

WEEK TWO

**THE ART OF  
COMMUNICATION**



## INTRODUCTION

- Intimacy requires effective communication
- We all have a longing to be known
- The Marriage Course is designed to help couples communicate both during and between the sessions

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Communication involves the message, the speaker and the listener
- Building intimacy in marriage involves hearing each other's experiences, thoughts, feelings and desires

### TELL YOUR SPOUSE THAT YOU FEEL LOVED WHEN YOU FEEL VALIDATED.

#### 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING

- Telling each other our thoughts and feelings
- May have been taught to hide feelings in upbringing
- Will take courage and practice to re-learn how to talk about feelings
- Some have difficulty recognising what they are feeling

### COMPLETE EXERCISE 1: BARRIERS TO TALKING ON PAGE 15

#### 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

- We can become highly selective in our listening
- Most of us take listening for granted, yet it is possible to close our ears
- Listening has the power to make our husband or wife feel loved and valued
- One of the most important skills to learn for a healthy marriage
- The Bible places great value on listening effectively

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. James 1:19

Those who answer before listening – that is their folly and their shame. Proverbs 18:13



### 3. HINDRANCES TO LISTENING

#### A. FILTERS

- We all listen through filters but often we are unaware of them
- When someone is speaking our own memories, attitudes, prejudices, physical environment, lack of interest, etc all affect what we hear.
- Sometimes we are listening more to ourselves than the other person
- Effective communication requires us to control the conversation in our mind

#### B. BAD HABITS

1. Reassuring
  2. Giving advice
  3. Intellectualising
  4. Going off on a tangent (deflector)
  5. Interrupting
- These habits prevent the speaker from saying what they're feeling and they may eventually shut down
  - We need to listen first before coming in with our contribution

### EXERCISE 2: IDENTIFYING BAD HABITS

Take a few moments to identify your particular bad habit and discuss this with your husband or wife

### PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING

- Pay attention and do not interrupt
- Try to put yourself in your partner's shoes
- Acknowledge their feelings
- Find out what is most important
- Help them work out what they might do

### EXERCISE 3: THE POWER OF LISTENING

Discuss the following questions as a couple:

- How do you feel when you are listened to?
- How do you feel when you are not listened to?
- To whom would you go if you needed a listening ear?
- What makes that person a good listener

## EXERCISE 1: BARRIERS TO TALKING

Take a few minutes to look at the diagram below together. Tell each other if any of the barriers apply to you.



## EXERCISE 4: EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Each of you pick an issue currently upsetting or bothering you that you have not discussed recently. At this point, choose an issue where there has not already been disagreement and conflict. It could be an area of concern related to work, holidays, children, your home, etc.

- The speaker should hold a candle (or something similar) - this is to remind you whose issue is being discussed.
- The speaker tells the listener about the issue and how they feel about it (do not go on for too long). The listener listens and then reflects back.
- Then the listener asks, **'What is the most important aspect of what you are saying?'** The speaker responds. The listener listens and then reflects back again.
- The listener then asks, **'Is there anything you would like me/us to do about what you have just said?'** Again, the listener listens and then reflects back.
- Finally, the listener asks, **'Is there anything more that you would like to say?'** The listener listens and then reflects back again.

Then switch roles so you both have a chance to speak and to listen. This exercise is good practice for all of us, both in talking about our emotions and in listening to each other.

Each of you should complete the exercise below. "How Good is Your Communication?" Compare what you have written.

Next, pick an area of your marriage that you haven't discussed in any depth, and, with your partner follow the steps for Exercise 1. "Effective Listening" (Page 13). Please ensure that both of you are ready to do this and are willing to follow the steps.

Follow the guidelines as listener and speaker as you work through each other's issue. Some of you may experience a strong emotional reaction to what your partner is saying. Try to put your own reaction to one side and keep listening and reflecting back what your partner is feeling.

### EXERCISE 1: HOW GOOD IS YOUR COMMUNICATION?

1. Areas in our relationship where I feel that we communicate effectively – i.e., we are both able to express our views, and we understand each other well.

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2. Areas where we do communicate, but not well enough – i.e., I feel that there is room for improvement.

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3. Areas where we are not communicating at all – whether due to neglect, embarrassment, or fear.

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#### Suggested topics for consideration:

- Handling children
- Money matters
- Goals and direction in life
- Sex – frequency or quality
- Family planning/how many children
- Jobs around the home
- Relatives and in-laws
- Death and bereavement
- Job or career/time at work
- Church involvement
- Expressing affection and emotions
- Relaxation and rest

## EXERCISE 2: IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS

To help those who struggle to identify what they are feeling.

Completing the partial sentences on the following pages will help you identify your emotions and become more emotionally aware.

**1. Quickly add a few words to describe your feelings (either positive or negative) for each one. The list below will help you to get started.**

### Positive Emotions

accepted	encouraged	loved	supported
appreciated	excited	liberated	sure
calm	forgiven	peaceful	trusting
capable	free	positive	understood
carefree	grateful	relaxed	valuable
comforted	happy	relieved	worthwhile
confident	hopeful	respected	
content	humbled	safe	
delighted	joyful	secure	

### Negative Emotions

abandoned	depressed	insecure	sad
afraid	disappointed	insignificant	scared
angry	disgusted	jealous	sorrowful
anxious	disrespected	lonely	unappreciated
annoyed	dissatisfied	misunderstood	unloved
apologetic	embarrassed	nervous	upset
ashamed	exposed	numb	used
bored	frustrated	overwhelmed	useless
confused	guilty	pressured	vulnerable
cross	humiliated	rejected	weak
defeated	hurt	resentful	

**EXERCISE 2 (CONTINUED)**

When we go on vacation, I feel ...

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When we go out with friends, I feel ...

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When I'm in a room with people I don't know, I feel ...

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When I'm with my parents, I feel ...

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When I think of past successes, I feel ...

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When I think of mistakes I've made, I feel ...

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When I think of the future, I feel ...

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When I think of relating to God, I feel ...

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When my husband/wife tells me he/she loves me, I feel ...

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When my husband/wife and I have a disagreement, I feel ...

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When my husband/wife tells me something I've done that's disappointed or hurt him/her, I feel ...

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When my husband/wife apologises to me, I feel ...

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**2. Complete the following sentences**

I feel most loved when ... \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I get angry when ... \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I feel happiest when ... \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I am sad when ... \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Now show your husband or wife what you have put.

**3. Tell your husband or wife  
about a time you felt**

- Encouraged
- Discouraged
- Understood
- Misunderstood
- Accepted
- Rejected