

# Better Relationship Communication

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When you're in a relationship, communication becomes more critical than you might imagine. Most disagreements and hard feelings come from miscommunications rather than real problems. And when true difficulties do arise, communication can help you to work through them.

## **What Poor Communication Looks Like**

You may have communication problems but not realize the depth of them. But when you know what to look for, you'll be able to identify the things you need to do to improve it. Let's take a look at a few signs that you might not be communicating well.

When you each get home from the end of a long day at work, do you go to your separate corners? If you're not taking the time to reconnect with each other each night, you may have some problems in the arena of communication.

Do you argue a lot? Arguing isn't always a bad thing, but when you find that bicker and argue all the time it could be because you're misunderstanding each other instead of communicating well.

Do you withhold information from your relationship partner? This might be because you don't trust him or her or because you fear the response you'll get. If you find yourself wanting to keep secrets or actually keeping them, you're not communicating in a healthy way. This can lead to bigger problems such as infidelity.

The good news is that you can work toward having better communication in your relationship. It won't happen overnight, but you can develop good habits to help you have a healthy romance.

## **Eat Meals Together**

It may seem simplistic, but eating at least one meal together each day can really help you to improve communication. During this time you should turn off the TV and if possible eat at the table.

If you're not used to doing this, it can seem a little awkward at first. You may not know what to talk about and you may notice some uncomfortable silence. Eventually, though, it will become easier and you'll naturally converse about what's going on in your lives.

Asking questions about your mate's day can help get the conversation started. This can lead to a back-and-forth conversation. Instead of going to your separate corners at the end of the day and living like strangers, it's important to have some focused time together.

### **Listen More than You Talk**

Sometimes in a discussion, you may find yourself trying to come up with what you're going to say next instead of really listening to what your partner is saying. However, this leads to poor communication.

It's important to really listen to what your mate has to say and stop trying to formulate a response. Be open to what you hear and formulate a response when they're done talking – there's nothing wrong with a pause in conversation.

You may be surprised how much more you can pick up on when you really open your ears. Many disagreements can be squelched by listening and when your partner feels heard you'll foster positive emotions.

### **Be Open About Your Feelings**

It can be hard to share your feelings. When you reveal what you're really thinking and your true emotions it can leave you vulnerable. You may find that instead of being open, you use defense mechanisms to mask your feelings.

But if you want to have true intimacy in a relationship, it's important to be willing to share and be vulnerable. This shows your partner that you trust him or her and it helps you to solve problems in a real way.

There are several defense mechanisms that can be used to keep you from being honest. For example:

- Deflecting your serious emotions with humor
- Becoming irritable and reacting with anger instead of true feelings
- Ignoring your feelings and sweeping them under the rug
- Giving the silent treatment
- Lying about your feelings

It may seem easier in the short-term to cover up feelings you're having, but it can do long-term damage. When you're not willing to share your thoughts and feelings, your partner can't really know the real you.

You'll have to learn to trust your partner with your most vulnerable information. In most cases, you'll be happy with the results of being truly honest. If your partner doesn't value your feelings, you may need to rethink your relationship.

The good news is that when you go out on a limb and share intimate information you allow your relationship to grow deeper. You'll actually uncover the true potential of your love for one another.

### **Stick to the Issue at Hand**

When you have a disagreement, there can be a tendency to throw in all the things that have ever gone wrong in your relationship. This type of arguing leads to very little solving of problems. Instead, it can just make you both angrier.

When you have a disagreement, try to stick to the one issue you need to work out. If you find yourself straying from that one issue, rein yourself back in. When emotions start to flare up and you find yourself getting angry, you can ask for a time out.

Sometimes taking a few minutes to cool off and really determine what's upsetting you can help you to get back to the real problem. Make sure to tell your partner you need a moment to cool off and that you want to come back to this discussion a bit later.

Don't just walk away and stop talking. This will make things worse and give your mate the impression that you don't want to solve things. Let him or her know that you want to talk this out, but you think you need to calm down first.

### **Do Fun Things Together**

Communicating isn't always about being serious and talking about issues. It's also about enjoying your time with each other. Make sure that you're investing time in having fun and making great memories.

Those good memories and good foundation are the things that will sustain you when you aren't in a great spot in your relationship. If you're not doing anything fun together, it's time to start.

You may have all kinds of excuses such as not having time or not enjoying the same things. These have to go out the window. You have to make time and you have to sometimes be willing to do things that aren't your favorite activities.

Schedule a date night for each week. This doesn't mean you have to go somewhere and spend a lot of money. Really you're just blocking off time that you'll spend together. Then, when it comes to planning what you'll do take turns.

When you take turns planning activities, you'll both get an equal chance to do things you want to do. And sometimes you'll do things you don't want to do, but you need to be a good sport. You may find that you have more fun than you thought.

If your budget is small, don't worry. There are many things you can do that don't cost a lot of money. Having a picnic at the local park, getting

an ice cream cone together, or going for a walk together are low cost activities.

If you haven't been making time for each other, you may think that this idea isn't really going to help you. But once you implement a weekly date night, you'll see that it's much more meaningful than you might imagine.

### **Don't Assume You Know What the Other Is Feeling**

Many times, couples have communication breakdowns when they assume they know what the other person is thinking and feeling. Assuming is one of the worst things you can do when it comes to communicating.

Instead, it's always better to ask your partner what he or she is feeling. It may turn out that they had a totally different thought process than the one you thought they had. And when you base your own feelings and reactions on incorrect information there can be big problems.

When you assume you know what your partner is thinking you can end up feeling bitter, sadness, anger, and even resentment when there's no real basis for it. Always make sure that you ask your partner how he or she feels instead of jumping to conclusions.

Also remember that people and their feelings change over time. If your partner felt one way about an issue in the beginning of your relationship, he may not feel that way several years later. It's okay to revisit issues and see if feelings have changed.

### **Be Willing to Apologize**

We all make mistakes. When you spend a lot of time arguing and trying to be right, it can be difficult to admit that, in fact, you are wrong. But this is a key to having a happy and healthy relationship.

When your disagreement becomes emotionally charged and you say things you don't really mean out of anger, be willing to apologize. If you

hurt your partner's feelings, even unknowingly, be willing to say you're sorry. The words I'm sorry are very powerful.

Likewise, make sure you're open to forgiving your partner when it's her turn to apologize. You may not feel happy feelings right away, but accepting an apology is more about a choice than it is a wave of emotion that passes over you.

Choose to forgive now, let go of hurt feelings, and eventually the positive emotions will come. Remember that you're both imperfect people and there's no way to get it right all the time.

### **Ask for What You Need**

Just as you shouldn't make assumptions, you shouldn't expect your partner to read your mind. If you need something physically or emotionally, it's important to let your mate know what you need.

When you expect him to be able to read your mind, you'll set yourself up for disappointment and you set him up to fail. Instead, be specific about your needs. Do you need him to hug you? Do you need him to help more around the house?

Whatever it is, make sure not to keep your needs hidden. You'll be much happier if you just express your needs and your partner will be grateful not to have to play a guessing game that can end up having negative consequences.

### **Remember You're on the Same Team**

Often, we take out all of our frustrations on our spouse. They're the closest to us and they're on our team, but we forget about that and treat them poorly. When you're going through struggles, it's better to lean on your teammate than it is to beat them up.

If you need to vent, that's okay. But don't make venting and frustration a personal attack against your mate. Let him or her know what's going on

with you and then allow them to be there for you and walk through tough times with you.

Together you can handle any problem, but when you become divided your team isn't as powerful. Remember that the person you with whom you share this relationship is your partner – not your opponent.

### **Tend Your Relationship**

If you plant seeds in fertile soil, they may get a great start to growing. But eventually weeds will come in, there will be drought conditions, and without your care a garden will start to die off or get choked out.

Your relationship is the same way. Most relationships get off to a wonderful start – there's passion and flirting and fun. But eventually there will be hard times – just like weeds invading a garden.

If you quit paying attention to your relationship, the negative stuff can take over and you can find yourself wondering what happened to the person you fell in love with. But if you constantly tend your relationship, you can protect yourselves from hard times by facing them together.



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