

# TALK TO ME



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## Communicating Effectively in Marriage

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TALK TO ME  
Communicating Effectively in Marriage

Published by Orange  
A division of The reThink Group, Inc.  
5870 Charlotte Lane, Suite 300  
Cumming, GA 30040 U.S.A.

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# INTRODUCTION

Communication is an important component of any relationship. A good marriage needs good communication to work.

Everyone has different communication styles. Which creates natural barriers in communication.

Good communication is not about trying harder. It's not about some secret code or phrase. But there are some habits you can pick up that can lead to better connection with your spouse.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

3 One-Liners That Made A Difference In Our Marriage .....5

7 Keys To Better Communication In Marriage.....8

2 Words We Often Need To Hear From Our Spouse .....12

8 Phrases To Say To Your Spouse .....14

5 Ways To Improve How You Communicate & Resolve Conflict .....17

5 Indispensable Habits for Rock-Solid Communication .....20

# 3 One-Liners That Made A Difference In Our Marriage

By Ted Lowe



*The problem with good communication is that there is typically a spouse who likes to talk and a spouse who doesn't.*

**W**hen I ask people what it takes to have a great marriage, they mostly say one of two things: hard work or good communication.

The problem with hard work is that most people work hard at work, and when they get home, they don't want to work anymore. Many people don't know how to work on their marriage. Or they think working on their marriage means good communication.

The problem with good communication is that there is typically a spouse who likes to talk and a spouse who doesn't. I'm not suggesting couples shouldn't work on their marriage or strive for good communication—I'm just saying many couples don't.

So, what's the answer? I think the answer is finding super simple applications that work at the speed of life.

For instance, my wife and I have incorporated three one-liners into our marriage that have been nothing short of life altering.

## **1. We Have Rich People Problems**

I'm not sure if this originated with Andy Stanley, but we first heard it from him in a Sunday morning message.

When we catch ourselves feeling sorry for ourselves for things—like not being able to afford to go to Disney World every year, or having a broken sprinkler system, or because we drive older cars—we say “we have rich people problems.”

It's amazing how quickly that one phrase can bring us back to the reality of how fortunate we are financially. We may not be rich by some people's standards, but by the rest of the world's standards, we are certainly rich.

## **2. Do You Want Me To Fix It Or Feel It?**

I'm not sure where we got this one, but it's saved a thousand fights.

Prior to this question, many of our fights went like this: Nancie would share with me an issue or problem she was having. I would tell her all the ways she could fix it. She would get frustrated and tell me all the reasons my solutions wouldn't work.

Somewhere along the way we learned that most women don't want their spouse to fix their problems, they want them to feel their problems.

This makes zero sense to me. But to Nancie, it makes perfect sense.

Now when she shares a problem, I simply ask her, "Do you want me to fix it or feel it?" 95% of the time she wants me to feel it. Then I simply listen attentively. Works like a charm!

### **3. We Know Tragedy And This Isn't It**

I've experienced quite a bit of tragedy in my life. I'll spare you the details but I have lost many family members suddenly and way before their time.

So, when we get frustrated with a situation or things go wrong, we often say to the other, "We know tragedy and this isn't it." We are quickly and easily reminded of what and who really matters.

I realize life is complicated and you need more than three one-liners in your marital toolbox, but often we make marriage way too complicated by creating our own drama.

Having simple ways to get our marriages back on course is crucial. Give one of these three one-liners a try for two weeks and let us know what happens.

**Do you have any one-liners that have helped your marriage?**

# 7 Keys To Better Communication In Marriage

By Dave Willis



*All couples face some level of communication issue, and all healthy couples must work together to get better at communicating.*

I recently sat down with a couple who were facing a common struggle. They love each other and overall have a strong marriage, but they're having persistent troubles in their communication.

They feel like they're speaking two different languages. They're not hearing each other, and it's creating a frustrating cycle that leads to hurt feelings, angry outbursts, frustrations and regrets.

Their marriage had started feeling like two blind people learning how to dance. They keep stepping on each other's toes!

Their struggle is common. All couples face some level of communication issues. And all healthy couples must work together to get better at communicating.

I'm convinced that healthy communication might be the single most important factor in a healthy marriage.

It takes work, but if you'll commit to making it a priority, your marriage can reach new heights. Don't beat yourselves up if it doesn't come naturally.

My wife, Ashley and I have three higher education degrees in communication between the two of us. But healthy communication still requires a lot of effort for us everyday. Here are the basic tools to help better the communication in your marriage.

## **1. Focus On Understanding More Than Being Understood**

When a husband and wife get locked into a cycle of just trying to get their own point across, they both miss out.

Instead, focus on trying to hear what your partner is saying. When he/she is talking, listen with focus instead of letting your mind wander to planning your response.

## **2. Ask Clarifying Questions**

When Ashley and I were going through a premarital course, we had to do a communication exercise which I thought was cheesy and pointless at the time, but it turned out to be incredibly helpful.

We had to listen to each other and respond with questions. Then repeat back a summary of their words by saying, "What I hear you saying is..."

Those clarifying questions helped us develop a discipline of listening more intently to each other. It will work for you, too.

### **3. Don't Try To "Win"**

Instead of looking at a disagreement in marriage as a fight to be won, approach it like a challenge to be won together in partnership with your spouse.

You share the same outcome. At attitude of partnership will revolutionize your approach to disagreements.

### **4. Remove The Distractions**

You might think you're great at multitasking. But you're not! Nobody is. You can't have a meaningful conversation when you're staring at your phone, watching the TV, and trying to talk to each other at the same time.

### **5. Always Tell The Whole Truth**

There's no place for secrecy or deceit of any kind in a marriage. Tell each other everything. Always.

### **6. Give Each Other Support, Not Just Advice**

When your spouse is going through a struggle of any kind, you might want to "fix" it by offering solutions.

Your spouse will need your encouragement and support more than they will need your advice. Be each other's best friend.

## **7. Be Each Other's Biggest Supporters; Not The Biggest Critics**

Build each other up. Speak life to each other. Always default to the positive. Don't get stuck in a cycle of negativity or criticism with each other. Communicate your love for each other clearly and often.

**What works when communicating with your spouse?**

# 2 Words We Often Need To Hear From Our Spouse

By Consuela Parsons



*When you're in a crisis and feel all alone "me too" is a beacon of hope.*

- T**here are lots of things I strive for in life.
- Raise healthy kids
  - Have a strong marriage
  - Continuously grow in my faith and my relationship with God
  - Create friendships
  - Be a person who makes my community a better place to live
  - Show others love
  - Stand up for what's right and confront what is wrong

But the thing I want to share today is about the “me too” life.

## The “Me Too” Life

Brené Brown says the two most powerful words when we’re in a struggle are “me too.” We’re all in a struggle, have been in a struggle, or will be in a struggle.

If we embrace the “me too” life we don’t have to do it alone. This quote is really simple, but when you’re in a crisis and feel all alone “me too” is a beacon of hope.

- As a mother, when I want to run away because I feel like a failure, “me too” is a lifeline.
- When you’re struggling with infertility, chronic illness, or depression, “me too” cracks the door to a very dark room.
- When you’re grieving the loss of a loved one, “me too” says things won’t be the same, but there is hope.
- When you’re doubting your faith, “me too” says you’re not alone.
- When you just want to give up, “me too” says keep going.

## The Power of Empathy

Do you see the power in those tiny two words, those 5 letters, those two syllables? It’s not really the words. It’s the person saying or hearing the words.

If I’m saying “me too,” it means I’m listening and being honest. It means someone trusts me enough to share their hurts, hopes, failures, and dreams.

If I’m hearing “me too,” it means I’m sharing and being vulnerable. It means I’m not carrying this burden alone. You have this power to share. Every person has this power. Will you use this power? Join me in the “me too” life.

# 8 Phrases To Say To Your Spouse

By Casey and Meygan Caston



*Our words have power and they can either hurt or heal. Our words have the ability to bring out various emotions and feelings.*

**W**hile they can lift and build people up they can also tear them down reeking destruction. There is a saying that “people will forget what you did but they won’t forget how you made them feel.”

Our words have the ability to bring out various emotions and feelings, and even after apologies have been said and a request for forgiveness made, the memory rarely fades.

The reality is, when it comes to what you say, people don’t forget, especially the person you’re married to. And some people will

remind you of what you said long after the words fall from your lips. While words like NEVER, ALWAYS, and STUPID are not OK.

These phrases below will breathe life into your relationship the minute you say them.

## **1. You're My Best Friend**

Great marriages are made up of two friends who respect and love each other, faults in all. Your best friend is someone you want to be with and care for when times get tough.

## **2. Thank You**

It's common courtesy to say thank you. Somehow we stop saying it for the little things, like taking out the trash or making dinner. Saying thank you shows appreciation and a heart of gratitude.

## **3. I Think You're Sexy**

The passion, the butterflies, the chemistry do not have to die once you get married. Telling your spouse how sexy they are will give them confidence and build emotional and physical connection.

## **4. I'm Sorry**

If you've made a mistake, fess up and be quick to apologize. I'm sorry shows that your marriage matters more than your ego.

## **5. What Do You Think?**

Asking for their opinion shows that you value their ideas.

## **6. I'm Proud Of You.**

We all want people to be proud of us, especially our spouse. This one simple phrase will give them the peace of mind and the energy that they need to keep going.

## **7. We Are In This Together**

You need to be your partner's cheerleader at all times. They need to know that you're on the same team, fighting for them, not against them.

## **8. I Love Growing Old With You**

Growing old with your spouse means you've weathered the storms, learned from each other, cried together, laughed together and have a deeper understanding of what true love is.

Dreaming of the future brings security into the relationship. You're simply saying that your love will last a lifetime.

# 5 Ways To Improve How You Communicate and Resolve Conflict

By Scott Kedersha



*Often, we only want to forgive if the other person has forgiven us.*

For obvious reasons, every one of us struggles in how to best communicate and resolve conflict. This plays out in marriage, friendships, work relationships, community, and parenting.

The struggle is real.

- How can we speak to each other in a more loving tone?
- What do you do when you know you need to ask for forgiveness, but you just don't want to?

- Why can't others see things the way I see them?

We can learn a few lessons from Paul's words in Colossians 3:12-13.

*"Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive."*

What can we learn from Paul?

## 1. Put On Humility

Some of us look good in certain outfits, but not so good in others. Some might like bright colors and others dark colors. But, one thing is for certain—we all look good when we wear humility.

James 4:6 says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." I don't know about you, but I don't want God to 'resist me.'

## 2. Try On Compassion, Kindness, and Gentleness

Too many times, I do not love my wife and kids with a spirit of compassion, kindness, or gentleness.

In fact, I lived as if I tore those garments off and instead put on harshness, anger, and a critical spirit. It's the kindness of the Lord that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). Be kind to one another.

## 3. Remember To Be Patient

Paul tells his readers to put on patience. Doesn't he know I don't have the time for that (pun intended)?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Paul writes, "And we exhort you, brothers and sisters: warn those who are idle, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone."

Sometimes we warn, other times we comfort, and sometimes we help. But, we're always to be patient, with everyone.

## **4. Forgive In The Same Way God Has Forgiven Us**

Often, we only want to forgive if the other person has forgiven us. We hold a lack of forgiveness over others because we don't want them to get away with anything.

But, I need to be reminded of the way the Lord has forgiven me. I need to remember that He doesn't forgive me not because I deserve it or did anything to earn it.

Rather, God's forgiveness is unconditional. A Christ-like forgiveness goes first and doesn't wait for the other person to seek forgiveness first.

## **5. Remember How #1-4 Happen In The First Place**

Last, but certainly not least, remember how you do these things. You do them as one who is chosen, holy, and dearly loved. This passage from Paul is not just a to-do list.

We're unable to do these things on our own apart from God's grace and His Spirit (John 15:5). We wear humility, treat others with compassion, and forgive others because we're God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved.

# 5 Indispensable Habits for Rock-Solid Communication

By Ryan Frederick



*Remember this: healthy communication is always a dialogue and never a monologue.*

**R**emember this: healthy communication is always a dialogue and never a monologue. Both sides must be actively speaking, processing, listening, and seeking understanding.

Here are five basic, but indispensable habits for rock-solid communication.

## 1. Talk

Actively engage your minds in discussions and learn to articulate your own thoughts in a loving way. Most people don't struggle with talking when they want to communicate something.

True wisdom is found when you speak what you mean in ways that give life.

## 2. Listen

Give each other the space and time they need to communicate by listening. Don't interrupt, just be silent and listen.

## 3. Seek Understanding

When you listen, try to understand your spouse's perspective. This means empathizing with them; trying to imagine how they must feel as they're communicating.

What circumstances are they facing? What could they be feeling? They're your spouse, so it's not a stretch to try and understand their feelings! When we seek understanding, we're wise. When we don't, we're fools.

## 4. Act

All the conversations in the world won't mean anything if it never translates into tangible action. Be disciplined enough to follow up your conversations with action.

Pray for grace to change behavior and underlying beliefs...just take action. Actions are a natural byproduct of love.

Just as we don't perform "works" to earn our salvation in Christ but good works are a natural overflow of experiencing grace, your love for your spouse should compel you to take action.

## 5. Rest

Remember that you're both works in progress and you're in this for the long haul. There is grace as God works in you, so rest and be patient...with yourself and with your spouse.

### Pray Through It All

If you're struggling with constant communication issues, you're not alone. We've been through many seasons that seemed unending where Selena and I just couldn't seem to connect.

If that's you, here are a few quick ideas:

- Get out and do something fun together
- Seek counsel from godly people in your life
- Pray hard for wisdom, and (no joke) be intimate

We've found that any one of those things can help unblock the lines of communication.

Don't let passivity keep you from digging deep and finding agreement on the important things and working past negotiable differences. Engage, talk, listen, seek understanding, act, and of course, always rest in Jesus.

### How have you worked through communication issues in your marriage?

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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