

STARE INTO HER EYES

Lessons in Marriage Communication

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What has happened to healthy conversation between husbands and wives, between parents and children?

Fast-paced living has robbed us of God's gift of converse. Yet it can be retrieved with a little thought and effort, mainly based on self-giving rather than selfishness in communication.

Try the following for starters:

(1) When listening to your spouse, truly listen with all you've got.

Sometimes the temptation is to fake a listening stance, just posing. It is nodding without really hearing, smiling while the mind is wandering, laughing when hardly picking up the joke.

In time, the other person figures out that the conversation is basically going one way. That is hurtful.

But when one truly listens, the vibes are there! The frequencies are strong. The one talking knows for certain that the other individual is all "into it." That is communicating with style!

(2) Don't interrupt.

Some couples spend whole conversational segments tossing sentences into the air for the other's knives to jab them at every flip. Periods at ends of sentences have time off for they simply never their chances to play the game.

If two people talk to one another, it should be WITH one another. That means that one should get to talk while the other listens; then vice versa. That means that each individual has the democratic chance to find his own period at the end of his own sentence.

How frustrating it is to be interrupted, not just once, but constantly. When that occurs, tempers get hot, facial expressions get contorted and nerves get shredded. For some, this becomes literally a lifestyle of "giving it back and forth."

Have patience with the one speaking. Practice common courtesy and let that person finish the sentence, the paragraph. When a pause is forthcoming, then pick-up and respond. There is more fun when playing the game by the rules.

(3) Stare into her eyes.

That's right. Look right into her face and let her know that you are glued! It is the same with him--let him know that he is the center of your universe at that particular moment. Rivet your vision onto the other person's to discover that you are most welcomed to enter deeply into that personality.

Can there be anything quite as frustrating as talking to a moving target? Of course, that is what much of today's life unfortunately is about--fast talk, fast jabs, fast nothing. Then we wonder why we rarely connect? Why life is increasingly empty?

Look into that other person's eyes so that there is no question that you are giving full attention. This is particularly crucial when in a group setting where others may have a yen to interrupt your twosome. Rarely allow that. Interrupters are hyper discourteous people who usually don't mean harm but still are unthinking by their intrusions.

You can beware of the intruders and thereby beat them at their first punches. Simply continue to look into the original talker's face, not permitting your gaze to slide away into the intruder's eyes. The interrupter usually gets the message in quick order. In other words, you are rightfully saying to that conversational stranger: This conversation has its boundaries and you have just crossed them. Please don't try that again. It's not nice.

(4) Allow for a breather.

Some partners discover early that one talks more than the other. Perhaps one talks too MUCH more than the other.

When that occurs, it can be a bit overbalanced and that off-tilt can lead to an individual's lack of attention, or artificial listening while thinking about other things. In other words, one individual may simply come to tolerate the constant haranguing of the other. That is not truly communicating, obviously. It is merely putting up with annoying sounds.

Be conscious of time fences when you are talking to your spouse. Give him a chance to have his say. Give her her time. That is only fair and makes basic sense. So groove it into place early on.

(5) Learn how to ask really thoughtful questions.

This is especially true when speaking with a person who tends to be shy. Draw that person out into deeper conversational levels by asking about his activities of the day, her schedule for tomorrow, what is going on his head, what preoccupies her past times.

People really do crave for others to be interested in them. Question-asking is one fond way to probe about kindly into another's heart and head.

Then when the person answers your question, listen attentively. Let the spouse know for certain that you asked the query because you are genuinely interested in the responses.

(6) Take time out to sit and talk.

After the evening meal can be a useful time slot at this point. Eat your main course at the table, and with the children romping about with their desserts gulped down, why can't mother and father take their desserts to the living room---coffee or tea accompanying.

In that milieu, just sit and talk and eat. Relax. Unwind. The meal dishes can wait to be stacked in the dishwasher.

Ask about one another's day. Find out what the evening's schedule holds. Pick around at some insignificant items of the day. Steer away from being totally business, totally serious.

The same sit-and-chat past time can sneak in happily upon you on a Saturday morning when neither spouse has to trot off to work. Or Sunday evening before going to bed is a really pleasant moment or two to have a light snack and talk about sweet nothings.

(7) Try to stay away from negatives.

In some marriages, one partner or the other tends to be negative--gripping, picking, finding fault, raising problems into mega proportions when they are actually mini-sized, and so on.

This can become a habit. It can also be quite annoying to the other person.

When a negative spouse tends to overdo it, it is quite appropriate for the other partner to point this conversational slant out for reframing. Suggest that for this particular evening, nothing negative, no really heavy problem, is going to be brought up.

Try this over and over so that one can begin to change his or her negative habit. In time, the downer partner actually can revamp conversation by revamping one's outlook on life.

(8) Toss a lot of life situations into prayer baskets.

One believer can remind the other that it is time to quit fretting and start trusting God with the practical nettles of life. This is not necessarily dodging responsibilities; it is really meaning business when it comes to real-life faith.

"I think we should give that one over to God," can be the simple suggestion. The light bulb goes on in the other's head. "Good idea," is usually the correct response.

It is not that one spouse is more spiritual than the other; it is just that the grind of life can cause us to forget that God is really on our side. We need to take situations to Him more frequently and let worry go fly.