

Communication

Building a marriage that speaks life

Verses to Consider

Proverbs 15:4 <i>"The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life."</i>	Proverbs 18:21 <i>"The tongue has the power of life and death."</i>	Proverbs 15:30 <i>"A cheerful look brings joy to the heart."</i>
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Healthy Boundaries in Effective Communication

1. We will steer clear of saying "never" and "always."
2. We won't blame or shame.
3. We won't name-call, label, or belittle.
4. We won't use "YOU..." statements.
5. We won't tell the other person we are "angry" at them — we will strive to use a better explanation.
6. We won't lose control. (Clarify what that means to each of you personally.)
7. We won't withdraw, isolate, or abruptly leave a conversation.
8. We won't speak until we have completely listened to our partner.
9. We won't make demands.
10. We won't use threats.
11. We won't criticize.
12. We won't interrupt.
13. We will not use the word DIVORCE.
14. We won't use generalizations.
15. We won't point out when our spouse breaks these rules — this is about our own accountability and example.
16. We won't go to family, friends, or co-workers about our communication without prior permission.
17. We will speak face-to-face rather than hiding behind technology.
18. We will learn to use the 4 T's.
19. We will not have intense discussion in the presence of others, including our children.
20. We commit to transparency, honesty, openness, and truth — even when it is uncomfortable or embarrassing.
21. We won't reference family members or their flaws unless they are directly interfering in our relationship.
22. We won't keep referencing past failures or previously resolved issues.

Three Types of Communication

1. Average daily talking The ordinary exchange of the day — schedules, kids, work, errands.	2. Serious conversation In-depth or important topics that need time, attention, and the 4 T's.	3. Conflict Hard moments. Use boundaries, listening steps, and the Daily 5 A's.
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This is why we practice the Daily 5 A's — they keep the first type healthy so the second and third do not overwhelm the marriage.

How Men and Women Often Process Communication

Husbands — often more... - Analytical and spatial in processing - Single-track when problem-solving - Slower to move from facts to feelings - Helped by a clear point and a clear ask	Wives — often more... - Attuned to tone, wording, and emotion - Connecting several topics at once - Helped by being heard before a "fix" - Reading meaning in what is not said
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The 4 T's of Communication

Before a hard conversation, run through all four. Circle the T you personally need to improve (answer for yourself, not your spouse). Then jot a short note in the space.

1 • Timing • Do I try to talk when they are busy, leaving for work, already engaged, or late at night? • Do I ASK if now is a good time — and if it isn't, what works? • Am I sensitive to my partner's daily rhythms and stress levels? • Do I pile up many discussions and try to address them all at once? Notes:	2 • Tone • Do I sound angry, sarcastic, condescending, or uninterested? • Is there a difference in my tone based on whom I am speaking to? (Do I sound nicer to friends or strangers?) • Am I too loud? Notes:
3 • Technique • Am I remembering to start positive and focus on strengths? • Am I using the healthy boundaries list? • Am I playing the victim or blaming? • Is technology an appropriate means for this conversation? Notes:	4 • Truth • Am I being honest and fair — or do I exaggerate or twist things? • Have I considered their intent or state of heart? • Do I rewrite history — alter facts or leave things out? Notes:

One specific change I will make: _____

Quiz: Am I a Good Listener?

Read each item and check any that apply to you. Three or more checked means give extra attention to the listening steps below. At least half of communication is listening.

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| ☐ Do I interrupt my significant other? | ☐ Do I zone out or become distracted easily? |
| ☐ Am I unwilling to stop what I am doing to hear them? | ☐ Do I say “can we talk later,” “I can’t deal with this now,” or “get to the point”? |
| ☐ Do I plan my reply while they are still talking? | ☐ Do I have trouble seeing things from their view? |
| ☐ Do I put time limits on listening? | ☐ Do I think my significant other talks too much? |
| ☐ Do I walk away or leave discussions? | ☐ Do I avoid times or places where I may have to listen? |

10 Steps of Intentional Empathetic Listening

Decide who will be the Talker and who will be the Listener. Follow the order. Then reverse roles. Stay on one specific incident.

1. Decide who will be the Listener and who will be the Talker. 2. The Talker begins with affirmations that are specific to the situation. 3. The Talker shares thoughts and feelings using “I feel” statements. 4. The Listener repeats what the Talker said and asks if they got it correct. 5. The Listener empathizes.	6. The Listener apologizes and asks for forgiveness. 7. The Listener asks if there is anything more the Talker wants to share about this specific incident. 8. The Talker, if needed, shares more “I feel” statements. 9. The Listener repeats again, asks if they understood, and if not, asks for clarity and empathizes (return to step 5). 10. Reverse roles.
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The Daily Five A's

Keep this under five minutes. This is not a honey-do list. Practice together every day this week.

Affirmation	Tell your spouse things you appreciate about who they are and what they do — the things that made you fall in love with them, and the strengths you still see.
Affection	Each of us needs physical contact. A hug, handholding, a kiss, a backrub, a cuddle. Do not withhold affection based on the day's emotion. Give generously.
Ask	Not a to-do list. Ask daily: "What can I do for you?" "Is there anything you need?" "How can I help with any burdens?" It means so much to know someone cares enough to offer help.
Apology	Learn to say "I am sorry" and mean it. You do not have to apologize for every little thing, but correct your wrongs and ease hurt you have caused. "I am sorry" is not weakness. It is strength of character.
Amen	Pray for the person you love, then pray together — meals, blessings, the start or end of the day. If you want to resist the enemy's attacks on your marriage, pray together. It is spiritual warfare.

Recommended Reading

<i>How to Have That Difficult Conversation</i> — Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend	<i>House & Home — God's Blueprint for a Great Marriage</i> — Chip Ingram
<i>Love & Respect</i> — Dr. Emerson Eggerichs	<i>Battlefield of the Mind</i> — Joyce Meyer
<i>Your Time-Starved Marriage</i> — Drs. Les & Leslie Parrott	<i>The Power of a Praying Wife</i> — Stormie Omartian
<i>Emotional Intelligence 2.0</i> — Travis Bradberry & Jean Greaves	<i>Crucial Conversations (3rd Edition)</i> — Grenny, Patterson, McMillan, Switzler & Gregory

Homework

Commit to sharing the Daily 5 A's with your spouse every day for the next week.

At week's end, discuss what you noticed. Were they mechanical, difficult, enjoyable, awkward, and/or helpful?