

Ten Ways to Better Communicate or ... Couple Communication – Keeping Cupid Happy

1 Make sure you have the time - kids or not, if you do not make a specific time to talk, it will not happen. There is no excuse!

2 Make a date weekly - It can be a simple arrangement. Do you remember why you enjoyed the companionship to begin with, and the positive emotional tension that brought you together? Take turns weekly making the date. Make it something new and exciting as well as simple and romantic

3 Become a better listener - We have found differences between men and women. Men feel the need to fix things and come up with good answers quick. Women really only want a sounding board. Sit back and relax men, you don't have to know everything, and the secret is already out, you don't know everything.

4 If couples could eliminate starting with the word "you" we would all be better off - This is a difficult exercise, but will give couples immediate results. The word "you" automatically puts the other person on the defense. Start with the word "I", and then the other person can start to listen. It is almost impossible to listen and think of something to say back at the same time. "I want to tell you what I am feeling".

5 Try this exercise – pick one night and have one person tell the other about their feelings. The listener is not to respond, but to only "actively" listen. The other person has to wait until the next night and express *their* feelings. This is not in retaliation of the night before. Remember to start with the word "I". Most importantly, use positives in referring to any problems. People do not want to hear complaining, no matter how valid you may think the point is. Remember that compliments will get you everywhere and complaints are just complaints. You may want have this exercise at a coffee shop to keep it neutral.

6 Communication style – There is a tendency to use the blaming style of communication. No one wants to hear what they are doing wrong. Research shows that punishment in itself does not change behavior but reinforces negative habits. Therefore, if you have a complaint, make sure you add in what you would like the behavior to be and some positive aspect of the person. If you do not subscribe to this suggestion you may be a blamer. It would also suggest that you don't want to fix things. Say something nice – remember about bees liking honey.

7 Take responsibility – One of the most difficult, but important skills, is to take responsibility for our own actions. It is easy to point the finger at someone, but more advantageous to help the other person. There are not too many people that like to get ridiculed and then are in the mood for love. Only *you* can make the change.

8 Appreciate the imperfections – We all have imperfections and you recognized most of them when you met. Let's not pretend that you actually thought that the other person was going to change. This is a common belief. "If you would just...". Don't expect the other person to change. After all, we practiced our good and bad behaviors long before we got into a relationship.

9 Remember why you fell in love. The passion is an important ingredient in any relationship. This is the glue that will get you through the hard times. Treat the other person as your best friend and not your enemy. Home is the place for safety and to be yourself. If it was good enough to want to be in a relationship, then there is enough of a bond to keep it going. Talk about why you are together and be in the moment. History is good, but the here and now is what is important.

10 Say I love you. Most people forget the most important ingredient. There is no excuse to not remind each other everyday, all day, that you love them. No grudge is worth the turmoil. Even if you have an argument, remember that love and compliments will get you through the good and bad times. Try and not go to bed angry. Buy a flower or small gift when there is no occasion. This says more than anything you can say.



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