

10 Ways to Improve Marriage Communication

Ironically, as our information age becomes a global reality, married couples increasingly report breakdowns in simple communication.

“He doesn’t listen.” “I don’t know her any more.” “We never talk.” “He spends all his free time on the computer.” “I wish he’d look at me like that.” “She talks to her friends but never with me.” These are common complaints.

For true communication to occur, the same message that left the mind of Person A must still be intact when it is understood in the consciousness of Person B.

There’s no doubt about it: We simply must improve communication within our marriages. Here are 10 tips to get started.

1. Model respectful listening. Top of the list? Take responsibility. Don’t wait for your spouse to make the first move—step up and listen already. Good listeners tend to get listened to in return.

2. Choose to be genuinely interested in what your spouse has to say. Yes, it’s a choice. You say you love her? Then don’t tune her out when the conversation is not about sports. Make the effort to attend that PTA event together—you might have something to talk about. Read that Jane Austen book she loves so much; watch her favorite HGTV decorating program together; walk hand-in-hand around the art show; show some interest in her friends. Make the choice to be interested.

3. Write your spouse a note that reinforces your message.

- “I’m looking forward to our date on Friday!”

- “Here are some things I want us to talk to Junior’s teacher about—what do you think?”
- “Thanks for bringing me lunch yesterday; I love you so much!”
- “I enjoyed shooting the breeze with you. Let’s meet for coffee and chat some more.”

4. Schedule regular, media-free family mealtimes. This applies to both marital communication and the family dynamic. Meals can be communication opportunities *par excellence*! They’re informal family meetings, clearing houses for information and workshops where parents both teach manners and model as examples. Plus, mealtimes are an awesome ongoing opportunity—with or without children—to keep communication flowing.

5. Keep the television turned off ... unless there’s a specific show you have agreed to watch together. TV as constant background noise is:

- An invitation to tune out relationships.
- A strong message about what is important (and unimportant) in a home.
- A distraction that will always suck attention away from one another.
- An excuse to avoid communication.

6. Make eye contact when you’re talking. Also make good use of use touch, responsive and reflective feedback, and body language (smiles, gestures, head tilts, raised eyebrows, nods, etc.) to demonstrate that communication is actually occurring.

7. Do not answer your phone, text, or multitask on any level while interacting with your spouse. Doing any of the above sends a clear message of priorities.

8. Avoid surface-level or single-word responses. When talking with your spouse, it’s too easy to brush off real communication, squash first-order interaction and signal your

spouse you are not really interested.

9. Designate a central location for all important notices, dates, reminders, messages, etc. Maybe a large calendar on the refrigerator, a bulletin board in the kitchen or a whiteboard by the front door.

10. Include your spouse as a “friend” on all your social media lists. No one should get more of your time than your spouse. Include one another as primary contacts, keep one another “in the loop,” send one another messages every day and act as if you are each other’s best friend. Chances are, you will be.

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