

One hour alone with your spouse can completely change your relationship

Kaori Becker
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Editor's note: A blank page, a fresh start, a time to reflect and make changes in our lives - these all come to mind when we think of the new year. Is one of your personal goals this year to improve a certain relationship or perhaps breathe some new life into it? Then read on. In the following article, one young wife and mother shares her personal experience with incorporating a new healthy habit into her relationship with her husband over a year ago and how it has changed their marriage.

How does one hour of alone time with your spouse completely change the dynamic of your relationship? I don't really know, but that's what has happened for my husband Alan and I.

Alan and I didn't have major struggles in our relationship, but about a year ago the idea came up for us to do a weekly check-in. We are both entrepreneurs, and up to that point we had just been doing our own thing - Alan would work on his animations and I would work on my cooking school business. It occurred to us after getting pregnant that our alone time together, while ample before, would soon become less and less with a baby on the way. We needed a way to check in so that we could be on the same page; on the same page about scheduling our week, parenting, about business, about our relationship and about finance. We noticed that when we weren't on the same page about these topics, it showed in our relationship. We would feel more distant from each other, or we would misunderstand each other or not trust each other. So, we decided one day that we were going to do a check-in once a week, on Sundays, to cover the topics mentioned above.

What we couldn't predict was how much of an impact the simple act of meeting over bubble tea with a sketchpad and a pen would have on our relationship, and not only that, but in our businesses as well.

What has happened through our meetings? One Sunday we met to discuss our businesses and how they were going. Through Alan sharing about his YouTube channel and us brainstorming ways we could each improve our businesses, the idea for Alan to post up a video once a month instead of once a year, came up. This decision alone has practically tripled Alan's income from YouTube, something that may not have happened had we not met and discussed how we were doing with our careers and what we were feeling were good next steps.

Meeting every week has also helped us to be on the same page about how we parent. When you become a parent, it is very easy to get into fights about simple things, like how one burps the baby, or how to hold a bottle so he/she can drink in the best way. When should she sleep? Is he ready to eat solids? Though we still have squabbles here and there about what parenting style is best, every week we've met and checked in about how we felt about our parenting. We decided we wanted to be intentional in how we parent, instead of being reactionary and basically following the same parenting style our parents had for us. Both of our parents did a great job in raising us, but we wanted to improve upon their styles and develop our own style as well. Through our weekly meetings we decided to study several parenting books together. First, we read "Raising up Bebe", which is a French-style parenting book, and then we dabbled with a few other books. We finally settled on what felt best and most sensible for our couple; "Parenting with Love and Logic". One Saturday when we went on a date to a far-away spa, we listened to the "Parenting with Love and Logic" book on audio so that we could take it in and discuss it together. It's helped us become

more unified in our approach instead of being adamant about our own styles.

Our weekly check-in serves not just as a meeting but also as a purposeful date. While it's important to also have dates where there is no agenda, where one can relax and be more present, having an agenda makes it feel like a more meaningful date, which feels intentional and productive. It doesn't feel like a waste of time at all; in fact, we look forward to our weekly Sunday meetings as a chance to touch base and discuss our relationship, finances, and weekly plans.



We can definitely feel when we haven't had a check-in meeting for a while. Our relationship feels a bit more distant and out of touch. When we don't check-in for two weeks, I'm not really sure what he's feeling or thinking, and he doesn't know what I've been feeling or thinking about. Often, when it is time to check-in specifically about our relationship, things come up for both of us that we didn't really know were there. So, in a funny way, sometimes an argument will arise because of the prompt to talk about our relationship. But I see it as a healthy purging of something that needed to be talked about, and something that needed to be discussed and worked out. After we check in about our relationship, I always feel closer to Alan, and that I understand him more, which creates more trust and empathy between us.

There are other areas of our lives that have been impacted by these short, one to two hour meetings on Sunday afternoons that I have yet to mention, but I'm grateful Alan and I have a chance to check in during the daily busy-ness of life and to remind ourselves that we are a team and that we have each other's back. The feeling of support from Alan is invaluable to me and it fuels my drive to be successful, to be a good wife, mother, daughter and sister. Our meetings are a good sounding board for ideas but also a good reminder that we are loved and supported, and that we don't have to keep our struggles or feelings to ourselves; we can share them with our spouse.

Now it's your turn! We'd love to hear about other simple yet transformative relationship tools from our readers. Please submit your responses to wfw.newsletter@gmail.com. You may be featured in an upcoming issue!

To find out more about Kaori and Alan, check out their websites below:

www.Kaoriskitchen.com

www.alanbecker.net