

10 PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD COMMUNICATION

1. **ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION.** We are all different: as men and women, and in our unique personalities. Learn about your spouse's way of communicating and listening. For example, is she an introvert: considers everything before she gives an answer? Is he an extrovert: speaking before he has a chance to think about what he's saying? Not understanding your spouse's way of listening and communicating can lead to misunderstandings...and hurt feelings.
2. **APPLY COMMUNICATION SKILLS,** like active listening (*listening to the person without *planning* your response*), and reflecting back what was said, or asking a question to clarify what you heard.
3. **TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN FEELINGS/STATEMENTS.** Use "I-statements" and "we-statements." Always beginning a discussion with "you" puts the responsibility for your feelings on the other person, can sound accusatory, and puts the other on the defensive.
4. **STICK TO THE SUBJECT.** Don't bring past history in to cloud the issue at hand.
5. **WATCH WHAT YOU SAY...AND HOW YOU SAY IT.** The words you use, as well as the tone of your voice can be hurtful, rather than contributing to a solution. Don't put the other person down, call him/her names, or put a sarcastic tone to what you say.
6. **AVOID ALWAYS AND NEVER.** Generalizations such as these don't move the discussion forward, and they usually aren't true anyway.
7. **FINISH THE DISCUSSION.** You may need to take a "time out" to cool down, but always resolve to come back and work on the problem *together*.
8. **SEEK HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT...BUT CHOOSE THAT HELP WISELY.** It's OK to ask for help, but remember: it's *your* marriage, and it's best not to involve a lot of other people, since too many opinions will really confuse things. If you need help, try consulting a pastor, counselor or friend who can be objective.
9. **CONSIDER COMPROMISE.** Ask yourself if winning is really so important if it makes your spouse feel like a loser. Compromise is almost always possible, but it requires working together, considering what is best for your family, and the willingness *to make a sacrifice* for the sake of the relationship.
10. **BE HONEST...BUT NOT HARSH.** Words and actions should never be used as weapons to hurt the other person. Be honest in communicating your thoughts and feelings to your spouse, but remember: you vowed your love to him/her. Whatever difficulties you encounter, whatever hurt you may cause (even unintentionally), you are in this *together*. Choose your words wisely, and if you make a mistake, apologize, and be willing to forgive the other person, too.

These ten should be guided by the Golden Principle:

DON'T FORGET TO PRAY!! You are in this *together*, but it's not *just the two of you*. God is in this with you, too. Ask him to help you when times are tough, and thank him when things are going well. Pray for yourself – that you will have the strength to love your spouse as you should. Pray for patience, and ask God's help in communicating with your spouse. And don't forget to *pray for each other*.

...I am with you always, to the close of the age.
Matthew 28:20

Trust in the LORD and he will help you.
Proverbs 20:22

*Tobiah arose from bed and said to his wife, "My love, get up. Let us pray and beg our Lord to have mercy on us and to grant us deliverance." She got up, and they started to pray..."Blessed are you, O God of our fathers; praised be your name forever and ever. Let the heavens and all your creation praise you forever. You made Adam and you gave him his wife Eve to be his help and support; and from these two the human race descended. You said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; let us make him a partner like himself.' Now, Lord, you know that I take this wife of mine not because of lust, but for a noble purpose. Call down your mercy on me and on her, and allow us to live together to a happy old age." They said together, "Amen, amen."
Tobit 8:4-8*

