

# *Redefining Healthy*

## 6 WEEKS OF SIMPLE STEPS TO BIG CHANGES IN YOUR HEALTH, HAPPINESS, AND LIFE

### WEEK 5 WORKBOOK: HOW TO CREATE CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOVED ONES



## My relationship with my husband is my most important relationship.

Frank and I have known each other for over 30 years! Crazy!!! We don't argue often, but when we do, I know how it affects my body: my mind isn't focused, my stomach usually bothers me, and I'm not myself.

The relationship I have with my three children is also a super close one. **I am asked all the time, how do you maintain a relationship with your kids -- even through the teen years?**

I'll tell you upfront that I found it overwhelming to be a homeschooling mother of three young children! Breast cancer helped me dissolve that idea of perfection and learn to love the mess.

**When I got honest with how I was feeling with myself and shared those thoughts with my family... magical things started happening.** On a daily basis, they helped me handle stress better, they called me out when I was grumpy, and they were constantly reminding me to have fun. (And they still do!)

I want to share how I've created such close relationships with my kids -- and how I keep things exciting with my partner of over 22 years. Here are three action steps that have supported our relationships to be close and connected.

# ACTION STEPS

HERE ARE MY THREE TOP ACTION STEPS FOR CREATING CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR LOVED ONES

## ACTION STEP #1: PRIORITIZE FAMILY TIME

Family time became an even bigger priority after getting cancer -- because I wasn't sure what my health would be like in another week.

**During this time, I had to learn how to say yes to the things that really mattered and *no* to the things that didn't.**

Being together as a family, whether we're snuggling, watching morning cartoons, or preparing a meal together, is more important to me than going to some special awards event.

Remember to have fun with your kids. There's no better way of connecting with our kids than when we're having fun. It doesn't have to be a special event -- it could be cooking together, or a taking a car ride together.

## BABY STEP #1:

**Review your calendar for this week.** List three activities below that are on your calendar:

- 1
- 2
- 3

**Reevaluate the list above.** Are there any activities that you wrote down that make you feel uneasy?

When you start thinking about doing them, do you feel overwhelmed or anxious? Are you blindly committing yourself to activities and events because you think you are “supposed” to?

If yes, write them down here:

Are there any activities that are a “hell yes! I want to do that!” or: “YES! I can’t wait to do that!”? If so, write them here:

**Now, that you have a calendar that you enjoy, how would you like to fill in any of the free time you just found?** Would you enjoy a movie night, a make-your-own-pizza night, or maybe it’s enjoying a quiet hot bath.

Write down what you would really enjoy doing.

## ACTION STEP #2: BE HONEST

**One of the reasons our family is so close is because we've created a safe place for honesty.**

In order for Frank and I to be in integrity with ourselves, it means being honest with our kids. This has allowed us to cultivate a home where everyone respects each other's words... because they mean something.

**This is also means making it safe for the kids to ask for what they need, versus trying to be the “perfect” mom that automatically knows or anticipates their every need.**

This supports them to become independent and grow into mature adults.

And supports you to feel more supported in your family environment, versus having to be, do, and know it all!

For example, when I took Emily to do her dance competitions, I started asking her: What do you need from me to feel supported and do you have what you need today in order to succeed?

In my mind, I'd be in the dressing room giving her a pep talk, helping her get dressed and putting her stage makeup on. In reality, all she wanted was that I provide her with some really good food, and then give her space to be alone and get in the zone.

So Emily got what she needed on her important day, I felt more relaxed and happy, and our relationship was stronger. (Rather than her actually being annoyed at me all day long.)

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So Emily got what she needed on her important day, I felt more relaxed and happy, and our relationship was stronger. (Rather than her actually being annoyed at me all day long.)

Here's another example:

I could feel the stress I was putting on myself one Christmas. We were scattered around the globe (literally) and my expectations of creating an incredible holiday were getting out of control. I realized I was creating a huge story in my head about what had to happen in order for us as a family to have an incredible holiday.

It occurred to me that maybe what I wanted and what the kids wanted were totally different. So to get on the same page, we each came up with three things that we wanted to happen in order for Christmas to be amazing.

We each needed to be in integrity with ourselves to come up with what it really took in order for us to be happy and have fun. And then, we needed to feel safe to each express that.

Our holidays turned out to be so much fun! Best of all, it took the onus off of me and put it onto each person.

## BABY STEP #2:

**First, you need to be honest with yourself.**

**Where are you out of integrity with yourself? Meaning -- are you saying what you mean and doing what you say?** For example, are you saying: I want to lose ten pounds -- but still eating ice cream every night? Or, are you saying yes to things in your life that you really want to be saying no to? Write down whatever is coming up for you as you read this:

It's amazing how many times we might tell little lies and not honor our full truth. All of that can add up to us not feeling in integrity with ourselves! By noticing all the "little" ways you can better honor your own truth, you can bring that into your family. And that creates an atmosphere where your family will be more in integrity with you.

**Next, bring that level of integrity into your family!**

**This week, involve your family more in the decision-making process.**

When you think you know the answer about what they need, consider asking them. This isn't about giving your kids whatever they want anytime they want it. It's about going deeper than that and valuing their point of view. (And if, for example, their answer is "I want to play video games and you to go away!" -- how can you go deeper and see what they might truly be missing and hungry for?)

Learn to really listen to what others are saying. Go beyond the words and actions of the people closest to you. **Remember, one innate desire of people is to really be heard and know what they feel and say matters.** Can you focus on that this week?

Then, come back and write down any successes you had this week relating on a deeper level to the people that matter most to you.

### ACTION STEP #3: MAKE THE DECISION TO LOVE

**Make a conscious decision to love your partner every day.**

We were asked by our local church over eighteen years ago to teach a class to young engaged couples who were getting ready to be married in the Catholic church. We'd have 5-6 different couples come to our house for five consecutive weeks to share some of the issues that could arise in a young marriage.

The name of the workbook that we used was called *A Decision to Love*. I didn't fully understand how valuable that title was until years later.

**A decision to love is about making a very conscious decision to love your spouse/partner every day, no matter what -- even on days when you can't stand them!** (You know those times when all you want to do is walk away, not communicate, or all-out shout at them for ten minutes straight!)



**The act of making the decision to love that person doesn't always come easy.** It's a constant conscious decision every day! Frank and I have a constant struggle when it comes to making the bed! Sounds silly, right?!

He loves coming to bed having it made. He loves when the sheets are all in the right spot, the blankets are in their correct folded position, pillows perfectly fluffed! I, on the other hand, could care less!!! But guess who makes up the bed most days... ME, not him!!! (I don't think he's ever made the bed in the 21 years we've been married.) But on days I don't make the bed, he goes in there, perfecting the sheets when I'm already in bed, getting ready to go to sleep!

You could see how this could be blown into an ongoing fight, but I choose not to spend energy on it. If Frank wants the blankets just right, it is up to him to climb into bed before me and fix them.

**I could blow the whole argument way out of proportion, but I choose not to.** I know how happy Frank is to climb into a bed that has been made. I am making a decision to love, by making the bed every morning, because it brings joy to my spouse.

Another example is: I love my morning coffee, Frank does not. He makes a decision to love by going with me after our workouts to grab a cup of coffee. At first Frank was annoyed that I would get a cup of coffee instead of going directly home. Instead of arguing about it, he makes a decision to love, and goes along for the ride, because he knows how happy it makes me!

**The point is that love doesn't automatically mean you love the person 24/7... It's a very conscious decision to love all the time.**

Some days are easier than others... but if there was anything I wanted to give attention to, this would be it!

## BABY STEP #3:

We can always find the faults in the other person. **Where are you finding the faults in the other person and not finding the good?**

It's easy to get sucked into the annoyances of your spouse, but it takes a real conscious decision to find the love every day. **Look for the opportunities to make the decision to love, without any resentment.** It could be as simple as making an extra cup of tea for your spouse to cooking up one of your kids' favorite meals!

This week, pay attention to the good things in your partner that you appreciate, instead of the annoyances.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

- Are you overcommitting yourself and your kids?
- How can you incorporate more fun into your daily lives?
- Stop asking your kids nonstop questions and start being with them... The information that they want to share will come out. Try involving them with meal prep, you would be surprised what can get shared while cutting carrots!
- Are you consciously making a decision to love on a daily basis?
- For more information about relationships, check out Chapter 7: Lifestyle in *The Healthy Girl's Guide To Breast Cancer*.