

What Wives Wish Husbands Knew

Session—Can We Talk?

“I Wish You Knew How to Communicate With Me ”

- (My) problems don't need instant solutions, but a listening ear.
- That I (need to) be more open in communicate with her about issues that she may have about my family and the way she is treated at times.
- Don't hear me....LISTEN to me! I look back over 20 years and realize how many times that Debbie listened to me complain about youth workers at church, or troubled teens or pain in the butt staff members...but I do not ever think that I stopped and really listened to her day. I heard many words but never did I stop to listen.
- She still wants me to pursue her after all these years. She wants to be honored and cherished by me. She wants to be understood.
- Communication, VALUES, GOALS AND HUMOR. I could elaborate on each one but I think you understand each one. These three are what makes our marriage good.
- (We) have been married 23 years, three teen age kids and lots of ups and downs. I thought a lot about your question the last few weeks and here are a couple of thoughts... I think (my wife) would have liked me to better understand that the seasons of life affect for a short time how much attention she can pay to me. For instance, I did not realize how jealous I acted when our kids were little. Childbirth and raising toddlers was physically exhausting to (her). I was not very understanding during this time that her lack of energy for me was short term. It was not because she was not in love or did not want me. I see this so often in marriages that are in trouble. So many times it is during this critical period before the kids are off to school...husbands turn to pornography or their job, or hobbies instead of throwing their energy into helping their wives or just being patient. I tell so many men that as the kids are less needy physically (pajamas, baths, holding, feeding, etc) that they can and will get their wife back...the one who used to have all her energy for them!
I did this so poorly during our season of life with pregnancy, nursing, babies and toddlers. Now that our youngest is 14...(my wife) has the energy for me! (I am so selfish)
Bottom Line: Over a lifetime...the kids come and go, jobs come and go, homes come and go...but the constant should be the marriage...so, understand that a 6 to 10 year diversion of your wife's energy and attention is pretty small considering you will have all of her before the kids and the 30 to 40 years after they are grown!
Another area that I did not understand was how long she waited for me to be a spiritual leader at home. It was easier for me to lead a community group or an e-team than it was for me to turn to her in bed before we went to sleep and lead a prayer...or lead a family devotional or even to set the example at home of living out the disciplines of the Christ centered life. Recently, one of my kids shared that knowing that I regularly sit in my chair in the family room reading the Bible was a source of security for her as a teenager! Wow! That is better teaching than me harping on her to have a QT...teaching by example is a form of spiritual leadership in the home.
(My wife) wanted me to be a leader at home and she did not want to nag, so she prayed that I would step up and eventually I did begin to try, I still fail regularly!

- Eye contact is very important. Offering to help means sooooo much more than having to ask for it. Don't ever forget how important it is to tell your wife that you really do think she is awesome.

I want to add one that doesn't seem to fit on a list. Humor—keep your sense of humor. (My husband) and I have remembered to laugh together, often and it has made such a difference. I think if you can keep laughing at the dumb things, stupid things, little mistakes, the kids, the little aches and pains, the things that break when you can't afford a new one...the list goes on and on. But I really do think all of us need to be reminded how good it feels to laugh together, often.

Ineffective Communication Habits

(Speak a couple of sentences in Spanish, Hebrew, or spout off some obscure theological jargon, i.e., documentary hypothesis of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, or Primary, Secondary or Tertiary authorship of Isaiah and deuterio-Isaiah and Tertiary-Isaiah). I'm talking, but I'm not communicating, because in the first instance I'm not speaking in a language your can understand, and in the second case I'm not speaking in a manner that is understandable.

- Most of the communication habits that come naturally to us are ineffective.
- If we're honest with ourselves most of us will have to admit that we actually fall back on these behaviors periodically.

The type of communication we're discussing here has to do with our willingness to learn how to understand what our wife is trying to communicate to us. To understand doesn't necessarily mean to agree.

- Even if our spouse is saying something we don't want to hear, we try to understand it, in order to see her perspective.
- When take the time and energy to listen we validate her.
 - It tells her we care about what she has to say.
 - It tells her that she interests us.
 - It says, *you're important to me.*

I. Ineffective Nonverbal Communication—Body Language

Body language speaks loud and clear!

- A. Facial Expression—rolling your eyes, sneers or smirks,—such actions are totally dismissive of the other person's worth.
- B. Demeaning Gestures—arms crossed or turning your head away in disgust...
- C. No eye contact or glaring—conveys

II. Ineffective Verbal Communication

- A. Using you statements.
 - a. "You're driving me crazy."
 - b. "You make me furious."
- B. Making declarative statements.
 - a. "That was a stupid thing to do."
 - b. "Adults shouldn't go to back to college."
 - c. "People who drive sports cars aren't spending their money wisely."

- C. Attacking the person rather than the problem.
- “So you wrecked the car—you’re so careless.”
 - “You bounced a check. What were you thinking? How could you be such an idiot with money?”
- D. Making comparative statements.
- “You’re just like your mother, she couldn’t keep her mouth shut about anything either.”
 - “That’s exactly what your absent father would have done!”
- E. Inappropriate use of the words always and never.
- “You always act like that.”
 - “You’ve never done anything right in your life, have you?”
 - “You never remember to feed the dog!”
 -
- F. Inattention to tone of voice.
- Tone says everything—don’t minimize the power of it.
 - Tone may sound sarcastic, hateful, amused, haughty, angry, and bored.
- G. Bring the past into the present.
- “Two years ago you wrecked the van and now you’ve wrecked the truck.”
 - “A year ago you got a speeding ticket and here you go again.”
 - “You should listen to me, I’m your wife, remember me, the faithful one.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Recalling a fairly severe disagreement with your wife, if someone had been present with a video camera to record every movement you made, not what you said, what do you honestly think your nonverbal communication: facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact, would have conveyed to your wife?
- Now, thinking of the same disagreement, what would your verbal habits tell her?
- What would your words, if we knew everything you said as well as your precise tone of voice, tell us about your communication goals with your wife?
- Were you trying to solve a problem or win an argument?

Effective Communication Skills

When I have something to talk to Shara about, if I actually want to accomplish anything positive, then it’s my responsibility to present it in such a way that she’ll listen willingly and not feel attacked.

If I’m yelling, whining, being sarcastic or making fun of her what are my chances? Slim and none and Slim’s out of town...

My goal when issues arise that have potential to harm our relationship is to present my thoughts or perspective in such a way that she will want to understand me.

I. Effective Nonverbal Communication—Body Language

- Facial Expression—the exact reverse of everything we talked about earlier...
- Open Gestures—leaning toward her, nodding your head to convey understanding,
- Maintaining eye contact—hugely powerful

II. Effective Verbal Communication.

- A. Use “I” statements.
- Take responsibility for what you are saying—“I would like you to go with me to the ball game,” instead of “You never go to ball games with me,” or “You should go to the ball game with me.”
- B. Making feeling statements.
- “I felt hurt when you told that joke about me last night.”
 - “I felt rejected when you didn’t sit by me at the movie.”
- C. Attacking the problem rather than the person.
- “Bounced checks embarrass me.”
 - “When I get home from work and there’s a mess in the living room, it frustrates me.”
 - Being late to church every Sunday embarrasses me.”
- D. Refuse to compare.
- Telling your wife that she’s “negative just like your mother” doesn’t make her want to listen to you.
 - It does just the opposite.
- E. Use words like sometimes, once in a while, occasionally or frequently.
- “No one is always negative or always lying around.”
 - Although it can certainly feel that way...from their perspective as well.
- F. Pay attention to your tone of voice.
- Your tone says a lot about how you think...
 - How you think says everything about how you really feel about this person...
 - We all pick up on it instinctively...
- G. Leave the past in the past.
- Quit dragging up mistakes she made last month or last year.
 - Does bringing up the past make her want to listen or try to understand you?
 - NO!
 - Again, it does the exact opposite...remember the goal, *to make understanding you something she wants to do*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Rate yourself from 1 to 10, 1 being not good and 10 being very good, regarding your knowledge of and willingness to utilize effective communication skills.
- Where do you think your wife would rate you?
- If your wife would offer to learn the above mentioned skills, how do you think it would effect your ability and desire to understand her?
- If you were to grant her the same consideration, are you of the opinion that she would be more likely to want to understand you?
- What is your responsibility as a good leader? Wait for her to learn and use effective communication skills or learn and use these skills himself both as the responsible action and as an example?