
Essential Couples Communication Enhancements

Write a letter to your respective in-laws stating reasons why you are glad to be joining their Family. You have most likely by now have discussed your dreams, plans, challenges and attributes... but if for any reason you have not had that opportunity, this would be a good time to generally get them 'up to speed' on your basic 'game plans' of life.

Describe your parents' attitude toward your marriage.
Do the two sets of parents like each other?

Describe things about your future in-laws that you really like.
Describe things about your future in-laws that you do not like...

Of the total feeling conveyed in a spoken message,
7% is verbal feeling, 38% is vocal feeling, and 55% is facial feeling.

Because we are more likely to censor our words than our actions in expressing our words, it is very common to find inconsistencies between these two levels of communication.

We are more likely to use words to comment on the other's actions and more likely to use nonverbal messages to comment on the other as a person. It is the latter set of messages that appears to dictate both satisfaction with the encounter and attraction to the other person, as well as to qualify the ways in which the spoken words will be understood.

LISTENING EFFECTIVELY

Listening is a learned skill and it can be developed.
More effective listening will show our love, care and support more fully and help our relationships grow.

Listen non-verbally.

Do not listen passively; **listen actively.**

Listen for words, tone of voice, facial and body language.

When a person's words and body language send different messages...

Believe the *body* language.

Remember that just as your love's non-verbals convey feeling messages, so do yours.

As you are listening, send non-verbal messages with your body:

Maintain good eye contact, give appropriate facial expression, nod your head, smile or gesture with your hands occasionally as appropriate, stay close physically, with your body position leaning slightly toward the speaker, and touch occasionally.

Listen verbally.

When we **listen actively**, we also give some verbal response to indicate to the other person that his message has been heard and correctly understood.

Some responses are simple “door openers,”

They encourage the individual to continue speaking.

Such responses let them know you are still with them,

still **actively listening**:

“Mm-mmm, I see,” “Yes,” “Oh? Really?” “Then what happened?” “Wow!” “Tell me about it.”

Allow a person to express himself as completely as he wishes without interrupting, except to summarize as often as is necessary for you to accurately reflect his message.

At an appropriate juncture you can say, “Let me see if I’ve heard what you said.”

Then endeavor to briefly summarize both the content and feeling.

You can introduce your summary with “I hear you saying . . .”,

“You seem to be saying . . .” or “It sounds like you feel . . .”

Then rephrase the person’s comments in your own words, incorporating the feeling words, he or she has used or synonyms for them.

If the individual has not used feeling words, then endeavor to identify their feelings and express them in words in your summary.

“It sounds like you’re confused about whether to try out for the team.”

“You feel good about your test results, but you were anxious during the exam.”

“So, your boss asked Sally to take over the open position instead of you?

That must’ve really hurt!”

After each summary, you can say something like,

“Is there anything more?” or “I’m interested in hearing more” to encourage further sharing.

Listening actively conveys empathy, acceptance, and freedom with support.

Although others may sometimes communicate anger, frustration, disappointment, embarrassment, pain and other negative emotions,

they need to know that they are accepted even feeling the way they do.

Listening summary

A person who really listens:

- Listens for both feelings and content.
- Accepts the one sending the message,

Even though his words and/or feelings may not be pleasant.

- Checks back with the speaker to determine whether the message has been received correctly.
- Repeats the process if the message was incorrectly received.

Listening formula:

Listen . . . accept . . . check back

LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

Level One: Cliché Conversation . . .

This type of talk is very safe. We use phrases such as "how are you?"
"How's the dog?" "Where have you been?" "I like your dress."
In this type of conversation there is no personal sharing.
Each person remains safely behind his defenses.

Level Two: Reporting the Facts about Others . . .

In this kind of conversation, we are content to tell others what someone else has said, but we offer no personal information on these facts.
We report the facts like the six o'clock news.
We share gossip and little narrations but we do not commit ourselves as to how we feel about it.

Level Three: My Ideas and Judgments . . .

Real communication begins to unfold here.
The person is willing to step out of his solitary confinement and risk telling some personal ideas and decisions.
One is still cautious.
If one senses that what they are saying is not being accepted, they will retreat.

Level Four: My Feelings or Emotions . . .

At this level the person shares how they feels about facts, ideas, and judgments.
Ones feelings underneath these areas are revealed.
For a person to really share himself with another individual they must move to the level of sharing their feelings.

Level Five: Complete Emotional and Personal Communication . . .

All deep relationships must be based on absolute openness and honesty.
This may be difficult to achieve because it involves risk...
The risk of being rejected.
But it is vital if relationships are to grow.
There will be times when this type of communication is *not* as complete as it *could* be.

MALE-FEMALE DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION

Key conversational differences between men and women, which seem to be derived from the different subcultures of boys and girls, can be summarized as follows:

- Women seem to regard questions as **A way to maintain a conversation,** While men view them as ***requests for information.***

 - Women tend to connect "bridges" between what their conversational partner has just said and what it is that they have to say.

 - Men do not generally follow this rule and often appear to ignore the preceding comment by their partner.

 - Women seem to interpret aggressiveness by their partner as an attack that disrupts the relationship.

 - Men seem to view aggressiveness simply as a form of conversation.

 - Women are more likely to share feelings and secrets.
 - Men like to discuss less intimate topics, such as sports and politics.

 - Women tend to discuss problems with one another, share their experiences, and offer reassurances.

 - Men, on the other hand, tend to hear women (as well as other men) who discuss problems with them as making explicit requests for solutions, rather than as simply looking for a sympathetic ear.
-
-