

5 HABITS THAT SABOTAGE GOOD COMMUNICATION

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Not every conversation is created equal. Sometimes you're able to clearly convey what you want, and you come out of it on the same team. Other times, wires get crossed, an innocent exchange gets derailed, and you find yourselves feeling frustrated and misunderstood. We're human – our emotions, biases, & expectations can cloud our ability to convey exactly what we mean or accurately interpret what our spouse is telling us. Despite good intentions, you might be sabotaging your efforts toward good communication with these five habits.

Being sarcastic

Even if it's just your personality (*and even if your partner knows that*), a sarcastic tone can come across as critical, contemptuous, or disapproving. You might think you're joking; but, your spouse is going into defensive mode. Avoid descending into a snarky exchange by softening your tone and being straightforward, especially if you've got something important to get across. Use emotional intelligence to sense if your spouse is in the right mindset for sarcasm, if not, consider saving it for another time.

Not being aware of your body language

You're being intentional with your words & tone, but if your non-verbal cues aren't matching what you're saying, your spouse will notice. Whether it's a subtle eye roll, a sigh, or crossed arms, if there is incongruence with what you're communicating verbally, it begs the question—is there something you're holding back? If so, be honest & address it. If there are no underlying emotions, then you'll need to put effort into being more aware of your body language to avoid misinterpretation. Take responsibility for your actions (*even if they're not intentional*) & give each other grace to work on it.

Being distracted

The devices, the dog, the kids, your to-do list. The opportunities for distraction at any given moment are plentiful. It's not always possible to eliminate them all but minimizing them will give you a better chance to say what you mean and truly hear each other. If you're in the middle of something, and you simply can't devote your full attention, let each other know. It could be something as simple as, "*Hey, can we talk about this in five minutes? I just have to finish up this task.*" If your distractions are mental, jot down a note to return to later & be fully present with your spouse.

Making assumptions

You assume they know or should be able to figure it out. Sometimes, you might be right. But making assumptions only increases misunderstandings. When you make assumptions about what your partner knows, you make it harder for them to meet your needs, while increasing your own feelings of resentment. By assertively telling them what you want them to know, you give them the chance to respond & increase the odds of feeling understood.

Not allowing yourself to be vulnerable

Quality communication, the kind that deepens your understanding of each other and helps your relationship grow, requires some level of vulnerability. You might find yourself holding things back, shutting down, or avoiding being emotionally available to your partner to avoid feeling vulnerable. This can do damage to your relationship. While it can feel scary and uncomfortable to open yourself up in this way, mutual vulnerability builds trust & a level of closeness that is indispensable to a strong, healthy marital connection.

By being aware of these habits, you can take steps to curb them – and begin to understand each other better.