

Envisioning Your Future Together (After COVID-19)

Step One: Dialogue

Sit down together when you have at least a half-hour of uninterrupted time for one another. During this time you will be envisioning your future together post-COVID-19. I have listed some questions below to help guide you in this conversation.

Several important notes before you begin: This exercise may or may not find you wanting changes in what your current reality is with your partner. The purpose is to have an open and forward-facing dialogue about how you want to be in relationship together and what that will look like. The questions you ask one another may change based on where you already are in your life.

- 1) How do you want us to grow together during this challenging time?
 - ◆ Are there priorities that we have been neglecting that we can choose to focus our energies on?
 - What are they?
 - How might we be able to focus our energies there?
 - ◆ What dreams are most important to you?
 - How can I support those dreams?
 - What can you be doing to support those dreams?
 - Are there things we can be doing today to help get there?
 - ◆ What are you afraid of?
 - What keeps you up at night?
 - In what ways is COVID causing fear for you?
 - Is COVID causing fear about something in our relationship?
- 2) When you picture our future together, after the most intense period of COVID, what do you see?
 - ◆ What does our everyday life look like?
 - What are we doing together?
 - Where are we spending our time?
 - Are there core practices we are doing together?
 - ◆ How do you feel when you imagine this?
 - What does your body feel?
 - What does your heart feel?
 - How connected do you feel to me? What does that feel like?
- 3) What would we like to start doing today to help us reach our goals of how we would like to come out of COVID together as a couple?

There are any number of questions you can talk about together during this phase of the exercise. Use the ones above in whatever way they are helpful or come up with questions that are more resonant for you both. After you have had this discussion with one another you will create a visual of this shared future together.

Step Two: Create Your Visual Future

You can be as creative as you want to be during this step. Don't let the need for this to be perfect or artistic get in the way. If you need this to be your first draft and know that you want to come back together to "do it up" in a different way that is just fine. Just be sure to do it now while you are in this connected space from your future visioning conversation.

For some couples a sheet of copy paper and a pen will be just perfect for this. For other couples you may want to gather a piece of poster board or canvas, some of your favorite pictures, markers, paint, or any other supplies that you both feel called to use in your creation.

Work together to create your Visual Future (VF) that you can hang somewhere that can be seen day to day by each of you. I'll give you a few possibilities for what and how you may want to create this, but please use it as *possibility not parameter*.

- ◆ You may want to find pictures of you together at your happiest and best and include these in your VF.
- ◆ You might like to create a poem or song together that tells your future story; where you are, how you feel together, what you have created, and more throughout your journey through COVID together.
- ◆ Perhaps you want to think of words that express your feelings for one another and the values you share and write them around the page.
- ◆ Maybe you paint a picture together, even if you're not a painter, that shows your future selves in all your glory emerging from COVID times. Think about the conversation you just had and incorporate those elements through color and texture if you like.

Step Three: Interacting With Your VF

Decide together where you will hang your VF. You may want to hang it in your bedroom, such that it is only seen by the two of you. Or, maybe you want to hang it in your living room above your fireplace so that it has a center place in your home. You could also hang it on your refrigerator. As long as it is located someplace special to the two of you it will continue to do its work for you.

Decide together how you want to interact with your VF after you have found its home. A few ideas include:

- ◆ Once a week, on a specific day and time, return to the VF together and talk about what you created and how you are working together to make it your reality.
- ◆ Have it serve as a visual during your mindfulness practice.
- ◆ When you sit down to dinner together in the evenings, ask each other questions that get to the heart of what you found in your discussion together.

Just as with how you created your VF, the way you interact with it will be unique for each couple. Do what works for you. Most important is to keep visioning and talking about how you want to grow together as a couple during this time.