



Healthy Marriages

Communication & Connection

Dale Wisely, Ph.D.

www.dalewisely.com/files







Healthy marriages

- ✔ Communication
- ✔ Balancing his and her wants and needs
- ✔ Controlling impulses -- and self-denial
- ✔ Managing emotions

Healthy marriages

-  Renewing
-  Working on trust—being trustworthy
-  Having realistic expectations

(TOO) GREAT EXPECTATIONS?

“*A marriage that would have been acceptable to us in the 1950s is a disappointment to us today because of higher expectations.*

Eli Finkel

Social psychologist, Northwestern University

In many marriages...



We neglect the positive.

We neglect gratitude.



We presume negative intentions.

We should presume positive intentions.

The conventional wisdom



WHAT EVERYONE SAYS

The conventional wisdom

“Marriages fail without open communication.”

“Communication is the key to a happy marriage.”





Licensed
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IS communication *the* key?



Are there gender
differences?



*“Dear, we need to
talk about our
relationship.”*



*“I thought
you’d never
ask!”*

...said no husband, ever.



“COMMUNICATION IS EVERYTHING”

So what's the problem?

One partner

...wants to talk because he or she feels anxious or lonely, or fears abandonment. But...

The other partner

...feels threatened when asked to “talk about it.” Then, not being able to, feels even worse.

GENDER DIFFERENCE?

One partner

...wants to talk because he or she feels anxious or lonely, or fears abandonment. But...

The other partner

...feels threatened when asked to “talk about it.” Then, not being able to, feels even worse.

A common pattern

-  She is comforted by talking about the relationship.
-  He is quick to hear it as criticism: “I have failed.” “I can’t fix her feelings.”
-  He also needs comfort & reassurance — but not necessarily through language.

Maybe...

Communication is not the key.
CONNECTION is the key.

Feeling connected.



Being connected...



Talking



Touching



Spiritual/Faith



Sex



**Doing things
together**



**Laughing
together**

Being connected...



Talking



Touching



Spiritual/Faith



Sex



Doing things together



Laughing together



...all relying on **TRUST**

“*The only way to be trusted is to consistently behave in a trustworthy manner.*

-Dale Wisely

The dude who is talking to you right now.

One method of connecting

1



Waking up

2



**Before
leaving home**

3



**Returning
home**

4



Before sleep

Focus: touch and/or sex, attention, compassion — ***the other.***
Care about the other's intimate needs.

One method of connecting

1



Waking up

2



**Before
leaving home**

3



**Returning
home**

4



Before sleep

Focus: touch and/or sex, attention, compassion — ***the other.***

Care about the other's intimate needs.

We have to be responsible for our own
needs.

*Marriage is a commitment to attend to
the other's needs.*

*How can spouses know each other's
needs?*

TOP THREE CAUSES OF MARITAL DISCORD, ACCORDING TO SURVEYS

Problem communication

1

Communication

2

Money

3

Sex

Some problems...

- ✓ Difficulty talking about feelings.

- ✓ Talking in problematic ways about feelings

- ✓ Impulsiveness

- ✓ Words as weapons

- ✓ “I’m entitled to my feelings and you’re obligated to figure them out, put up with them — and change them.”

- ✓ Linear and nonlinear arguments

The water heater died.

ANN: So the plumber says \$1,400, and he can come Thursday.

BOB: That's more than I hoped. Can we do the repair instead of replacing it?

ANN: He said a repair on a fourteen-year-old unit buys us maybe a year.

BOB: Okay. Then where's the \$1,400 coming from? If we take it out of savings we're down to almost nothing before Christmas.

ANN: What if we put \$700 on the card and pay it off over two months, and take the other \$700 out of savings?

BOB: I can live with that. Can you call him back tonight?

The water heater died.

ANN: So the plumber says \$1,400, and he can come Thursday.

BOB: You already had him out? Without talking to me?

ANN: Well, yeah. The water heater's out.

BOB: This is exactly like the car. You just decide, and then I get informed.

ANN: The car was six years ago, Bob.

BOB: Oh, here we go —

ANN: No, this is the pattern. I handle everything, and then I'm the villain for handling it. Like, your mother's situation....

BOB: Oh, so now we're back to my mother.

Some tips

- ✔ Devote (schedule) time to conversation.
- ✔ Take time to calm down and think.
- ✔ Develop the ability to express anger in a nonhurtful way.
- ✔ What we say and do every day matters.
- ✔ This takes a lot of consistent effort. Beware of complacency.



Some tips

- ✔ Devote (schedule) time to conversation.
- ✔ Take time to calm down and think.
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Some tips

- ✔ Venting vs. exploding.
- ✔ Say it. Don't expect your partner to know it or figure it out.
- ✔ Avoid absolutes: "You never..." and "You always..."
- ✔ Pick up your own garbage.

Staying connected with questions



How are you? No, really — how are you?



Is there anything you need that I'm not giving you?



Is there anything you are worried about?

Commit yourself



Make it a three-way conversation. Ask God for help.

*“Ears that hear and eyes that see —
the LORD has made them both.”*

Proverbs 20:12

Every day

- ✔ Be true to our commitment.
- ✔ Help our spouse, every day, feel loved and appreciated.
- ✔ Do what we can to know what our spouse needs and wants — and do what we can to help.
- ✔ Compromise.
- ✔ Maintain a spiritual foundation.



THANK YOU!

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