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- Sarah Dessen

*What defines you isn't how many times you crash, but the number of times you get back up.*



As a relationship therapist for nearly 20 years, I've often worked with people who find themselves at a complete loss on how to relate and feel close to their partner. Sometimes couples feel that they are living 'alone together' and leading separate lives, having lost the connection and love that originally bound them together. I see couples that experience a range of feelings, from depression, anxiety, anger and rejection, to loss of desire and passion, or jealousy, compounded by the loss of the love once shared. These emotions, depending on the issues involved, are primarily based on fear. Fear of not being loved, understood, accepted or appreciated.

When partners do not feel acknowledged and noticed within the relationship they often exclaim 'She/he doesn't understand me' or 'She/he doesn't listen to me, I may as well not exist.' And here lies the fundamental problem: both partners feel unseen, unloved and misunderstood. This leads to disconnection and distance, with

each partner disappearing into their own protective shell, moving further and further away from one another.

**IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS...**

So how is it possible to rekindle love and create a supportive, revitalised and happier atmosphere? I believe it begins with listening to the deepest need of our partner's personality. When you begin to listen closely to your partner and occupy a space of empathy and validation, you start to feel heard, understood and appreciated in return. Soon this melts the veil of distance and enables you to start loving your partner in a different way, moving from distance to closeness.

It is the way two people communicate along with their body language which often provides the key to understanding the underlying issues. Within the first session I attune myself to how people are conveying what they truly feel through their tone of voice, body language and behaviour. Non-verbal communication is a formidable

force and often carries a larger punch than the words being spoken, especially when you are in the midst of trying to be heard.

Most relationship problems are rooted in failed communications between a couple that are either misinterpreted, avoided or misunderstood. The purpose in this case is to provide an emotional experience in which each person's key emotional needs are expressed, mutually valued and met through a sense of unconditional giving.

A very important thing in a couples session is knowing what it is you want to say, what you need from your partner, and developing a non-confrontational language-base which is used to frame and structure discussions. This eventually leads to the shared understanding and perhaps even the resolution that you both desire.

I encourage people to speak in a way that grows and strengthens, getting their voice heard, which is key to getting their emotional needs met by their partner. It's always a miracle to see before me two people beginning, for the first time, to truly receive and listen to one another.

*Helen Mia Harris is an intuitive counsellor and therapist who specialises in individual and couple/ marriage counselling, helping each client address their distinctive difficulty and reach emotional freedom, using her unique tailor made Recovery Programmes. Helen is based in the Sevenoaks area, but also conducts counselling sessions by Skype or telephone. [www.helenmiaharris.com](http://www.helenmiaharris.com). t: 01732 453 758.*

# Living Alone Together



- by Helen Mia Harris

## Five tips to help overcome distance in your relationship:

- Find a Couples Relationship Therapist you can really trust so you can speak honestly about your concerns.
- Conscious communication - try to see the world from your partner's point of view as well as your own.
- Recognise expectations which are your invention and which your partner cannot satisfy, and identify your real needs, as well as theirs. Putting aside false expectations really helps.
- Identify triggers (what is the Reaction/ Response in your communication together?) and learn the difference between open speaking and reactive defences. Getting rid of negative triggers creates a more positive vibe in a relationship.
- Use the relationship's latent potential for growth, honesty and truth so you can create what you need and want together.