

5 Toxins of the Tongue That Can Poison Your Marriage

Toxic words poison, and sometimes even kill, relationships. Words like “I hate you” or “I wish I never met you” can cause irreparable damage.

I confess there have been too many times when harsh, harmful words have come out of my mouth toward my wife, Susan, my kids and others. It grieves me. I’m continually working hard to choose my words wisely.

Here are five toxins of the tongue that we must work to avoid.

1. Sarcastic Words. Comments like “The lawn isn’t going to mow itself” or “Do I look like your maid?” seem like no big deal on the surface, right? But sarcastic words are sometimes just symptoms of an underlying unmet expectation that has frustrated a spouse for quite some time. They can be used as a cowardly way to “dig” at your husband and wife ... poisoning slowly.

2. Unsupportive Words. Every husband and wife wants to know that their spouse is in their corner, cheering them on. When a spouse says things like, “That’s a crazy idea,” or “Do you really think you can do that?” what they may really be saying is, “I don’t believe in you,” or “I’m not on your team.”

Now, that’s not to say you shouldn’t tell your spouse when you think they have a truly bad idea. But instead of saying, “That’s the worst idea ever,” you could say, “That’s a great idea, but I feel like you would be better at this ...” Supporting one another’s aspirations is essential to a happy and productive marriage. We should be our spouse’s No. 1 fan, not their biggest critic.

3. Disrespectful Words. Respect is not something that has to

be earned. It should be given unconditionally in marriage. Disrespectful comments like, "Can't you find a real job?" "I don't care what you say; I'm going to do it anyway" and "You've really been putting on weight" are insulting, offensive and can undermine a spouse's sense of worth.

4. Comparing words. When saying things like, "Jonathan would do that for his wife" or "Why can't you be more like Karen?" what you're really communicating is, "You don't make the grade; you're not good enough" as a husband or wife.

5. Selfish Words. "I don't care how you feel, just get it done." "I want that new dress." "I need someone who really meets my needs." Spouses who care more about themselves than their spouse often start their sentences with "I." It's all about their wants and their needs, rather than their mate's.

Have any, or many, of these toxins of the tongue been injected into your marriage? If so, here are several antidotes you can use to counteract their effects.

- Apologize to your spouse for all the poisonous things you've said to them over the years. Healing can only begin when toxins are removed. And in the case of verbal toxins, relationships begin to mend when couples ask for forgiveness from each other.
- Be slow to speak. There's an old adage that states, "You never regret what you never say." It's okay to be quiet, reserved and thoughtful about what comes out of your mouth—especially when you are upset.
- Make a personal vow that toxic words will no longer come out of your mouth. Putting a Post-it note by your bed or on your mirror can serve to remind you of your commitment. Give your spouse the freedom to inform you when toxicity starts to stream from your tongue.
- These "10 Things Husbands Want to Hear From Their Wives" and "10 Things Wives Want to Hear From Their Husbands" can give you some ideas on how you can breathe

life-giving words into your spouse. You were created to build each other up, not tear each other down.

Which of these five toxins do you struggle with most? And how do you work to keep from speaking those words to your spouse? Please share your ideas.

*For the original article, visit . **Mark Merrill** is the president of Family First.*