

COMMUNICATION

Learn both the beauty and importance of great communication in marriage. Marriages rise and fall on a couple's ability to communicate. It's only fitting that we address this directly in order to plan for success in this area of our marriage.



Communication: The Air to Marriage. Marriage Rises and Falls on Communication

By Ken Patterson

"All she wants to do is talk!"

"He won't listen to me!"

One of the biggest problems most couples face is that the concept of communication and the idea that everyone communicates successfully is severely misleading. We assume that because we can talk, we can communicate. We also assume that because we have our own style of communication, that everyone should adapt to our style and communicate with us in the manner that best suits us!

The problem is that we don't truly know how communication

involves a wide spectrum of approaches, and is paramount in expressing goals, sharing feelings, and resolving conflicts that may arise. It's precisely at the time that we need to effectively communicate that there is a breakdown which leads to further miscommunication---and the marriage is then ruined.

What this session details is the need to understand the communication style of your spouse, as you work and continuously build upon one of the pillars of your marriage.

How do you plan to address the needs of your spouse? What are your personal needs?

The best thing anyone can guarantee their spouse is that they will work tirelessly to provide for the needs of their spouse in an effort to build a strong marriage. Instead of looking to receive, the greatest value in a marriage is always finding the opportunity to give. Each of us has needs, and it is important to discover the needs of your spouse and work to providing the one you love an endless supply of resources for all of their needs.

Let's dig in to discuss how we can effectively communicate, as well as work on a plan to meet the needs of our spouse!

-Pastor Ken, Your Coach.

Till Words Do us Part?

The vitalness of communication to your union...

By Ken Patterson

Riding in the car in college I remember getting a call from a friend telling me to turn to one of our AM Sports Radio stations as news had just broken of a mega-deal that definitely affected my favorite football team. The only problem is that my car in college might have looked good on the outside, but my antenna had broken and unfortunately I wasn't able to turn to the necessary frequency to get the information I needed. Lucky for me it wasn't a state of emergency and I could just research the information later.

Many marriages are like that as well though. She speaks on one frequency, he speaks on another and yet neither of them are tuned in to each other to get the desired message. In marriage though, the message *is* often a critical one and is much more than the breaking news of a star player on the team. For some of our marriages, they look wonderful on the outside...all shiny in public, and they even come with built-in cliché responses to standard questions such as "how are you and the wife doing?" "We're doing great! Couldn't be doing better!" Ultimately though, many shiny marriages don't have antennas and messages aren't being communicated properly.

Communication will make or break a relationship. It's also unfortunately unavoidable. Whether we are communicating about plans for the evening or plans for the year, we are always communicating, even when we aren't talking. We often say we marry "til death do us part", but more often than not it's a breakdown in communication that 'does us part' in marriages. Since communication is a critical and crucial component of marriage, it goes without saying that our focus on communication should be a priority in the marriage relationship.

If we're fortunate, most of us will survive learning in the University of Difficult Experiences, or as some call "The School of Hard Knocks", but why suffer through endless near-divorce communication experiences when you don't have to? You have the opportunity to read and grow in this area of your life and we owe it to our spouse to do so. Let's dive into some core concepts that will undoubtedly serve as benefits to your marriage:

Define Communication. Take a moment with your spouse to define communication. When we say "*communication*", what comes to mind? I'm not talking about a picture of phone towers scattered endlessly across the country, but what comes to mind as it relates to your relationship? Do you have positive experiences with communication, or do you see communication as negative, given the experiences you may have grown up with?

Ultimately, all of our communication revolves around the transfer of information or messages that can happen either verbally or nonverbally. There are messages that you need to share, or information that may be of great benefit to your spouse and you need this information transmitted as clear as

possible, and saturated in love. Likewise, communication is also a two way street: It is equally important for the person receiving the message to also accept responsibility for the correct transmission of information. What complicates matters even more is the understanding that there is also what communication experts call *paralanguage*. This is communication that happens above the verbal level and into the nonverbal communication as well. Whew! No wonder so many couples get into so many fights! At the end of the day, it's more often than not a *breakdown in communication*.

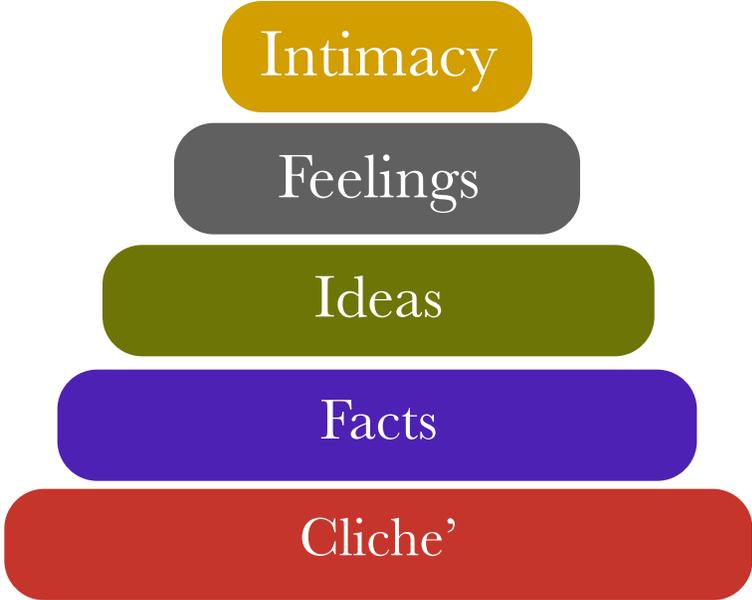
Let me show you what I mean: Those that know me can tell you how grateful I am for my life experiences as a kid growing up in countries around the world as a military brat. Moving to a new country is frustrating at first just because you really have no concept of the language and experience quite the frustration trying to belt out a simple request of one of the locals. In this case we have a couple of options: Either I can learn the language, or simply hang on the base with the other Americans. What I noticed is that those that worked to learn bits and pieces of the language traveled farther, and enjoyed their stays in these countries much more than those that didn't.

Such is the same in marriage. H. Norman Wright, in his book *How to Speak Your Spouse's Language*, says that in terms of communication, basically we all marry foreigners. *What?!* Gary Chapman was on to something when he said partners don't even speak the same *Love Language*, but Dr. Wright goes a step further and tells us that the person you marry doesn't speak your language at all! They handle situations differently, they speak at different paces, and in many cases...their words don't even mean the same as your connotations! When working with couples, I used to go through the dictionary on a random sentence we'd make up and look at all of the different connotations of the words. We were surprised at how many meanings a simple sentence had when you mixed and matched different definitions. Then we thought: *How much more difficult can our own communication be?*

In your relationship, you love each other...and you want the best for each other. If you didn't feel this way, you wouldn't get married. When you communicate, you are expressing ideas, feelings, and emotions that will work to further your relationship. This means you must focus on every aspect of your communication and bathe it in prayer as you both go forward as a couple growing in your understanding of each other. We'll dig deeper in our session on the different modes and methods of communication, as well as understanding the different levels of communication and how it relates to our problem solving, as well as dream sharing in our marriage.

Think for a moment: What are some negative examples of communication that you've witnessed? Have you witnessed intense screaming matches at home with your parents? Maybe in a previous relationship? As we work through this session, let's talk about what you learned from them.

The 5 Levels of Communication



Level 5 - Cliche' Conversation: This is the safest form of communication. This is where we ask questions that garner safe answers, or when we communicate for the sake of communicating. “How are you?”, “You look nice today”, “Hey, have a nice day!” This communication never gets beyond the surface and in many cases isn’t interested in the actual answers.

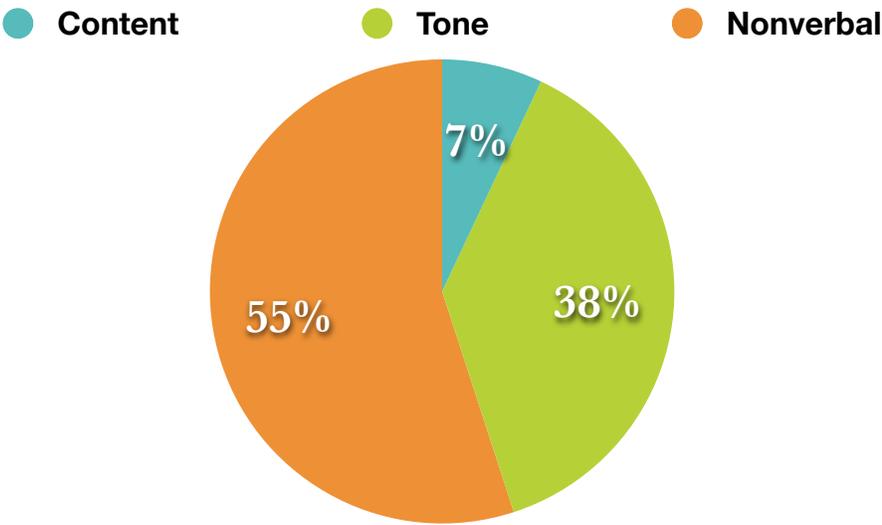
Level 4 - Factual Conversation: This is where we just exchange factual information without really expounding on what we’re reporting. “Traffic was backed up today on the road.”, “Susan was let go today at work”, etc... In this case, the both marriage partners in this level might as well be news reporters, because reporting is all that is happening here.

Level 3 - Ideas: This is the beginning of real conversation where we’re simply testing our ideas and philosophies in hopes of gaining some understanding and feedback. Even some of the ideas we exchange here are tester bits of conversation because we don’t want to risk being rejected.

Level 2 - Feelings: At this level each individual shares how they feel about facts, or how they feel emotionally about the ideas or conversation at hand. At this level, although a much deeper level than most experience on a regular basis, there is still much to be desired.

Level 1 - Intimacy: Honest and openness define this level. Innermost feelings and desires are shared and protected by deep relational security. At this level two are truly intertwined into a relationship unlike any other. This is the ideal level.

Communication Chart





“God gives you Christ as the foundation of your marriage. ‘Welcome one another ... as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God’ (Romans 15:7). Don’t insist on your rights or blame each other, don’t find fault with each other, but accept each other just as you are, and forgive each other everyday from the bottom of your hearts.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*



Conflict Survival Quick-Guide... Dealing with the inevitable...

By Ken Patterson

Conflict in marriage is inevitable. One of the biggest lies I was ever told, which could have almost derailed my marriage, was that couples who are in the best harmony don’t at all have arguments. In fact, one guy once told me that in 25 years of marriage, he and his wife never had an argument. *C’mon man, really?!*

The truth is that conflict in marriage is as natural as breathing. Especially in the beginning when you are establishing routines and learning to live with each other. It’s not that anything is wrong with either of you, but rather the law of annoyance: any two people that share the same space for a great length of time will annoy each other at some point. Remember sharing a room with a sibling? Your best friend college roommate? Its the nature of merging moods and temperaments that are ever-changing. This is marriage.

So it goes without saying that marriage isn’t about trying to avoid conflict, but rather dealing with conflict positively in a way that moves the marriage forward.

Conflict is your friend. Alright maybe not so much, but what conflict can do, if used properly, can result in a greater understanding, which can only positively impact your marriage relationship. Resolve not to avoid conflict, but to deal with it the best way possible. Determine that you’ll commit to obtaining the tools you need to thrive through the conflict you will face as you both are learning and adjusting to each other. This conflict survival quick-guide will help you do just that.

If you haven’t had conflict yet, don’t worry. You will. Hold on to this guide and refer to it after the honeymoon period is over. You’ll be thankful you did.

Conflict Survival Quick-Guide... Dealing with the inevitable...

The first order of conflict survival is a relentless pursuit of accepting and granting forgiveness. If you are unwilling to forgive, forget about it. Determine in your hearts *right now* that you will always seek to forgive your spouse, even when you feel you've been incredibly wronged. Here are some tools to get you there:

1. Listen to your spouse. James 1:19 "Let every one of you be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger..." Nothing derails communication faster than an unwillingness to hear our spouse. We feel we've been wronged, or we feel we have to get our point across by any means necessary and we end up losing our spouse in the process. The old saying is something like "two ears, one mouth...communicate accordingly".

2. Deal honestly with your anger. James 1:20 "The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." Whether its an unfulfilled desire, and unmet expectation, or an offense, we are responsible for our anger and what we do with it. I remember screaming "*He made me angry*" as a kid when I once got in trouble in school, and my teacher said to me "No one can *make* you angry. *You alone* control, and you alone are *responsible* for your emotions."

"All communication takes place on two levels: the content level (truth) and the relational level (love)."

From Family Life's The Art of Marriage

3. Deal with your selfishness. James 4:1
"What causes quarrels and fights among you?...you covet what you can't obtain, so you fight and quarrel." Most of our arguments begin when we want what we want, or when we feel we've been wronged. I'm not sure if there was ever a time in humanity that a spouse said "I am mad and we need to talk. I have been so wrong to you and I want to argue about it." Be honest and open about your selfishness and watch God free you in your marriage.

4. Confront in Love. Ephesians 4:15. You can have a right position in a disagreement, but present it in a wrong fashion. You must realize that all of your conversation will either move the marriage forward or apart. Confrontation is inevitable, and trying to avoid it is like trying to avoid breathing. Eventually you either die, or suffer serious damage. Don't be this way! God calls us to confront lovingly...that is...with the other person's best interest at heart. When you present the content (truth) in a relational sense (love), then great success happens.

"Always Remember,
Your Spouse is not
your enemy."
~ Dr. Dennis Rainey



Conflict Survival Quick-Guide...

I've had the pleasure of meeting Tim and Joy Downs, authors of *"Fight Fair: Winning at Conflict Without Losing at Love"* and to see them interact with each other, you'd think they've never had a disagreement or conflict in their marriage, ever. The truth is, they have...and learned enough to write a book! In their book, they give these nuggets that are critical additions to your Conflict Survival Toolbox.

Mistaken Objectives in a Conflict:

1. To change your spouse.
2. To make him feel guilty or ashamed.
3. To intimidate her into submission.
4. To stir up a boring marriage (make-up sex, maybe?)
5. To prove that you know his motives.
6. To rationalize your actions.
7. To prove yourself right.
8. To prove your mate wrong.
9. To punish the other person (filibuster, anyone?)
10. To pay back a previous offense (or "lost" argument...)

Seven Obstacles to Resolving Conflict:

1. Anger - Many don't want to give up their anger or feelings in order to forgive.
2. Fear - Some refuse to think about an incident that caused them great pain, much less focus on forgiving those who caused it.
3. Pride - Some people are too proud to admit that they have been hurt, since to them admitting hurt is admitting a weakness or vulnerability.
4. Black and White Thinking - Some people firmly believe that it is foolish to believe that a person can change. They believe that once someone has hurt you, you can't trust that person.
5. Unreasonable Expectations of Others - In order to forgive, we must understand that we all make mistakes, we all fall short of our potential, and we all have a dark side.
6. Sitting in Judgment - Perhaps the biggest obstacle to forgiveness is our tendency to judge others harshly.
7. Lack of Empathy - In order for some of us to gain empathy for wrongdoers, we need to admit to ourselves that we have been guilty of committing the same or a similar offense.

-Adapted from Fight Fair: Winning at Conflict Without Losing at Love, By Tim & Joy Downs.

Another issue with conflict arises simply because people refuse to listen. You're silent just because you're waiting for the other person to finish their boring, uninteresting, and irrelevant argument because of course what you have to say is both *right*, and will certainly *shut the whole discussion down*. You can't wait. Little did you know, that it was actually your partner who was right and because you refused to process what they were saying, you ended up steamrolling a point that was already made minutes go. Yeah, you need to listen. Here are some tips:

Things to think about when Listening.

1. **Listen with everything you've got** - When you are uninterrupted in your listening, you communicate value to what the other person is saying. This helps greatly when it comes to their reciprocating the value you desire when you speak.
2. **Listen with an Open Mind** - Don't just listen to the things that agree with your position, or listen to try to find something in the discussion to use against the person speaking. Have the humility to know that you may be wrong.
3. **Listen with your heart, not just your head** - Your spouse isn't giving a lecture, she is sharing her heart. Listen to what connects and listen to her feelings *behind* the words.
4. **Listen to what *isn't* being said** - Even though we depend heavily on low context discussion (we try to put all of the work on the words we speak), much of our conversation actually includes more of our body language and gestures.
5. **Listen until *she* is satisfied** - By now you've probably figured out that this whole sub-section here is slanted. Ladies don't worry, because the guy probably won't even read this part. This is actually here to see if he gets this far. If so, let me know.

Ten Listening Pitfalls:

1. The half-ear listener.
2. The "even though I'm talking to the children, I'm listening" listener.
3. The "even though I'm still on the phone, I'm still listening" listener.
4. The "I can interpret two conversations at one time" listener.
5. The "don't let my reading this newspaper keep you from talking" listener.
6. The walk in and out of the room while you're talking listener.
7. The "I'm going to just rest my eyes a bit while you talk" listener.
8. The "I can do at least six other things while you talk" listener.
9. The interrupt constantly listener.
10. The "I'll listen for 30 seconds listener."

LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF APOLOGY.

Apology has saved more marriages even in cases where the individual having to apologize could have been "right" in the conversation. Learn how to look your spouse in the eye and say "I am sorry", or "I was wrong". Don't believe that fantasy mess about "Love means never having to say you're sorry." Oh whoever said that is a big liar. Love means *saying you're sorry even when you don't feel like it*. Take that! Because of the competitive nature of man, after my wife says "you're right", or after I feel I've won I have the weird desire to spike the ball and say "BOO YOW!". When I do, I've killed it and we're back to square one. Learn Apology! It'll save you! -Pastor Ken

Reflection Assignment

Assessing Your Communication...

Directions: Part of knowing where you're going is knowing where you're starting from. Even with a GPS unit, there always needs to be a starting position. This assignment is a brief self-assessment of your starting position so that you can begin to see a map developing of where you need to be heading. Complete this assignment apart from your partner and compare responses in your next session.

How satisfied are you with your communication as a couple?

Response Choices

1 - Strongly Disagree 2 - Disagree 3 - Undecided 4 - Agree 5 - Strongly Agree

_____ We are good at sharing positive and negative feelings with each other.

_____ My partner is very good at listening to me.

_____ We let each other know our preferences and ideas.

_____ We can easily talk about problems in our relationship

_____ My partner really understands me.

-----*Cut in 1/2 and give the other portion to partner*-----

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Directions when completed: Share answers with each other for further discussion. Make a special note of any that were similar between both responses. Pay special attention to After sharing, commit to doing these things in your marriage!

Reflection Assignment

Improving Your Communication...

Directions: Understanding the criticalness of communication is the first step to really opening up blessings in so many areas of your marriage. The irony of this assignment is that you actually have to communicate about communicating so that you can actually improve your communication. Did you get all that? Sometimes the start to great communication is communicating! Complete this quick quiz, and let's dig deep into each other's thoughts.

List three things that you really like about how your partner communicates:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now list three things you'd like your partner to improve upon in how he/she communicates:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

-----*Cut in 1/2 and give the other portion to partner*-----

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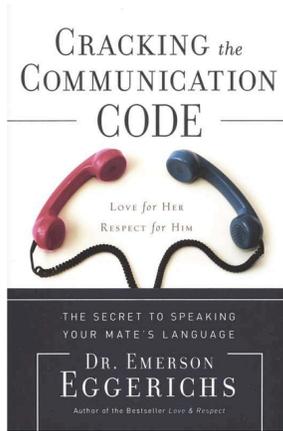
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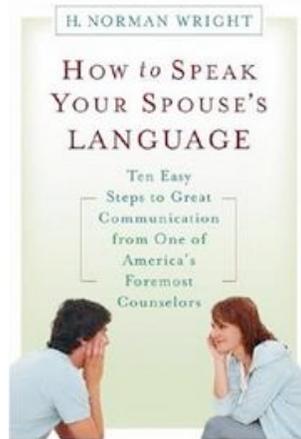
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Directions when completed: Share answers with each other for further discussion. Make a special note of any that were similar between both responses. You must hold yourself accountable to understanding the communication preferences of your partner, as well as being flexible on those of your own. We don't all communicate the same, but we can certainly learn each other and communicate better. After sharing, commit to doing these things in your marriage!

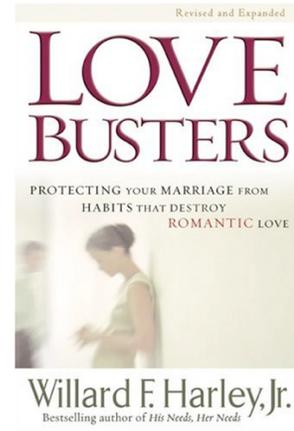
Additional "Role" Resources to Consider... Build Your Marriage Library...



Cracking the Communication Code
By Dr. Emerson Eggerichs



How to Speak Your Spouse's Language
By H. Norman Wright



Love Busters
By Willard F. Harley, Jr.



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marriages@thepowerofgrace.org



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Marriage Matters is Grace's free bimonthly potluck marriage fellowship hosted in homes throughout the region. Games & Discussion! For more info, please email:

marriages@thepowerofgrace.org

Ken Patterson Husband, Father, Pastor, Teacher.

Ken is a devoted Husband, Father, Pastor, Marriage Coach and Conference and Seminar Speaker, and Teacher in that order. He has obtained both is Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education and Master of Science Degree in Educational Administration and currently serves as an educator within the Maryland public school system.

Ken also serves as the Pastor of Grace International Church {www.unthinkchurch.org}, in Baltimore, MD, which is a non-denominational, multiethnic ministry seeking to change the world through solid biblical teaching, meaningful relationships, radical outreach, and a focus on unity.

Ken is the founder of The Maryland Wedding Officiant, a full-service ceremony planning & design company also specializing in the area of Premarital Coaching, and Marriage Coaching. For more information on these services, including arranging your premarital or marriage coaching please visit: {www.themarylandweddingofficiant.com}.

Ken currently lives in Baltimore with the love of his life, gift from God, and wife for eternity, Jo-Ann Patterson, and their two children Corey and Kyle.

For booking information, conferences, or seminars, please send an email to: booking@thepowerofgrace.org.



Ken Patterson is a rising voice for marriage and family advocacy, believing wholeheartedly that the strength of a nation is firmly dependent on the strength of the family structure.

SESSION FEEDBACK FORM

Please be so kind as to leave just (two) points of feedback so that we may concentrate on improving the quality and content of this session:

1. Please briefly detail what, in your opinion, was very beneficial about this session. (Please also indicate some beneficial note-items of enjoyment that we may want to keep in the presentation.)
2. Please briefly detail what, in your opinion, was an area of improvement that should be addressed in upcoming sessions. This includes, but is not limited to content, delivery, flow, facilities, etc...