

Scott Blair: Taking care of yourself to better your relationship, this is Stay Happily Married, Episode Number 302.

Announcer: Welcome to Stay Happily Married, your source for weekly updates on the latest tips and advice to build a happy and healthy marriage.

Scott Blair: I'm Scott Blair, and I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. Are you taking care of yourself in your relationship? They always say you must love yourself before you can love someone else. This appears to be true when talking about loving yourself emotionally and physically, but what about when it comes to understanding yourself? If you are not aware of your own emotional and physical wants and needs, how can you expect your loved one to understand or even recognize your emotional physical wants and needs? If you are not aware or comfortable with your own wants and needs, it may become harder for you to confide in your partner about what you desire. When this happens, you and you partner may get frustrated or even give up on one another. What can we do to alleviate the problem and strengthen the relationship with our loved one?

Earning her Master's Degree in Community Agency Mental Health Counseling, Leticia Huger-Hill practices at Positive Redirection in Durham, North Carolina. Leticia has expansive experience interviewing and assessing new clients, working with clients with co-occurring disorders, writing treatment plans and conducting individual counseling sessions to address physical, mental, social, and emotional problems. She is a facilitator of Coping with Work and Family Stress which is a workplace prevention intervention designed to teach employees 18 years and older, how to deal with the stressors at work and at home. The curriculum emphasizes the role of stress, coping, and social support in relation to substance abuse and psychological symptoms. Leticia is a licensed professional counselor in North Carolina. She promotes conferences, develops event topics, and speakers, and monitors event activities. Welcome to the show Leticia. I'm so glad that you can join us today.

Leticia Huger-Hill: Thank you.

Scott Blair: Well, we are here today to talk about taking care of ourselves to help our relationships. Can you talk to us a little bit about why this is so important?

Leticia Huger-Hill: Yeah, well, in order to have a properly functioning intimate relationship, we have to know what it is that we bring to the table. Sometimes in the course of our relationship, we forget that we need to take care of ourselves in order to be the best that we can be for our relationship. Taking care of our own emotional well being plays a huge role in the direction of our relationships and how they go.

Scott Blair: Well, let's talk about what types of problems do you see that couples are experiencing inside the relationship when one or both of them aren't taking care of themselves first?

Leticia Huger-Hill: Yeah, well, a great deal of couples are together based on emotional needs, and

what their partner may be able to provide emotionally at any given time. And what one fails to realize is that once the needs has been met, that tends to give you the way to cope through problems. Instead of finding our own coping skills, there is a tendency to rely on our partner to support us as the sole means of getting through emotional turmoil.

Scott Blair: So left unresolved or unaddressed, what are some of the short-term and even long-term effects that this type of behavior, being dependent upon the other person or not taking care of ourselves first, and have on the relationship?

Leticia Huger-Hill: Yeah, well, this issue affects individuals and couples because a standard becomes established and a high threshold of satisfaction is then created that becomes difficult to achieve and couples begins to feel as though their partners are not there for them or feeling alienated with the relationship, and things begin to set in that you really don't want there. And one person begins to withdraw, because they feel as if they're doing everything they can, and it's never enough, and this eventually leads to a gradual breakdown within the relationship. And when you look at things now, people are seeking marriage and couple's counseling, and yet the divorce rates still are high, and people are ending relationships based on emotional reactions to situations that's beyond the relationship. And the hardest thing in the process of being a relationship is the ability to self evaluate. And some individuals are totally fine with the process, and are usually the people that have the most fulfilling intimate relationships. And those who struggle with self evaluation are those that tend not to understand how their emotional well-being is affecting their relationship.

Scott Blair: You said they're not aware that their own emotional well-being is affecting the relationship. At what point do you see that the individual or couples together are becoming aware that this thought pattern, this behavior is actually hurting the relationship?

Leticia Huger-Hill: Well, the point where I see that couples are becoming aware that this behavior is indeed hurting the relationship is when arguments are more often. They start to begin picking out each others' faults even. They begin to have more arguments based on just basic decision making, where they can't agree on things and that's where they come in for a session to say, Okay, I don't know what's going on with my relationship, and they can even sit next to each other sometimes, but they know that they still want to work on something, but they usually are quicker to pick out the faults of the other individual as opposed to looking within.

Scott Blair: You said when they come in, who typically comes in? Have you observed any trends among the couples? Is this something that affects young couples or anybody?

Leticia Huger-Hill: This is something that affects everyone, because I've seen people that have come in while they were in college. We have college students that come in, up to people that have been married for years, or have been married, divorced, and starting new relationships. So the age and the length of the relationship, it's varies, and it's a very broad spectrum.

Scott Blair: So when a couple comes in to see you, and they sit down, where do you usually start? What is it that you suggest that couples do to take care of themselves in order to better the relationship?

Leticia Huger-Hill: Well, the first thing that we do is we first try to point out the positive things about each other. And I would ask each individual to say something positive about their partner just to kind of start things, to kind of get them to look at themselves through the eyes of each other. And that kind of opens up the door, because the person doesn't feel pushed against the wall, or they don't feel as if someone is saying something negative about them, or attacking their character, and things like that. So that's the way that we would start. And then as time goes on, we talk about things such as accountability and how we're accountable for our actions within a given scenario. And from there, that's when we begin to self evaluate. We're just kind of taking about each other as a couple, and then going into the accountability, and then things get a little bit deeper once we start to talk about accountability.

Scott Blair: Well, if you wouldn't mind, let's get a little bit deeper. Can we drill down on that?

Leticia Huger-Hill: Yeah.

Scott Blair: What are some specific items that you have couples working on that help resolve some of these negative effects that we were talking about earlier?

Leticia Huger-Hill: Some of the specific items we would talk about things such as parenting for couples that have children. And a lot of times, what we begin to shift into is how the individual experience being a child and how they've actually learned their parenting skills from the parenting that they've received. And then we go into that and talk about how you can improve your relationship and being on the page through parenting. That's one example. The other example is talking about things such as communication skills, learning how to argue in a healthy way, learning how to get your point across without demeaning the other person. And then when we go a little bit deeper than that, we actually kind of see how they've experienced communication through their childhood and seeing their parents argue, and leaning how they adopted that to their own relationships. Having someone to be able to look through all of these things to say, okay, this is something that I've learned. This is something that I can work on, and this is something that can help me to be a better person in the relationship, because this is what my experience is with relationships.

Scott Blair: So when you have a couple that's learning to start holding themselves accountable, and they're starting to use self evaluation, and they're communicating a little better, what are some of the changes that you're seeing in the quality in the interaction of that relationship?

Leticia Huger-Hill: Yes, some of the changes actually, they vary, because we have individuals who know that they want to work on the relationship, and they're able to accept that

responsibility and be able to want to make positive changes for themselves and that increases the communication within the family, within that relationship. They're able to be more on the same page, and be able to make decisions based off of how they are challenging themselves within their interactions, and there are some people who are not ready for the accountability, and who are not ready to self evaluate, and sometimes they may notice things in themselves that they weren't ready to face yet. And that's when it becomes a different issue where it begins to say, okay, you may have to work on some of these issues outside of the counseling relationship, even, in order to better the relationship. Sometimes it gets a little bit overwhelming, especially in cases where people begin to remember things that were traumatic to them such as abuse or anything that links to pain within their past and things. So it's a broad result that comes about with that depending on just where the person is.

Scott Blair: Well, for anyone who has sought out this episode, and they are looking to better the relationship by taking care of themselves and doing some self evaluation, is there anything else that you think they should know?

Leticia Huger-Hill: I think the best thing is to know that in order to really understand yourself and learning to understand your own emotionals and the patience, and being able to address them no matter how small or large they are, that's the foundation of a healthy relationship. And couples who are in a relationship should learn the skills of self evaluation and discover what they bring to the table emotionally as well as being open and honest with their partner so realistic expectations are established.

Scott Blair: Leticia, thanks so much for talking with us and being on the show today.

Leticia Huger-Hill: Thank you for having me.

Scott Blair: To find out more about Leticia Huger-Hill and her practice, Positive Redirection, you can visit their website at www.positiveredirection.com for an appointment. Thank you so much for joining us today, and I hope you'll join us again next week. For more information about this show and previous episodes, visit us at stayhappilymarried.com. I'm Scott Blair, until next time, stay happily married.

Announcer: Thank you for joining us today on Stay Happily Married. If you would like more information, please visit us on the web at stayhappilymarried.com. We would love to hear your feedback or comments. Please email us at comments@stayhappilymarried.com or call us at 919-256-3083. Until next time, best wishes.