



Commentary Transcript: *Family Switch* Film Scene

This film got mixed reviews, but I thought it had some really good moments. One of them is the basis of this commentary. You may have seen a trailer that included this scene, which, in my opinion, is perfectly written, directed, and acted.

We see the parents at the end of their day, during the holiday season. Mom is realizing the kids are growing up and losing interest in the things they used to love. Dad is sharing his thoughts at the same time. Neither of them is really listening to the other—each is so in their own head they are barely aware of the other.

Let's watch.

[PLAY SCENE]

I laughed out loud at how Jennifer Garner delivers that line. That is perfection!

This is a brief commentary, so we'll skip the play-by-play and just summarize a dialogue that could have addressed the disconnection in real life. I'll start with the wife.

Wife: (Noticing the disconnect) Hey, can we just stop for a minute?

Husband: But tinsel! And pee!

Wife: Yeah, I know... that's interesting. But I feel like we're disconnected. Like the entire family is disconnected, and it's really bugging me.

Husband: (Slows his roll a little) OK, you go first... you're worried that the kids are losing interest in things and that we're not as connected as you'd like. What do you think we should do?

Wife: I don't know, but I think we need to figure something out.

Husband: Understood. Can we talk more about it in the morning when we're fresh?

Wife: Yeah, thanks. OK, now you... you were saying something about tinsel and pee?

If your relationships are suffering from disconnection, you can start to change that experience by repeatedly taking a few simple steps:

First, notice disconnection and get used to one person asking for a pause when things are getting scattered. Having that language established helps you slow down when someone waves the "Hey, we need to pay attention" flag.



Second, when someone asks for a pause, deliberately stop all action and accept that you are being asked to show up differently. Try not to resent that. Instead, move physically close together, touch gently if it's appropriate, and look each other in the eye. Then, shake off the vibe of disconnect. Literally, that could be a physical shudder or a mental regroup: "Give me a second," or moving in for a hug before speaking, or just taking a deep breath together. The point is to get out from under the body and mind states that accompany self-focus and disconnection. Commit to getting in sync because it's important to you both. Finally, state what you think the other person is saying, or express what you want or need, and then respond to those statements.

Like so many other communication skills, this doesn't take very long. But it does take a form of mindfulness. You have to notice disconnection to ease it, and you have to shift toward more connective behaviors to, well...connect. Doing it on purpose is the job here.

A few more thoughts about this exploration...

Sometimes genuine connection isn't essential to a conversation. It's not like you always need to host a summit to talk. But when people in a conversation care about connection, it's a good idea to notice disconnect and purposely address it. It only takes a minute to slow things down, get in sync, and show you care by listening and responding to someone else's thoughts or needs.

We're all learning as we go, and there is no perfect way to think, feel, be, or communicate. The lesson here is that we can break habits of disconnection—and it's important to do so because we can't hear or be heard if we're trapped in our own heads. Making a habit of paying attention during disconnected moments and purposely changing the vibe can build trust and nurture intimacy.

Here are a few questions you're invited to consider about these topics...

- Do you have a sense of how it feels in your body when you're "in your head?" Are those sensations different than when you're feeling connected and open to somebody else?
- Do you sometimes feel irritated when someone is asking you to come out of your head and pay attention to them? What do you tend to do in those situations—listen grudgingly, put down what you're doing, ask them to come back later? What messages do you send to people you love through those choices?
- Do you have habits or rituals that help you pay attention, slow down, or come out of immersive thoughts? Do you need to practice those more often, or together with your partner?

OK, that's an exploration of noticing and changing habits of disconnection. I hope you found a few useful tidbits that you can apply in your own life.