

Close Companions: Online Relationship Academy

Course: Managing Stress Together

Lesson Four: Responding to Partner Stress

Part 1: Foundational Information

Objectives for this lesson

1. Have a greater appreciation for the importance of balancing caring for your partner and caring for yourself.
2. Gain a clearer understanding of the effects of stress on your partner.
3. Gain a clearer understanding of the effects of your partner's stress on you.
4. Have a realistic awareness of the positive and negative ways you respond to your partner's stress.
5. Improve your strategies for responding in helpful ways to each other's stress.

Factors that influence how much of our partner's stress we take on

- Personality and temperament
- Habits related to relational boundaries
- Family system patterns
- Situational factors
- Relational closeness

How can we best respond to our partner's stress?

- Don't take our partner's stress away or go into problem-solving mode.
- Don't make our partner's stress worse by injecting more stress – our stress – into their system.
- Do provide a safe, hospitable resting place where our refuel for the next leg of the journey.
- Do communicate, with and without words: You are not alone. I love you. I care. I believe in you. I'm with you all the way.

Caring for other/caring for Self

What's needed to care for your partner

- Caring spirit - empathy

- Willingness to be fully present with our partner as they navigate the ups and downs of their life.

What's needed to care for yourself

- Value ourselves enough to know and state our needs and concerns
- Recognize the boundaries where our role ends and our partner's role begins
- Pay attention to the limits of our physical, mental, and emotional energy and taking time to "refuel," as needed

Self-differentiation: how we manage our anxiety

- Distancing ourselves
- Internalizing our partner's stress
- Exhibiting a non-anxious presence