

Love Is A Verb--Pushing the Pause Button

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Imagine pulling into your driveway after a long, stressful day at work. Before getting out of your car and greeting your family, you take a few minutes. Closing your eyes, you take three deep breathes. Pushing your pause button to get perspective and reconnect to your family, you say to yourself, "My family is the most enjoyable and important part of my life. I'm going into my home to feel and communicate my love for them." Getting out of your car, you walk into your house, kiss your spouse, hug your kids and help get dinner on the table. After dinner, you take out the garbage, talk to your son about his school project and listen to your daughter practice her reading. By doing this, you rise above the fatigue and challenges from the work day to express love and care.

M. Scott Peck said in *The Road Less Traveled*, "The desire to love is not itself love... Love is an act of will -- namely an intention and action. Will also implies choice. We do not have to love. We chose to love. No matter how much we may think we are loving, if we are in fact not loving, it is because we have chosen not to love and therefore do not love despite our good intentions. On the other hand, whenever we do actually exert ourselves in the cause of spiritual growth, it is because we have chosen to do so. The choice to love has been made."

The message that we get daily is that love is a feeling and relationships are disposable -- from Disney stories to glorified Hollywood movies to top hit songs and in every area of advertising. It creates a false expectation about what love looks and feels like--that one just falls in and out of love and the relationship is focused on what I get out of it.

Lasting love in our families takes commitment and involve us working through the bumps and rough patches. It is so easy to be reactive. Developing the capacity to pause when emotions are running high allows us to create a space between what happens and our response to it. And in that space, we can step back, reflect and act with wisdom instead of reacting with frustration or anger.

As parents, we are called to model those characteristics that we want our children to inherit. So, pushing the pause button starts with us. It involves becoming more self-aware of my part in family interactions. If I am getting angry, I can simple say, "I am too upset to talk about this right now. I make better decisions when I am calm. Let's talk about this later."

Any successful marriage and family talks work, effort and sacrifice. It takes knowing that love is a verb. What would implementing a pause button in your family relationships look like?