



Three Communication Strategies That Can Improve Your Relationship TODAY!

Many of us in long term relationships become lazy in the way we communicate with one another. We tend to speak more respectfully to the adolescent who bags our groceries at Safeway, than we do with the person who shares our committed relationship. There are several changes you can make in the way you communicate with your loved one that will improve your relationship, today!

Speak with Courtesy

Consider what you say, before you say it! From here forward, speak with intention. No longer do you spout off, throwing words like gauntlets at one another. It has been my experience that unlike the childhood retort, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," words actually can hurt. Words chosen to wound, anger or shame your partner will begin to tear at the very fabric of your relationship. Choose words that will support your partner and benefit the relationship. To make this change in the way you communicate, simply take a long, slow breath before you speak or reply. That is usually enough time for you to collect your thoughts and formulate a right response.

Smile

Have you noticed that when you are in a difficult place in your relationship, you tend to walk around with a solemn look or frown on your face? Smiling, whether you are by yourself or with your partner, will have a profound effect on your sense of well-being and how your partner responds to you. There is current and specific research

analyzing how smiling changes your brain responses and blood chemicals (if that interests you, just Google "the neuroscience of smiling" and take your pick of scientific as well as general articles). The upshot is this, when you smile your brain tells your body to relax and let go of tension. Imagine how a more relaxed you could impact the health of your relationship! Smiling is also a nonverbal communication technique that conveys to your partner, "I still care about you!"

Offer Eye Contact

In our Western culture, eye contact can convey a genuine respect for another person. When couples come into my office for counseling, eye contact or lack of eye contact, can indicate the emotional distance they are feeling. As couples move through the counseling process and relationship healing, they tend to make eye contact with their partner more often and hold the gaze for longer. The quality of the eye contact also improves: the muscles around the eye soften or they are smiling, the brow is unfurrowed, and warm emotions are revealed. Even if you are in a rough patch in your relationship, offering appropriate eye contact to your partner affirms their importance to you, invites them into relationship with you, and communicates your commitment to them.

Adopt these three communication strategies, consistently, for one week. Observe your partner's response and reaction to you. The beauty of these changes is that it only takes one person to improve the relationship! Imagine the healthy outcomes to your relationship if both of you participate in intentional, improved communication.

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