



EAP Educates: Basic rules of couple communication

It is known that to maintain a healthy relationship it is essential to communicate, communicate, communicate! Committed couples care about and consistently work at the quality of their relationship. They realise that effective communication is important in strengthening their relationship.

Couples who have healthy marriages love and respect each other and use many methods to communicate that to each other. These include verbal, physical (such as touch), gifts, doing things for each other and special time together.

It is essential that in verbal communication, a clear and correct message is given and thus received. Here are some important tips on improving your verbal communication.

- 1 Speak for yourself – use “I”, e.g. “I would like to...”, “I am feeling...” – and then ask your partner where he / she is in the situation.
- 2 Disclose the hidden parts of your inner experience if you really want to be understood – what you are thinking – what you are feeling – what you want to do about your situation.
- 3 Do not attack – Do not defend – just state your case and then ask for your partner’s view.
- 4 Listen without interruption, and listen to hear. Try to really understand what your partner is getting at. Watch yourself that you are not just listening / waiting until he / she is finished so that you make your point.
- 5 Keep to the point at issue – avoid deviations and red herrings.
- 6 Your partner’s point of view has as much value as yours has – it has the same right to be heard.
- 7 Choose a time for discussion of sensitive areas – i.e. when you both can bring all your faculties to bear on it. That way, you can both do justice to your points of view.
- 8 Avoid being personal or derogatory, and using phrases such as – “You should...”, “You must...”, “You always...”, “You never...”
- 9 Try for understanding and being understood – After that, you can try for some agreement or compromise.
- 10 Avoid using “Why?” – It puts the hearer on the defensive. There are many other ways of asking for information.
- 11 Check out if the message has been correctly received.
- 12 If communication is failing, check the underlying attitude. Is it to win, rather than to understand?

Remember, the world is difficult enough as it is. As a couple, focus on building each other up not breaking each other down. Edify each other using positive comments, genuine appreciation, time and attention.

P.S. People in loving supportive relationships tend to have fewer health problems.