

Communication and Listening

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Why talk about communication again?

Because MOST OF US have had problems communicating at home !!!

And the survey says...

Communication is crucial

According to Dennis Rainey of Family Life Ministries:

- ▶ Communication is the #1 problem faced by married couples
- ▶ Open communication is “essential to the life” of a marriage relationship
- ▶ Communicating effectively begins with discovering **transparency**. Transparency in marriage is described in Genesis before the fall: “The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25)

Definition of Communication

1. The imparting or exchanging of information or news
2. A means of connection between particular people or places

TWO-WAY : Sender and Receiver

When is Text and Email communication deemed complete ?

Have you checked your Connection?

- Without a good “connection” effective communication can not take place



An excerpt from *A Real-Life Scandal*:

“As our careers grew, Lou and I were spending less and less time together. Our once strong connection was fading and I found myself craving the laughter we used to share. Our arguments became more frequent, but nothing was ever resolved. One resentment just piled on top of the next, and after a while it felt like an insurmountable hill to climb. By 2002, my husband and I were barely communicating.”

Group Discussion

1. Pair up with another couple
2. Discuss and share what went wrong
3. Identify what may have caused the couple to feel disconnected
4. Prepare to share with the larger group

Disconnection can be caused by:

1. Boredom
2. Feeling out of touch
3. Acting like room mates vs. lovers
4. Not prioritizing the relationship
5. A festering fear or harmful hurt

Group Discussion

1. Pair up with another couple
2. Discuss and share ways that this couple can re-connect
3. What would you/your spouse do?
4. Identify the most effective approach

10 ways to stay Connected

1. Regular Date nights
2. Laugh and play together
3. Show concern daily
4. Argue w/o fighting
5. Apologize and forgive
6. Celebrate successes
7. Share with each other
8. Listen to understand
9. Rekindle romance
10. Pray together

“Oneness” is not “Sameness”

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- **Parents still married**
- **Daddy’s Girl**
- **5 siblings**
- **Loves nice things**
- **Home-body**
- **Spends freely**



- **Divorced parents**
- **Mama’s Boy**
- **No siblings**
- **Likes to travel**
- **Lots of friends**
- **Conservative**

Accept and respect your spouse

- ▶ Accept that your spouse has the God-given right to be, think, behave, talk and act differently than you
- ▶ Respect your spouse and listen to them
- ▶ Married persons are no longer 'Independent' but 'Interdependent'

"Healthy interdependence has also been termed "effective dependency", defined as effectively utilizing others for help and effectively trusting others." *Dr. Sue Johnson,*

- ▶ Create a non-judgmental atmosphere where your spouse can open up and communicate

Communication is the key to LOVE

If he says: “Honey, I got a raise.”

She hears: “We hit the lottery, let’s go upgrade this tiny diamond.”

Love ain’t easy but it doesn’t have to be so bad!



What did you say? What did you hear?

- ▶ What messages are commonly misunderstood?
- ▶ Consider these questions:
 - ▶ What did he/she say?
 - ▶ What did you hear?
 - ▶ What questions can be asked to clarify?

Listen so he/she will talk

- ▶ Men and women have different communication styles
- ▶ Listening is a skill that can be learned by men and women
- ▶ We must listen, so our spouse will talk to us
- ▶ We must earn his/her trust
- ▶ Humans – men and women respond to active, empathic listening

“He/she who has ears, let him/her hear.”

Matthew 11:15

Levels of listening

Light Listening

You hear only the information that is relevant to you

Dialogue Listening

You hear the words but not the sentiments behind the words

Empathic Listening

You hear the full content of the message communicated verbally and non-verbally

Biblical References on Listening

▶ James 1:19 NIV

‘My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry’

▶ Philippians 2:3-4 NIV

‘Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.’

▶ Proverbs 17:28 NIV

‘Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.’

▶ Proverbs 18:2 NIV

‘A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.’

What do these words have in common?

BUILD

CRUISE

EQUIP

FRUIT

GUIDE

SUITED

What do these words have in common?

The 'U' comes before the 'I'

BUILD

CRUISE

EQUUP

FRUUT

GUUIDE

SUUITED

What Does It Mean...

...to put “YOU” before “I”?

Tips to Remember

- ▶ Don't interrupt
 - ▶ Keep an open mind
 - ▶ Make listening a priority
 - ▶ Use feedback technique

An excerpt from A Real-Life Love Story:

“Steve and Marjorie have also learned to communicate, the most valuable asset in a marriage. “I’ll say to Steve, ‘This is what I said. Now tell me what you heard,’” Marjorie explains. “When I do that, I’ve found pretty much every time that Steve heard something else, and it helps clarify things before they escalate.”

Tips to Remember

▶ Watch non-verbal

“Interest and caring, like all emotional states, are conveyed **primarily** by facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, **not** by words or communication techniques.”

Tips to Remember

- ▶ Watch non-verbal messages
 - ▶ Avoid blocks to listening
 - ▶ Stay focused
 - ▶ Appreciate differences

Adopted from About.com (Marriage)

By Sheri & Bob Stritof

Focus on Oneness

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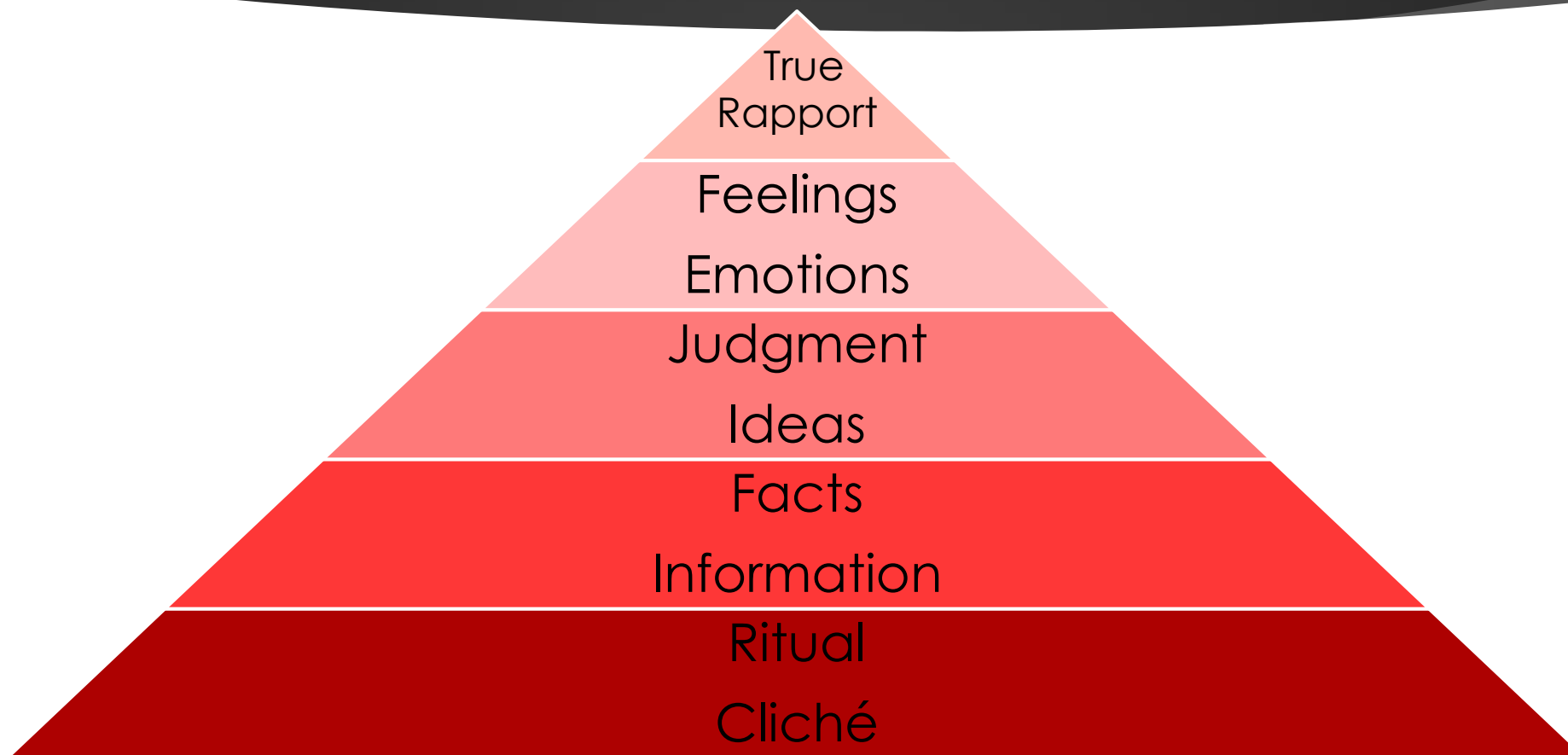


MATT 19:5 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE,
AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'

Couples communicate well when :

- they feel safe
- they feel they are not going to be judged negatively
- they are not afraid of being punished or attacked
- they are not going to be made to feel guilty
- they believe they are going to be understood
- they know that what they say is not going to be distorted and/or misinterpreted
- they know that what they say will not be used against them later
- they trust that what they are going to say will be kept confidential
- there is no chance a talk will go on for hours or escalating into a painful argument
- the listener does not respond with solutions

Communication Triangle



Levels of Communication

Reporting Facts/Information

- ▶ There was a lot of traffic on the way home
- ▶ I heard there's a meeting at the church tomorrow
- ▶ It's starting to get cold outside
- ▶ I put the kids to bed

Involves sharing what you know, but exposes nothing of yourself or your feelings

Levels of Communication

Sharing Your Opinions, Ideas and Judgments

- ▶ **That was the best movie I've seen all year**
- ▶ **I prefer your hair cut short**
- ▶ **Basketball is the best sport to watch**
- ▶ **I disagree with that approach**

Communication becomes more personal and self-revealing

Reaction of person you're communicating with can impact whether you continue coming out of your shell or start retreating

Levels of Communication

Emotional Sharing

- ▶ **Begin sharing “what / how you feel”**
- ▶ **Intimate communication occurs**
- ▶ **Involves RISK but without it, marriages can end up being superficial**
- ▶ **We must avoid hurting one another and judging or critiquing feelings**
- ▶ **Where we need to be “good listeners”**

Levels of Communication

True Rapport

- ▶ **Completely open and honest -- Transparent**
- ▶ **Sharing the real you (e.g. keeping it real)**
- ▶ **Communicate from the HEART**
- ▶ **Must feel totally SAFE**
- ▶ **Requires deep TRUST and COMMITMENT**

Conversation starters...

- ❑ When we fell in love, my favorite thing about you was ...
- ❑ My greatest need right now is...
- ❑ Our kids would be shocked if they knew...
- ❑ I love you more today than yesterday because...
- ❑ Today, I prayed that God would...
- ❑ You are the world's greatest...
- ❑ The happiest we have ever been was...

Are you listening?

Genuine listening means suspending memory, desire and judgment – and, for a few moments at least, existing for the other person.

Michael P. Nichols, Ph.D., The Lost Art of Listening

Summary

- ▶ **What are some keys to effective communication and listening?**
- ▶ **What practical steps can you take to improve or maintain communication and listening in your marriage?**

Pray Until Something Happens

Lord, give me ears to hear my spouse's words, as well as his/her thoughts and feelings underneath the words.

Move me out of the way of my spouse expressing himself/herself. Replace my reactions with the empathy of Jesus to what he/she says and how he/she says it.

Lord, please identify in me the habits that prevent my spouse from opening up to me and let your Spirit in me replace them with new ways that will make me an irresistible listener.

*Adopted from *Praying for the Men in Your Life* by Suzan Johnson Cook*