Which is it? “Absence makes the heart grow fonder” or “out of sight, out of mind?” These two common phrases, used in the same setting, have completely opposite outcomes.

My wife has been on a two-week jaunt out west with our youngest, and I can tell you for sure, absence makes the heart grow fonder. Rambling around this old ranch house with her empty chair by mine and no delicious aromas wafting from the kitchen lets me know I miss her.

But I believe in some time apart. I’ve met older couples that say they never spent a night away from each other in their many years of marriage and that’s fine. We take the approach that we need our lives together and some time with friends is important, too.

Relationships need some balancing and checking. Sometimes we need to blow off some steam with our like kind. We can do this with friends and other healthy couples. She doesn’t really want to listen to all my ramblings about cycling, cars, and fishing. And I really can’t appreciate the intricacies of the recipes she reads. However we do share a passion for our Georgia Bulldogs!

When I’m standing on a boat, five miles offshore, in my nothing box as Mark Gungor would call it, fishing for trout or redfish, the quality of relationship and conversation with my friend, Phil is different. Not better or deeper than I have with my wife just different and I think I need that. And so does she.

She has her book club and bible study group. I have my poker and fishing trips and the occasional round of golf. These are places we are understood and heard in a different way. “Boy” or “Girl” conversations that the other doesn’t really get.

I have said before, put yourself around respectable folks, likeminded people who support your basic beliefs and values. You don’t want somebody cosigning your idiotic and hairbrained schemes or piling on to your complaints with more anger and resentment because of the axes they haven’t ground.

One more thing along this line. We need to find couples with whom we can spend time. Too often, I come across individuals or couples who say they don’t have friends. I know this is very difficult; friends are not only hard to find but take time in developing. You may ask them to come over for steaks or meet at a restaurant for dinner. You have to take the risk of sharing yourself and being rejected.

We have been blessed with dear friends through the years. These relationships provide a subtle springboard for comparing experience and bouncing ideas off of. We can check the normalcy of our ideas and expectations. We find that with these friends we automatically search for depth and a form of regulation. We can experience our relationship in a new way in the reflection of happy couples we admire.

It’s never all sunshine and roses. Sometime I need to complain to my friend sometimes he shares his pain with me. Mostly we just laugh at ourselves.