

Communication With Your Spouse – Is It Healthy for Your Marriage and Family?

By Moe & Paige Becnel

We communicate everyday, but often we do not get our message to our spouse. Nor do we at times completely understand our spouse's message.

Webster defines Communicate as – To impart to another, To share, To participate
The word Commune means – To interchange ideas and feelings, To impart sentiments mutually,
Friendly conversation

Communications between spouses have taken on a variety of purposes and tones, such as:

Praising their partner	or	Pointing out faults
Encouraging each other	or	Casting doubt of their ability
Expressing gratitude	or	Complaining
Discussing a disagreement	or	Defending your point
True concern for feelings	or	Only concerned with your feelings
Constructive problem solving	or	Destructive – creating more problems
Developing common goals	or	Putting down each other's goals

Similar comparisons can be made when we discuss our spouse's children. Stepparents are either lifting the children up or tearing them down; helping them solve their problems or creating more problems for them.

I know people who create more problems than they solve, and damage more relationships than they build.

The driving force behind these people is self. They live for only pleasing themselves, and often become arrogant in the process. They have little regard for other people.

Quiz Time:

How would you rate the effectiveness of the communication between you and your spouse?

Place a score of 1 to 5 (1 = poor communication and 5 = excellent communication) next to each statement as to how it fits the communication in your marriage:

1. My spouse and I communicate over the issues in our home to build our marriage & family. _____
2. We have some or several issues that we do not talk about, because it creates arguments. _____
3. When we discuss an issue, one of us gets defensive or upset, and nothing gets resolved. _____
4. No matter how much we communicate, little change takes place. Issues go unresolved. _____
5. Our romance is alive and well. (A form of communication.) _____
6. I am thankful for my spouse. I tell and show them regularly. _____

Scores of one's or two's may be areas that need some attention in your communication.

A Scenario

Susan, a Stepmom (we prefer "new mom") tells her husband Bill that Davey, Bill's son, "once again" did not put the garbage out last night like he was supposed to, and the garbage truck has already passed this morning."

A typical Blended Family response --- Bill replies, "Well Alice, (Susan's daughter), still has not cleaned up her room like she was supposed to do 2 days ago!"

This type of communication creates tension, and CAUSES THE REAL ISSUES TO BE STUFFED, AND FUTURE COMMUNICATION TO BE STIFLED.

*A stuffed issue equals stuffed feelings.
Stuffed feelings are the beginning of resentment.*

An appropriate response should have been discipline for both children.

What is Your Goal?

Is your goal to have your needs met? (You will wear everyone out.)
Is your goal to win – to prove yourself right? (You will hurt others in the process.)
Is your goal to defend your position? (You will live lonely.)
Is your goal to defend your children's position? (You will dishonor your spouse.)

Your goal should be to have a strong marriage FIRST, and a strong family.
Spouses are a TEAM, or should be. They are on the same team, though at times it may not seem so.

We build strong families by building the relationships within the family.
Building requires two hands on the task. It is impossible to be constructive with a hammer in one hand, and a sword (to defend yourself or your wants) in the other hand.

A kind word one day followed by harsh words another day will only build WALLS between people, not relationships.

If you want to build relationships, make sure your hands hold the right equipment in both hands (a hammer and nails, or a saw and a board.)

What am I talking about? A soft, caring, loving heart toward all the people in your home that produces:

Encouragement	Kindness	Grace	Gentleness	Goodness
Self-less-ness	Concern	Compassion	Thankfulness	Fun

Here are some tips to enhance your communication skills:

1. Effective Communication is non-emotional

Nothing gets resolved when people are emotional, that is – when they are angry, upset, or hurt.
Allow yourself and your family members to calm down before trying to resolve an issue.

James 1:19-20 says, "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

2. Control your tongue

Watch your words, and the tone of your voice. As described in the list above, your tongue can be a blessing or a curse to your family members.

Remember, you can never take harsh words back. Even after they are forgiven, they are still remembered.

Psalm 120: 2 states, "Save me, O LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues."

Proverbs 10: 19 says, "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise."

Proverbs 18: 21 reads, "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

3. Give

Become a giver! Jesus Christ is our example, who gave His entire life to the service and well being of others.

Give of yourself to your spouse, and your natural and new children. And know that giving is your source of receiving.

4. Fight Fair

Don't bring up the past, especially if it involves hurt.

Don't point fingers. Adam and Eve pointed fingers (Eve blamed the snake, Adam blamed the woman), and never admitted their own failure for eating the forbidden fruit.

5. Keep communication open

Ask a lot of questions, and then listen. Don't assume you know how the other person is feeling, or that you may know why they have done something a certain way.

6. Give people the benefit of the doubt

We call this 'B.O.D.' There is always an explanation for a person's actions, so don't judge (assuming you know the reason) before you know the facts.

7. Pray

This always AMAZES us.

Praying for your family members will change YOUR heart toward them, which will bring change in your actions toward them, which will then change them.

Praying about your issues gives you new ideas (from God's Holy Spirit) on how to handle them.

Praying brings peace. As you see God start to change things because of your prayer, you become aware of the higher power working on your behalf.

Listen in your prayer time! Prayer is 2-way communication with God. He probably wants to tell you something about those people or things you are praying about.

If your family needs change, you change first!

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