

SIMPLE MAGIC

How to Travel in *(Better)* Time with Your Mate

THE STORY OF HOW YOU MET REVEALS THE FUTURE OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

HERE'S A SIMPLE QUESTION I ask each of my new clients: “Tell me about how you met—the early days of relating when you realized your partner was someone you wanted to spend a whole lot more time getting to know better.”

When I asked Paul and Laura this question, their energy immediately shifted. Laura blushed, and they both visibly softened and squirmed as they looked at each other warmly. This, of course, is a positive sign. If either one had stiffened or looked away, I would know that the road ahead would be filled with potholes.

THE PAST

Science now substantiates what most of us know to be true: Heightened emotions affect how well we will remember events. The more something matters to us, the more apt we are to catalog it for future reference. As neuroscientist Rebecca Todd notes, “We call this ‘emotionally enhanced vividness,’ and it is like the flash of a flashbulb that illuminates an event as it’s captured for memory.”

The good news is that we can use our positive memories to replicate the delightful feelings of our honeymoon period simply by putting our attention on them. Just like Paul and Laura, retelling “the delightful story of how we met” deepens the neural pathway of that memory and influences our current feelings toward our partner. A poignant example of this phenomenon occurred with my mother-in-law who died a few years ago. Her favorite memory was when she was “just sweet sixteen” and met the dashing navy pilot who was to become her husband for over 60 years. She told this story regularly, and the gleam in her eyes never dimmed.

Of course, the inverse is also true. If what you remember is how your spouse got drunk and hit on your best friend, or you can’t really remember your first dates at all, chances are you have undercurrents of dissatisfaction or distrust in your relationship. My advice: If you want your relationship to flourish, put even more attention on creating positive memories now—and cement them in the retelling.

THE FUTURE

A favorite pastime with my husband is imagining future exploits together. During the cold, gray days of January, you will find us sitting next to a fireplace plotting out our summer camping adventures. Anticipating future activities bonds us and builds excitement. Whether we are contemplating moving my elderly mother nearer to us or buying a new house, we take time to “toss”—sharing our ideas and

Do-Overs: Change the Past, Influence the Future

Do you ever wish that, after getting triggered with your partner, you could push “rewind” and have a second chance to respond to the same situation? Well, you can! Simply take a breath, center yourself, and tune into what you wish you had said—instead of the knee-jerk response you gave. Then ask your partner, “May I have a do-over?” If your partner agrees, go back to the moment in time where your communication went awry, and do it over with the presence and awareness now available to you. Be sure to “rewind” yourself physically, as well. For example, if you were walking in the door when you made your fateful, unconscious remark, then go back and walk through the door again.

Many coaching practices are designed to help create new awareness and deepen presence. A do-over is a playful way to help heal the past and encourage new neural pathways for the future.



Caught in the Waves
Lisa Golightly

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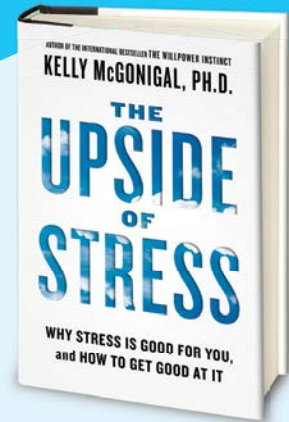
feelings about our potential future. If the future event poses challenges, we have the opportunity to prepare ourselves and unite in our intention. When focusing on fun, it's a grand twofer: In addition to the eventual satisfaction we'll derive from the actual event, we also get to parlay our future plan into pleasure *now*, simply by putting our attention on it.

Couples who enjoy collaborating on future projects tend to feel secure in

their partnership. Visioning together naturally supposes a shared future, one that we are actively nurturing. True collaboration involves several important interpersonal skills: listening with curiosity; sharing candidly; accepting another's influence; and making clear agreements. It also can bring up control issues—with an opportunity to heal them.

—JOY HOSEY

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