness helped them focus on present experiences rather than these distracting thoughts.

For many, it is easiest to be mindful when alone, such as during yoga or in a meditation. Interacting with others in relational mindfulness can test one's ability to remain aware and nonjudgmental, and these challenges can increase in the charged and emotional sexual relationship. For many, there are expectations on sex: to feel a particular way, to be sexual or look a certain way, to end with orgasm, or follow a certain pattern. Women, particularly, may have harsh opinions of their naked body or feel insecure about how they look, act, or feel during sex, and this may be especially true if pornography has been a source of conflict in the marriage. Men may feel discomfort with emotions that sex evokes, or they may rush the experience of sex to reach the goal of orgasm.

Overcoming Sexual Anxiety Through Presence and Nonjudgment

Anxiety is one of the most troubling and consistent sexual functioning issues for men and women, and mindfulness addresses this directly (Lucas, 2012; McCarthy & Metz, 2008). Men and women who practice sexual mindfulness try to refocus when negative thoughts intrude and pay attention to the physical feelings and emotions unfolding in the present moment. Chris and Ginny began this process by doing mindfulness practices to become more aware of their own physical and mental states which brought greater awareness of how they were feeling physically, even before they became intimate. For instance, Gina said that she noticed that she often carried tension in her back or neck, and Chris became more aware that he clenched his jaw and that his irritability was often related to physical or sexual tension. As they brought this growing awareness to their sex life, they set aside expectations and focused on the sensations of touch, physical pleasures, and feelings. They also focused on the rhythm of their breathing and did body scans, gently bringing awareness to each body area to explore the stress or state of that section. They became more aware of how heightened arousal was affecting them emotionally and physically and what meanings they associated with sex. As Chris and Ginny slowed down and changed their expectations, they also found that their ability to talk about intimacy became safer and more meaningful.

Sex is more than just a physical act for couples. Becoming more sexually mindful includes understanding the meaning of sex as well as the emotions that are associated with it. Chris and Ginny discussed their emotions, responses, excitement, experience, and the journey they were taking together. They came to appreciate the vulnerability of sex as something that represented a total sharing of themselves with each other.

Overcoming Sexual Barriers with Mindfulness

Because of Ginny's troubled history with touch, she struggled with some of the strong feelings sexuality triggered. It was helpful for her to explore the relationship between pleasure, pain, and discomfort in the process of accepting her bodily sensations. Pleasure and pain use the same neural receptors, and a natural reaction to pain is tension (Kim, Zhang, Muralidhar, LeBlanc, & Tonegawa, 2017), which helps blunt the experience. The same can be true of pleasure. Some people feel uncomfortable with new sensations or emotions and resist the feeling and blunt it or rush through it to lessen its intensity, which diminishes the overall experience.

However, mindfulness helped Ginny acknowledge unfamiliar sensations, sit with them, be curious about them, and examine how they made her feel. This did not happen at once but took months of patience and courage. She had to communicate with Chris about how she was doing, and he needed to be sensitive about how things

were going for both, and some of their learning experiences happened during their failures when they would rush through sex or get distracted or frustrated. As they embraced success and failure and pleasure and pain, they learned from each other.

Befriending Your Body Through Acceptance and Nonjudgment

Unfortunately, most people are dissatisfied with their bodies, and this can set up challenges in the bedroom. Becoming a friend rather than a critic includes examining ones' internalized messages about the body and being open to the unique, awkward, and unusual parts of sex. In mindful eating, a person focuses on the feel, texture, and sensations of food, and the same principles apply in sexual mindfulness. Our body has drives, and honoring and exploring these are more helpful than ignoring them. For example, if someone ignores their hunger, it will eventually push forward and may result in scarfing a candy bar instead of a well-balanced meal. If intimate couples don't engage in regular, nourishing sexual experiences, they may get frustrated, impulsive, or distant. One of the goals of sexual mindfulness is to create a space where couples can regularly honor their bodily drives for sex and practice developing the skills of mindfulness in an atmosphere of intentional sexuality.

As Ginny and Chris became more intentional, they paradoxically became more relaxed. They set aside time, including certain days of the week, to be together. This helped Ginny feel like she could prepare for intimacy and helped Chris feel less anxious about not getting together. Their expectations changed from only orgasmic sex to also include sensual touching, holding each other, or just talking about sexual feelings. They shared sexual ideas and activities and gained confidence in their ability to be comfortable with low levels as well as more intense levels of sexual arousal. Although couples are different in terms of how often to connect, most couples benefit from sexual experiences multiple times a week.

Gender Differences in Sexual Mindfulness

Research has found that sexual satisfaction increases as people practice sexual mindfulness (Khaddouma, Gordon, & Bolden, 2015; Leavitt, Lefkowitz, & Waterman, 2019), but it is also typical that men and women have different experiences with the process. In general, sexual mindfulness helps women gain needed grounding within their own body and learn to honor her pleasure as much as her partners', and women tend to benefit more from nonjudgment and acceptance about body image and performance (Brotto, 2013; Brotto & Barker, 2015). Men are generally already more aware of their bodies and sexual sensations and less judgmental

of themselves, so one of their roles is patience and encouragement. A husband can prompt his wife to pay attention to her own body and remind her of the sensations they create together. He can focus less on his own sexual goals and more on the couple's physical and emotional connection with each other.

Moving Forward Together Mindfully

The mindful journey to intimacy is a lifelong trip. It is not a destination, and intimacy is not a location to arrive at. This is the reason that mindfulness is called a "practice." It is a process that is simple to try but will never be mastered. A relationship is made up of two people that have unique preferences and personalities that don't always mesh, and using mindfulness to grow closer takes time and energy. However, for those who are committed, there are endless ways of being mindful together. Couples who want to deepen intimacy can try personal mindful practices through apps or videos, couples therapy, reading books together, spending meaningful time on dates, and trying the ideas contained in this chapter. It will take patience and intentionality, but the results can change relationships.

For Ginny and Chris, mindful efforts paid off. They reduced not only their individual crankiness but also their relational conflict. They became comfortable talking about their feelings, including formerly delicate subjects like their sex life and old hurts. They set aside their devices and focused on each other, protecting their alone time from children and other interruptions. They chose to be kind and compassionate, share their feelings, and think positively about each other and their marriage. They slowed down and prioritized their sex life. It wasn't easy, and there were relapses, but they were committed. By choosing a mindful marriage, they became more emotionally and physically intimate.

Appendix: Mindful Marriage Practices

Mindful Body Scan With this exercise, find a time where you can be away from any distractions such as phones or interruptions from family. Begin by sitting or lying down and becoming aware of your body and its sensations such as tension or tightness. Try to become aware of your emotions of feeling restless or calm. Start to focus on your breath where you feel it most prominently such as your nose, mouth, or chest. Notice your breath as it comes in and as it comes out, breath by breath. Next, notice your body from the head to your toes and the sensations that are felt. Then, simply be aware of and be curious of your sensations and your emotions in a nonjudgmental way.

Mindful Appreciation and Awareness As a couple, sit down when you are calm and relaxed, and talk about your relationship. Perhaps set a time limit of 10–15 min. Start by discussing the positives that you appreciate about your partner (e.g., *You are a very good father to our children, and I really appreciate that because I know some fathers don't put their children as a priority.*) and the positive areas of your relationship (e.g., *I really appreciate that we are good with our money, and we generally agree in that area of our relationship.*).

Next, begin discussing some of the ways that you have disconnections, and see if you can identify the pattern that comes and attacks your relationship. Try not to focus on the topic that you argue about but rather the *way* that you argue and the way you move away from each other and/or move toward each other. As the days and weeks go on, try to recognize this pattern the next time you argue or find yourself in a conflict. Point it out together. Also, be mindful of your emotions when your negative pattern comes up, and share this with your partner when you are feeling calm and there is less tension in the relationship. For example, you might say, "I've noticed that when I am stressed, I tend to pull away which then affects you. You pick up on my withdraw and show what I perceive as frustration. Then, I tend to get defensive and pull away more which, I'm going to guess, is really tough for you. Is that close?" After you have agreed on a general pattern, promise each other that you will work together to fight against this pattern when it comes up. A phrase that Jeremy (third author) uses and teaches to couples and students is to come toward your partner with "compassionate curiosity" rather than frustration, defensiveness, or blame. Instead, try to see their underlying primary emotions, and then, reflect your understanding, accept that it's their experience, and explore more if necessary using compassionate curiosity.

When you are in the pattern, decide together to stop (e.g., "I think we are getting into that negative pattern we talked about."), take a break, and write down some of your underlying (i.e., primary emotions) feelings. Start each one by writing, "I feel…" or "I'm experiencing _____ right now." You may be tempted to say, "I feel angry." That is fine, but try to see what might be under the anger. What are your primary emotions? When you are both calm and relaxed, share these with your partner. By doing this, you avoid blame, criticism, and your negative pattern, and you create safety and softer feelings toward one another.

Mindful Embrace Stand with your weight supported, and loosely embrace your partner for about 10 min. Allow full-body contact if comfortable. Do not talk while embracing. Keep your mind's eye focused on your breathing, and remain aware of your body and your partner's body. What part of your body does your mind take you to? How do you feel within your partner's embrace? What does the space between you feel like?

When the 10 min are up, face each other, and talk about your thoughts and impression from your embrace. You may or may not want to continue touching by holding hands or hugging. When the second author (Chelom) has used this with

couples, they often report back that although it feels unusual at first, it then tends to become relaxing and even sparks feelings of love and gratitude.

Mindful Gazing Lie down on your side and face your partner in a comfortable position. Look at each other's face and if possible keep eye contact. You may talk about how you presently feel or what feelings you experience. Creating shared attention is important in all social contacts but particularly for intimate relationships. What emotions or thoughts come to mind as you maintain eye contact?

Loving-Kindness Meditation Sit facing each other, and hold hands for approximately 10 min. Each partner takes a turn being the giver and the receiver. The giver thinks of sending loving thoughts to the receiver. Keep breath in a regular pace and deep. Think of loving thoughts to send to the receiver. After the giver has focused on the receiver for about 5 min, stop. The receiver can then tell the giver how they felt. What thoughts or feeling came to them during this exercise? Then, switch roles and the giver is now the receiver. This can be done causally while driving in the car or sitting next to each other.

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