

## COMMUNICATION

Communication is to love what blood is to life. It is impossible to have life unless you have blood. The same is true about communication. It is impossible to have any kind of meaningful relationship unless there is good communication. That is true for you and your future spouse and for your relationship with God.

Write your definition of what the word “communication” means to you

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Write your definition of the word “listening”. After you have finished, share your answers with your future spouse.

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If there is any one insight with which a young married couple should begin their life together with, it would be to keep open, at all cost, the lines of communication between the two of them.

A marriage is like a large house with many rooms. Each couple would like to use and enjoy all of these rooms. But in many marriages, doors are found to be locked - they represent areas in the relationship which the couple are unable to explore together. Attempts to open these doors lead to failure and frustration. The right key cannot be found. So the couple are happy to live together in only a few rooms that they can open easily, leaving the rest of the house, unexplored and unused.

There is, however, a master key that will open every door. It is not easy to find. Or, to be more correct, it has to be forged by the couple together, and this can be very difficult. The master key that will open all the doors is the art of effective marital communications.

In our communication we send messages. Every message has three different components; first, the content; second, the tone of voice; third, the nonverbal way it was communicated. Nonverbal communication includes facial expressions, body posture and actions. When we have any change in the tone of our voice or in the nonverbal way we communicate, it is possible for us to express many different messages using the same word, statement, or question.

When conveying your message the nonverbal way you communicate them is the most important. The tone in which you convey your message is the second most important aspect whether your message is received in the way it was intended to be received.

Take a minute and think about how you communicate nonverbally. In the space below write your thoughts on what you feel your nonverbal communications means to other people.

Now write your feelings on how your future spouse communicates nonverbally and what you feel their nonverbal communication means to other people.

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Our nonverbal communication and tone of voice are two essential elements in conveying our messages to other people. Are you aware of your tone of voice when talking to others? You may want to use a tape recorder to record some of your conversations. Then play them back and pay attention to your tone of voice and what it implies.

Read each of the following situations and after each write what you would say in response. After you have finished read each situation out loud to your future spouse and have them answer the question to you out loud. Listen to what and how they say it and after they finish repeat back to them what you heard them say to you.

1. Its Saturday. Your spouse ask you to shop for something but you really don't want to go. What do you say? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. You are trying to watch your favorite TV program but your spouse is continually interrupting and asking you questions. The program is at the crucial part and you don't want to miss it. What do you say? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. You are describing to your spouse the most exciting event of your day. Right in the middle of it your spouse yawns and says, "I think I'll go get a cup of coffee." What do you say?

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4. Your spouse serves you breakfast. You notice that the bacon is overcooked, which you don't like. The toast is served lightly toasted with fresh butter which is exactly what you like. What do you say? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. After dinner your spouse asks you if you would do the dishes tonight since they are so tired. You, too, are tired and were looking forward to relaxing. Usually you both do them together. What do you say? \_\_\_\_\_
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- \_\_\_\_\_
6. You have just had an argument with one of the children and you realize that you are wrong. It is not easy to apologize to family members because they usually rub it in. What do you say?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

In the book, “Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?” author John Powell states that we communicate on five different levels, from shallow cliches to deep personal comments. Hang-ups, such as fear, apathy or a poor self-image keeps us at the shallow level. If we can be freed from our restrictions, we can move to the deeper, more meaningful level.

The five levels of communications are:

**Level Five:** *Cliche 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/her defenses.

**Level Four:** *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. The person is willing to step out of their solitary confinement and risk telling some of their ideas and decisions. They are still caution. If they senses that what they are saying is not being accepted, they will retreat.

**Level Two:** *My Feelings or Emotions.* At this level the person shares how they feel about facts, ideas and judgements. Their feelings underneath these areas are revealed. For a person to really share themselves with another individual they must move to the level of sharing their feelings.

**Level One:** *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.

After reading the five levels of communications, take a minute and answer the following questions and then share with you future spouse.

1. What are some of the reasons why a person might respond only at level five or level four?

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2. When do you feel most like responding at levels two and one?

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3. At what level do you usually respond?

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4. At what level does your future spouse usually respond?

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5. On which level do you usually share with God.

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6. Describe a time when you really felt that you were communicating with God.

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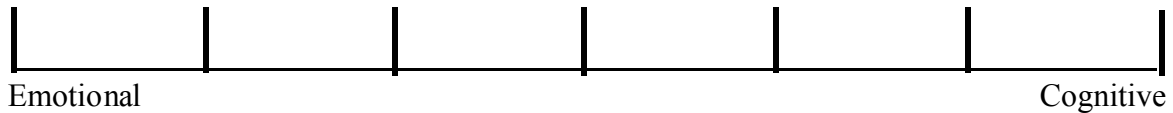
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Persons who communicate primarily on a cognitive or thinking level deal mainly with factual data. They like to talk about such topics as sports, the stock market, houses, jobs, etc., keeping the subject of conversation out of the emotional area. Usually they are quite uncomfortable dealing with issues that elicit feelings, especially that involve love, fear, and anger. These persons have difficulty, then, being warm, and supportive of their spouses.

Others communicate more on the feeling level. They tire easily of purely factual data and feel a need to share feelings, especially with their spouses. They feel that the atmosphere between husband and wife must be as free as possible from unpleasant feelings like tension, anger and resentment. So, of course, they want to talk about these emotional things, resolve conflicts with their spouse, clean the air and keep things pleasant between them.

Of course no one is completely cognitive or completely emotional. Where are you and where is your future spouse? On the diagram below indicate with a "1" where you think you are, indicate with a "2" where you think your future spouse is, and indicate with a "3" where you think you future spouse would place you.



A person on the left side of the graph, who shares more feelings, is not less bright or less intellectual. This person is simply aware of his/her feelings and is usually better able to do something about them. A surprising fact is that the so-called cognitive person (on the right) is controlled by their feelings just as is the so-called emotional person, but they don't realize it. For example, the stiff, formal intellectual has deep feelings also, but uses enormous energy to keep them buried so he won't be bothered with them. Unfortunately they do bother him. Whenever someone (like an "emotional" wife or child) is around asking him for affection and warmth, he is not only unable to respond, he is angered that his precious equilibrium has been disturbed.

Communication is the process of sharing yourself, both verbally and nonverbally, in such a way that the other person can both accept and understand what you are sharing.