

Continuing to Dialogue Even when it doesn't seem to get us anywhere

by Marge & Con Terr

**When the well seems to be dry, keep on digging.
There's bound to be more water in there.**

We all have times when we just seem to be in a slump or life has become extremely stressful. It's important for us to not take a break from dialogue during these times. It's our special life-line of communication.

Our dialogue, prayer life, sexual relationship, and belonging to an intimate community are the means we have available to us for strengthening our sacrament and making ourselves more attractive to others.

Of course, keeping the dialogue tool sharpened takes effort.

The theme of our workshop this time refers to those times when dialoging just seems to take too much work.

(Remember the words you've heard others say: "It takes too much time." "We have a baby in the house!" "We work opposite shifts. There's no way we can work out 20 minutes together each day." "We have a teenager!" "We have three kids that we have to chauffeur all over town every day." "...besides, we talk to each other a lot.")

Sometimes it's good to take another look at our basic goals. In one of our slumps, another couple once challenged us to dialogue on the questions:

1. Why did we get married? What was my fondest dream for our life together? How do I feel about my answer (HDIFAMA)?
2. Does our life together reflect what I had hoped for when we first married? (HDIFAMA)?
3. What would I change about our lifestyle so that we could have more time together? (HDIFAMA)?

This experience also showed us the value of sharing our relationship honestly with another couple.

Another tried and true solution for us when we've "run out of challenges" has been to read a book together a few pages at a time and dialogue about the feelings that come up as we read. One couple we know dialogued their way through *The Joy of Sex* and decided they didn't like the book, but they had some really good dialogues in the process.

Our biggest obstacle to keeping our dialogue alive and life-giving right now is tiredness. We are actually eager to be with each other, but lack the creativity to challenge ourselves. We work at examining our schedule and lifestyle and decide (every 4 months) that we need to get to bed a little earlier so that we can be more alive to each other.

Other couples we have talked to have tried re-scheduling their dialogue time. The time they were using was not prime time for them. They tried earlier in the day when they were both more alert. Some couples find it more encouraging to write their letters on their lunch break and then share the letters and dialogue when they meet at the end of the day.

We are starting to set up a one-week series of dialogue questions at a time so that we won't be stuck staring at each other wondering what to write. It works best for us to do this on Sunday evening before we plunge into the workday madness.

Over the years we have been dialoging, we have run into spells that seemed as dry and barren as the desert where Jesus fasted and was tempted. Giving up dialogue to gain a few minutes of time or to eliminate a stress in our lives was a tempting but empty promise.

Our dialogue has always been an important element in finding our way out of the desert and back into the Promised Land.

Ideas for Breaking our of a Slump

- Re-examine your basic goals for your relationship.
- Talk with another couple about your dialogue.
- Read a book together and dialogue on the topics.
- Make sure your dialogue time is “prime time”.
- Set up a weeks worth of questions in advance.