

Communication Essential to Marriage

By MARY BOIKE

A lot more goes into a marriage than sharing a single name and bank account. People are looking for companionship, a special quality of living, intimacy, self-disclosure, reassurance from mates, freedom to be, the experience of self, the other and the union of the two. Each marriage is unique as each combination of two people makes for a unique relationship. There are no fixed rules for living a marriage but there are tools which can be used to help make marriage a more positive experience.

Communication is one such tool. It is easy for a couple to feel a license to talk to each other in ways that they wouldn't to a friend. This is ironic in that spouses should be very best friends. For instance, with a friend you are careful to resolve conflict in a pleasant manner. You make sure you are smiling, are understanding, and you give the other person plenty of eye contact and frequent head nods to acknowledge that you're listening. You would not approach friends with an angry face, nor would you smirk or glare at them. Your voice is tender, warm, affectionate and caring. You would not think of being cold, blaming, accusing or sarcastic. Even your body posture is relaxed and physical distance between the two of you is reduced. You would not throw up your hands in disgust or make rude gestures. The whole context of the communication situation is different with a friend. How much more effective communication would be if a couple continued to treat each other with the consideration expended on a friend.

Effective communication also consists of listening to both what a spouse is saying and feeling. Often the feeling behind a statement is more important than what is actually being said. However,

listening is not enough. The communication process must be carried one step further by expressing what you think you heard your mate say. At times you may also want to express how you think your spouse is feeling about the subject being discussed. We gain a sense of being understood when the feeling is accurately recognized. Another technique is to ask for feedback so that you can evaluate if your spouse heard what you really intended to say and if your feelings were accurately recognized. This allows any misconceptions to be cleared up and the discussion to proceed on a better level of understanding. In addition to clarifying understanding, your actions show the other person that you care. This helps to make a person feel important and loved.

Another aspect of communication is sharing. All too often a couple will hesitate to express their feelings, thoughts and desires with each other in the hopes of avoiding conflict and disagreement. The spouse is expected to magically discover what they are. This is often referred to as a hidden agenda. You have something you would like your spouse to know or to do but won't directly tell what it is. Instead, you let your spouse stumble around until he guesses the answer. Meanwhile, you remain distressed because it appears that your spouse is so insensitive. Without sharing your thoughts and feelings your spouse has no ability to know where you're at on an issue or that you're unhappy about something. A spouse is not a mind reader. For you to get what you need, you must tell your mate. Your willingness to be open and up-front about your needs encourages your mate to do likewise. It promotes a supportive environment for growth.

In order for a spouse to share intimate feelings, there

must be a feeling of psychological safety. Each person can provide this safety for the other by being accepting. Accepting means being nonevaluative or nonjudgmental. This does not mean that you agree with everything your spouse says but only that you accept it as a valid point-of-view. You acknowledge that it is okay to have a point-of-view different from your own.

Communication is also negotiating. Negotiation is a process of stating what each person is willing to do about an issue until each party feels comfortable with the final solution. This recognizes the right of each person to have needs met and respected.

Communication means setting time for sharing and resolving conflict. In this way the emotional build-up of anger and resentment associated with unexpressed feeling, unmet needs or

unresolved conflict is less likely to reach such unmanageable proportions.

Communication is useful not only when conflict arises but also for positive experience. It should not be neglected as a way to promote growth and enhancement. Communication can be used to express positive qualities in the spouse. We all like to hear good things about ourselves and hear appreciation for the hundreds of little things we do but we frequently forget to express this appreciation for the things we like about others to them. Through communication you can share your own goals and desires for yourself or for your marriage, family or career. You can share your feelings and how you're growing and changing. In turn, you might want to share how you would like your marriage to be changing so as to enhance growth as a couple. In this way you keep your marriage

**Communication is a tool.
It is sharing.
It is negotiating.
It means setting a time for sharing and resolving conflict.**

What Is a Family?

A family is a very special gift from God,
made up of the love of a mother,
the wisdom of a father, and the
innocence of a child.
It is an endless source of laughter,
tears, smiles, and sighs — and
very special memories.
A family is there to cheer us when we're blue,
to reassure us when we are troubled,
to tease us, to spoil us . . . and to pray for us.
A family is a guiding light — a light
of God's love and a lamp of His understanding.
A family is a feeling — a warm special feeling —
that stays with us wherever we may be, and
reminds us of those loved ones who share
this spirit of belonging.

*Thus gave these lessons on they soul —
Hope, faith, and love, and thou shalt find
Strength when life's surges rudest roll,
Light when thou else wert blind!*

Johann Von Schiller

Photography Tips

A primary concern of the amateur photographer is cost. It can be very expensive to record a wedding in pictures. If one can get by the initial expenses, then here are a few tips to insure success:

(1) Carry twice as much equipment as you would normally. This includes two cameras, two flash units, a double set of replacement batteries, etc. Thus, rely on the unexpected to happen. Many consider that if something can go wrong, it will go wrong. Having the extra equipment along will help prevent an embarrassing situation from surfacing.

(2) Carry twice as much film as you think you would normally use; e.g. if you figure on shooting three rolls of film, then carry at least six. The planning behind this is that of all the film you will shoot, you can figure on losing approximately 25% of your pictures (due to camera movement, flash failure, etc.). Plus, no matter how many pictures you take, there is always another different shot that comes to mind later. This reasoning brings us to number

(3) Take the time in advance to thoroughly plan your schedule. If your itinerary

calls for being at the bride's home on the wedding morning to set up some poses, then be there a little early to catch some of the excitement of everybody hustling about. If you know there will be relatives from out of town, then make sure that their visit is recorded by your camera. These types of shots have proven to be in much demand in the camera. These types of shots are not readily thought of during past pre-wedding planning by the bride and her family, but have proven to be much in demand for reprint after the commotion has settled and your proofs have been examined.

(4) If you know there is a specific shot you want, but are not sure when it will take place in the progress of events, then you should invest YOUR time in finding out exactly when it will happen. For example, find out exactly when the couple will cut the cake. You should NOT have to ask the parties involved to set up the shot again just because you were on the other side of the room taking group pictures of relatives or whatever.

(5) Above all, make sure well in advance that all your equipment is in perfect working order.

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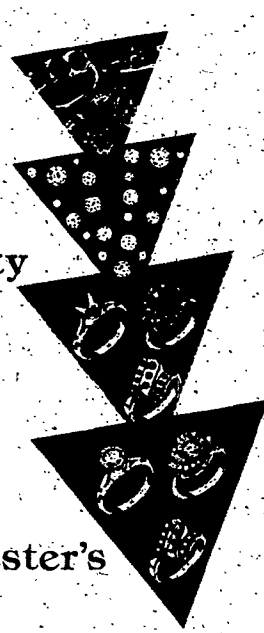
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alive and growing.
Before marriage is a good time to evaluate your level of communication as a couple. How have you felt when discussing areas of conflict? Do you as a couple tend to focus only on negative issues? Does one person always initiate communication? Do you feel comfortable talking about sexuality, occupation, recreation, friends, child rearing, size of family, finances, division of household responsibilities, religion and spirituality? Do you know your future spouse's expectations in these areas? If not, why? Some reflection on these questions will give you an estimate of how well you two communicate and may pinpoint areas needing attention. Developing good interspouse communication will enhance your relationship and help to keep it a rewarding experience throughout the coming years.

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