

# COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE



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Theme Verse:  
*“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”*

*Ephesians 4:29*

## Beliefs That Hinder Understanding

- “All my marital problems are my spouse’s fault.”
- “If our marriage takes hard work, we must not be right for each other.”
- “My spouse can and should meet all of my emotional needs.”
- “My spouse owes me (for all I do).”
- “I shouldn’t have to change who I am to make our marriage better.”
- “My spouse should be like me.”

Thurman, C. (1999). *The Lies We Believe*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



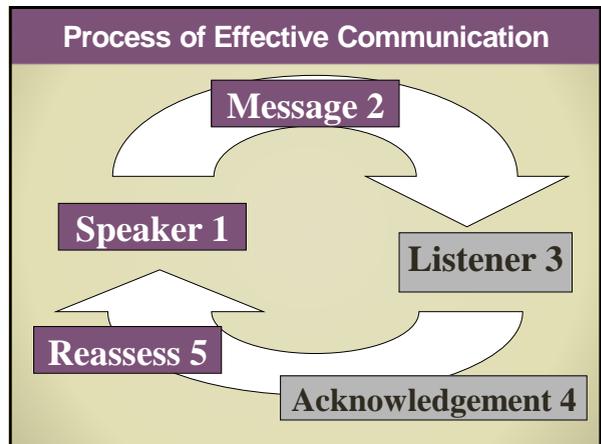
## The Communication Cycle

*Proverbs 25:11 “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”*

## Communication Cycle: Speaker-Listener

- Slowing down and being clear on who is the *Speaker* and who is the *Listener* can prevent misunderstandings.
- Conversations are more likely to spiral out of control when there are **two Speakers** and **no Listeners**.
  - Not every conversation needs to be slowed down.
  - If you think communication isn’t going well, call a “couple negotiated time-out.”

Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg *Fighting for Your Marriage*



## Speaker Role

- The *Speaker* “has the floor.”
- Speak in short sentences.
- Speak from your perspective.
- Don’t expect the *Listener* to be able to “read your mind.”
- Non-verbal communication is just as important as verbal communication:
  - Facial expression, eye contact, posture, tone of the message, etc.

## Speaker: The Message



- “Say what you mean and mean what you say!”
- **James 5:12** “...but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay...”

## Speaker: Helpful Tools

- **Use X, Y, Z format**
  - “In situation X, when Y occurred, I felt Z.”
- **Use “I” statements**
  - “I feel frustrated when you don’t call me to say that you’ll be late.”
- **Avoid “You” Statements**
  - “You never help me around the house.”

**Ephesians 4:15** “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

## Listener Role

- Focus on **understanding** your spouse instead of formulating your response.
- Listening is a gift you give to your spouse.
- Body language and eye contact are important.
- **Your** job is to:
  1. Hear what the *Speaker* says.
  2. Comprehend it.
  3. “Reflect back” what you heard *Speaker* say.
- **Proverbs 18:13** “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

## Speaker: Reassess

- When the *Speaker* hears the *Listener’s* acknowledgement, it can be determined if the message got through correctly.
- At this stage the *Speaker* can say:
  - “Yes, that’s correct.”
  - “That’s part of it, but also...”
  - “No, that’s not what I said.”

## Communication Cycle: Be Aware of Filters

- Filters are anything that come between the *Speaker* and *Listener* that can potentially alter the meaning and/or reception of the message.
  1. **Environmental Filters:** radio, children, telephone, being in different rooms, etc.
    - Conversation through text is discouraged.
  2. **Internal Filters:** being tired, frustration, having a headache, being sick, etc.



### Expanders and Condensers

- It is common for spouses to differ in the quality and quantity of communication they are used to giving and receiving.
- Understanding personality can help shed light on the way each spouse communicates.
- One simple way of discerning communication style is by looking at the amount one talks.
  - Expanders and Condensers

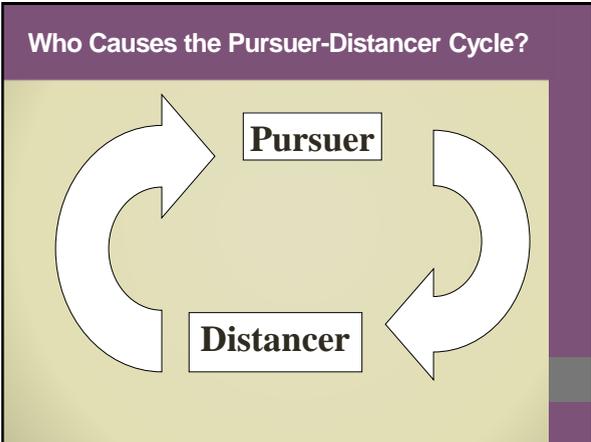
### Expanders vs. Condensers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Expanders</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Expanders are people who tend to talk more than others.</li> <li>○ They elaborate, give detailed, lengthy descriptions, and have a dislike of silence.</li> <li>○ Expanders may be frustrated by Condensers who do not provide as much information when talking.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Condensers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Condensers are people who do not talk as much and who do not always include a lot of detail in their conversations.</li> <li>○ They prefer an efficient use of words and tend to stick to the main points or the "bottom line" when communicating.</li> <li>○ A Condenser may become overwhelmed by the Expander's seemingly excessive use of words.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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Wright, H. (2000). Communication: key to your marriage. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.

### Direct and Indirect Communication

<h4 style="text-align: center;">Direct</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediately "say it like it is."</li> <li>• Less room for misunderstanding.</li> <li>• Effective when used with soft tone.</li> <li>• Ex. - "Hun, I would like you to wash the dishes."</li> </ul>	<h4 style="text-align: center;">Indirect</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't immediately say exactly what is needed.</li> <li>• More risk of misunderstanding.</li> <li>• Ex. - "Why am I the only one that washes the dishes?"</li> </ul>
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## If You Tend To Be A Pursuer...

- Be careful not to be too pushy.
  - Just because you feel like talking through an issue doesn't mean it is the right time to discuss a conflict.
- Instead, let your spouse know you have something you want to talk about.
- Find a good time for you both to talk about it.

## If You Tend To Be A Distancer...

- Be careful not to immediately withdraw when your spouse wants to talk.
- If your spouse wants to talk about something and you aren't ready to talk:
  1. Let your spouse know you are aware he/she wants to talk.
  2. Tell him/her that it isn't a good time for you to talk.
  3. Negotiate a time in the near future that both of you can talk (be specific!).

## PERSONAL / COUPLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Identify what role you each play in:

- Pursuer/Distancer
- Expander/Condenser

On a scale of 1-10, how effective are you at actively listening to your spouse? Are you often guilty of:

- Formulating your response?
- Distracted by their body language?

Which aspect do you need to strengthen in order for your spouse to feel heard?

## Emotional Connection

*Jeremiah 31:3 "the Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."*

## What fuels connection?

- Couples are always making "bids" for each other's affection, support, and attention.
- Real-life romance is fueled by the daily humdrum interactions in life.
- In a study of newlyweds:
  - Couples responding to "bids" on average of 86% of time were still married after 6 years.
  - Couples responding to "bids" on average of 33% of time were divorced after 6 years.
- Bids can be as meaningless as "it's raining so hard today," to as meaningful as "I need you."

The Seven Principles Of Making Marriage Work (Gottman And Silver, 2015)

## Type of Bids

### VERBAL

- "While you're up, could you grab the ketchup, please?"
- "Wow! You sure look amazing in that outfit!"
- "I blew the presentation I had today."

### NONVERBAL

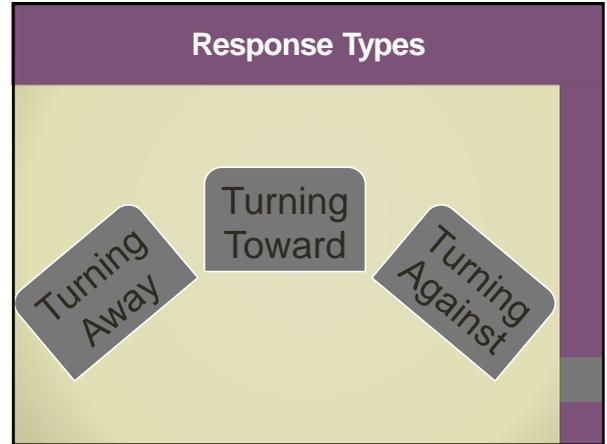
- Affectionate touch
- Facial expressions
- Kind gestures





## Responding to Bids

*Psalm 36:7 "how excellent is thy lovingkindness,  
O god! Therefore the children of men put their  
trust under the shadow of thy wings."*



## Example #1

"Did you notice the sunset? It is beautiful!"

Turning Toward

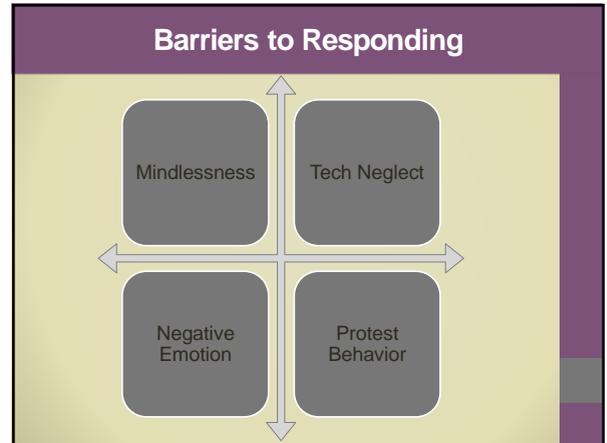
- "I didn't notice it. Tell me what makes it so beautiful to you?"

Turning Against

- "Did you notice that I am reading?"

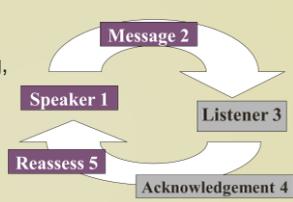
Turning Away

- Pretending to read newspaper.



## Summary & Conclusion

- Communication is about understanding, not agreement.
- Separate communication from problem solving.
- Learn to "Turn Toward" your spouse.



Speaker 1

Message 2

Listener 3

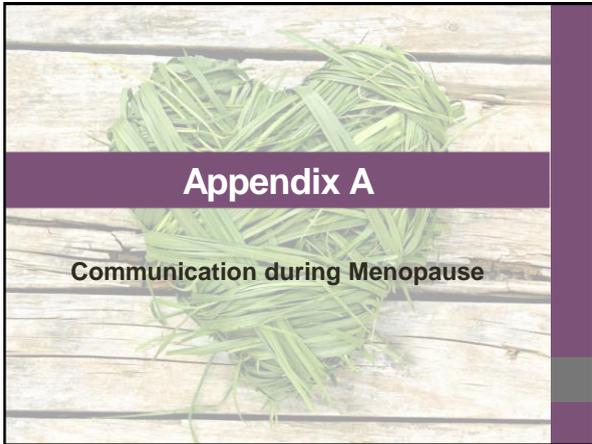
Acknowledgement 4

Reassess 5

- [www.accounseling.org/communicationmarriage](http://www.accounseling.org/communicationmarriage)

## PERSONAL / COUPLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What specific barriers are currently present in your marriage and get in the way of making and receiving bids?



### Communication: Menopause

<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen, don't criticize or try to "fix."</li> <li>• Accept there will be mood swings.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to go with the flow.</li> <li>• Seek to not personalize.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Believe she is doing the best she can.</li> <li>• Talk about menopause symptoms and what you can do to help her feel better.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with your spouse and let him know what you need.</li> <li>• Affirm your husband when you feel understood by him.</li> <li>• Track your symptoms and identify specific times when the two of you can communicate effectively.</li> <li>• Do your best to stay positive.</li> </ul>



### Preparation for a Trip

- Minimize surprises - communicate about upcoming logistics and obligations (i.e., bills, repairs, or chores).
- Back-up plan – consider developing a list of options should issues develop (i.e., auto mechanic, a trusted repairman).
- Travel plans – provide spouse with a complete itinerary. (include dates, location, phone numbers, and key contacts)



### Stay Connected While Apart...

Accessibility	Dependability
Respect	Trust
Role Acceptance	

### Stay Connected While Apart...

- Accessibility – in addition to cell phone, provide key contacts in case of emergency. Consider "code" for emergency while traveling.
- Dependability – schedule consistent times to call as well as talk about times of mutual availability. Text when you arrive to destination. FaceTime for family devotions.
- Respect – be intentional about engaging in two-way conversations. Don't wait until the end of the trip to talk about events at home.
- Trust – be where you say you will be, doing what you are supposed to be doing.
- Role Acceptance – find ways to acknowledge that parts of the job are not ideal.