

Overcome these communication problems and reclaim your marriage

By Richard Nicastro, Ph.D.

Anyone who's ever read a marriage advice article or relationship help book knows that couple's communication is an essential part of a healthy marriage. A large percentage of the couples who seek out my services communicate ineffectively and the goal becomes teaching them the communication skills needed for a more harmonious and fulfilling marriage.

Think of communication as the bridge that joins two separate souls and creates emotional intimacy—it helps solidify the "we" of your relationship. When communication falters, it can feel like you and your partner are living separate lives under the same roof.

Here are three common communication problems couples often struggle with—see if any of these apply to your marriage:

1. Poor timing

You just walked in the door from a long, stressful day at work and your husband bellows, "We need to talk!" For the next ten minutes he spells out his version of what is needed to get the marriage back on track and stop the incessant arguing that has become an unwelcome guest.

As you can probably tell, in the above example, the timing of this discussion is problematic. Whenever possible, discussions about sensitive issues should be planned. Ideally these conversations should occur when you and your spouse/partner can give your undivided attention to the topic at hand.

2. Not listening to the *longing* behind your spouse's/partner's message

Jennifer's husband Steve seemed distant and unsupportive after Jennifer received a big promotion at work. She became upset with him and they started arguing about everything that ever went wrong in their marriage of sixteen years.

On the surface, Steve appeared sullen and unsupportive, but simmering right below was anxiety that Jennifer wouldn't need him any longer. While unable to articulate it at the moment, Steve needed reassurance that Jennifer still needed and valued him, even when she earned more money than him.

3. Assuming you know what your partner needs

Samantha complained that Hector rarely listened to her. Part of the problem was that Hector would immediately voice his opinion or offer suggestions whenever Samantha talked about the stress of her job as a nurse. As a result, she often felt unheard by her husband and she began to withdraw from him.

Hector's intentions were good, but he was missing the mark. To get their communication back on track, I coached Hector to ask his wife this simple yet powerful question:

"What do you need from me right now?"

This had a dramatic, positive shift in their relationship, since Samantha now felt listened to and Hector was given a clear blueprint for what his wife needed (rather than just assuming what she needed).

Are you ready to make effective communication a regular part of your marriage or relationship?

I've created two powerful communication resources for couples:

Check out: The ABCs of Effective Communication Workbook which can be found at http://www.strengthenyourrelationship.com/store/abcs_ebook.html

Check out: The Turbo-Charged Communication Workbook & Audio Program which can be found at http://www.strengthenyourrelationship.com/store/turbo_charged_communication.html

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Author Bio

Over the past fifteen years Richard Nicastro, Ph.D. has helped couples build stronger, more fulfilling marriages and relationships. Dr. Nicastro has lectured at several universities and now conducts workshops for couples on a wide range of issues. His relationship advice has appeared on television, radio and in national magazines. A member of the International Coach Federation, Dr. Nicastro is passionate about coaching and believes that healthy relationships can add meaning and fulfillment to our lives. His goal is to guide individuals and couples as they implement the skills that will allow their relationships to flourish.

You can reach Dr. Nicastro via his website <http://www.strengthenyourrelationship.com>