

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PARTNER

Why is it important to communicate with your partner?

Talking about day-to-day activities and common interests can bring happiness and success to a relationship. Communication is a key to succeed in marriage: both spouses must be able to freely express a wide range of positive (and sometimes negative) feelings to each other.

When spouses communicate, they should be able to speak respectfully to each other, to express positive feelings and listen with open minds and ears.

What does it mean to talk respectfully, express positive feelings and listen with open minds and ears?

Talking respectfully means listening without interrupting when your partner is talking. It means waiting to add your opinion until your partner is completely finished with what he/she has to say.

Expressing positive feelings means talking to you partner with affection and warmth, appreciation and approval, and admiration and respect.

Listening with open an open mind and open ears can sometimes be difficult. A marriage/relationship between man and woman is complicated and difficult at times, but it is important to listen to all of the feelings -- good and bad -- that your partner has to say without becoming defensive or angry.

How do you overcome misunderstanding and confrontation with your spouse in your relationship?

There are many ways to overcome misunderstandings. First, you must plan to communicate with your spouse so that your spouse feels like he/she is heard and that you have listened to their concerns.

Deal with one issue at a time and stay on topic. That allows you to make serious progress in one area of the problem. Once one issue or problem is resolved, you can move on to another one.

Make sure only one person speaks at a time, and let them finish their thoughts before you say anything. Do not interrupt them! There will be plenty of time for you to express your opinions, too. Usually, it is best to repeat what you think your spouse has said to make sure that you have understood them correctly. Only after that should you respond with your point of view.



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Remind yourself that your relationship overall is more important than any one frustration or problem you may be experiencing. Work on an attitude of forgiveness.

Why is it important to effectively communicate with your spouse on difficult topics?

Communication is a key to succeed in marriage. Both spouses must be able to freely express a wide range of positive and negative feelings to each other. Communicating about sex or other personal (and sometimes difficult) topics can improve your marriage and result in more interest in sexual intercourse.

How can you get your spouse to communicate with you on difficult topics?

We all need to develop skills that help us better communicate.

You should show interest in your spouse and avoid talking only about yourself. Also find a good time to talk – at time that is good for both of you – when there are not many distractions and neither one of you is overly tired.

Why is it difficult to talk about certain topics such as sex?

We are often embarrassed to discuss sexual issues because of long-standing beliefs or taboos that have been passed along in our families or communities. Sexual issues can also lead to misunderstandings and quarrels that result in lack of intimacy and can lead to infidelity.

How do you talk openly about sex and relationships?

It is important to introduce the idea that openness in discussing sexual matters is important in a marriage or serious relationship. It should be agreed that talking about sex, HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases does not necessarily mean immorality or sexual promiscuity.

It is important to communicate openly and honestly about your life with your spouse. Communicating about sex is nowadays viewed as essential to HIV/AIDS prevention strategies. Communication between husbands and wives helps couples agree upon and meet their reproductive goals and keeps them safe and healthy.

Couples should understand that sex is not the only way to show sexuality. Sexuality is a wide concept. It includes sexual identity, relationships, knowledge about our body, sexual feelings, sexual life and reproductive health. Therefore, sexuality does not always imply sexual feeling or actions only.

What are the disadvantages for not talking often and openly to each other in the couple?

Discussion between partners about their relationship, love and sexuality are very important.



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Sure, these topics are difficult to discuss, but if we do not pay attention to our interpersonal relations, our marriage can easily fail.

What are the issues that affect sex in a marriage?

There are three kind of issues related to sex in a marriage:

- **Physical issues**
 - Lack of sexual desire that is linked to physical reasons (e.g., medical conditions such as high blood pressure, exhaustion, alcoholism, painful sex, infections, mental illness)
- **Emotional issues**
 - Fear of intimacy
 - Childhood sexual abuse
 - Lack of privacy
 - Guilt from (false or genuine) sexual sin
 - Stress
 - Depression
- **Issues related to the relationship**
 - Lack of trust, betrayal and adultery
 - Lack of respect or abuse
 - Boredom

How do you communicate with your spouse about health and HIV/AIDS?

Talking about sex, health and disease, especially HIV/AIDS, is very sensitive in a couple. Therefore, it is worth taking the time to be aware of the most appropriate language and information on what is HIV, how it is transmitted, and how it can be prevented.

Be sure to:

- First gather information on HIV
- Talk about HIV in a quiet, one-to-one setting
- Bring it up when it is mentioned in the news or on TV
- Discuss the subject in person: not over the phone
- Go together for HIV counseling and testing; this is a good way to work through any HIV-related issue
- Visit together a trained counselor who can provide information, answer questions, and promote discussion about sex between partners.



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