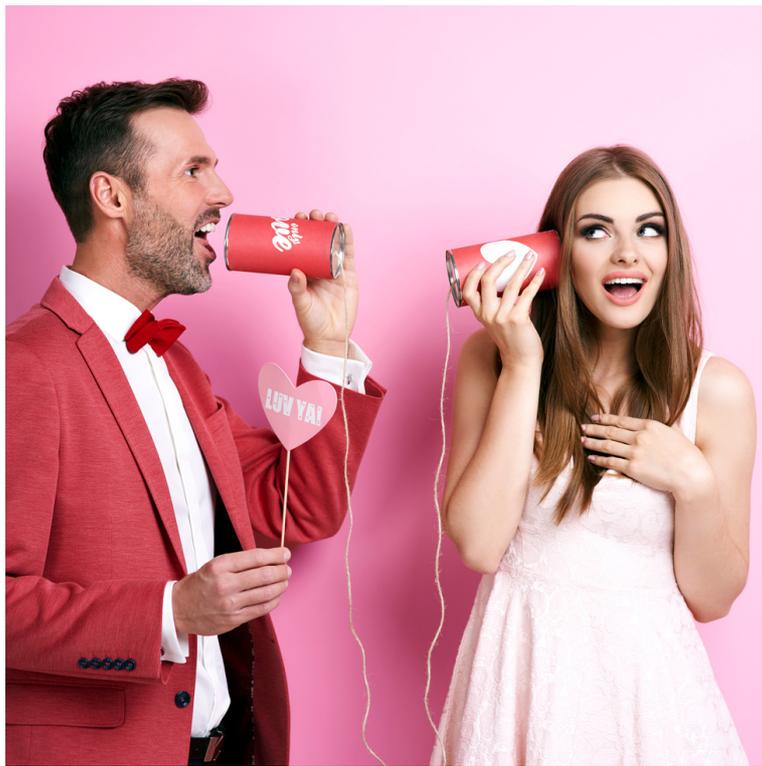




30 DAY COMMUNICATION CHALLENGE



30 Day Communication *challenge*

Communication is the number one issue couples ask for help with. Learning to communicate effectively as a couple will reduce unnecessary arguments, decrease stress in the home, and strengthen your bond as a couple. Growing in communication will not only provide your marriage with more peace but it will deepen your friendship and intimacy with one another.

This 6-week challenge will help you learn to communicate more effectively in marriage. Some weeks have a lighter challenge, while other weeks include heavy and hard conversations. This is called a “challenge” for a reason. The goal is to *work* as a *team to improve your communication*. If your communication patterns aren't great it's going to take work and intentionality to improve them as well as potentially working through some hard issues.

This challenge includes 5 challenges every week for 6 weeks. You can take the weekends off or aim for every day and just have 2 “grace days” each week.

Here's how it works: Each morning, both of you read that day's challenge. Then communicate to complete the challenge in the evening. **It's important to read the challenge in the morning because some challenges take time or thought to execute properly.**



WEEK 1

This week we will focus on daily touch points and small daily communication. Overlooking these can easily lead us down the path of poor communication and poor connection.

DAY 1

Today's challenge is simple. You are going to pray together to set the tone and posture your hearts towards God and your marriage. For this Communication Challenge to be most effective, you must posture your hearts first.

Here's your challenge: *Together pray,*

- That God would be present in this Communication Challenge.
- That you would both have the endurance to do the challenge well, even on the hard days.
- That God would soften your hearts toward each other and guide your conversations and actions during each of the challenges.
- That God would protect you and your marriage from the enemy.
- That God would draw you closer to Him and closer to each other through this challenge.

DAY 2

A major part of effective communication that so many couples miss is being aware. To communicate well with someone you have to see them, pay attention to them, notice them. Notice your spouse today. Pay close attention to them. Study them!

Here's your challenge: *Pay attention to your spouse today.*

Study them and pray for them. Then at the end of the day share 1 positive thing you noticed about them today AND 1 positive thing you learned (or relearned) about your spouse that you hadn't noticed before.

WEEK 1

DAY 3

It's not the big conversations or moments that make a marriage, it's the small, simple daily ones. To communicate well you need to learn to communicate often. It's important to have a daily time to check in with each other. It would be great to make this one a daily routine!

Here's your challenge: *Ask each other these questions*

1. What did your day look like today? Give me a play by play.
2. What was 1 good thing that happened today?
3. What was your least favorite part of your day?
4. What is the thing that consumed your mind for most of the day today?

DAY 4

Part of good communication comes from having a good relationship and rapport with each other. We have to put deposits in our spouse's love tank.

Here's your challenge: *Think of one way to serve your spouse today and do that.*

WEEK 1

DAY 5

A major part of communication is understanding each other. The problem with this is that so much of what is going on is only going on in our heads. We can't see our spouse's thoughts or heart. We don't know what's going on in there unless we ask. Knowing what is going on in a spouse's head and heart can help us communicate more effectively and compassionately with them.

Here's your challenge: Ask each other these questions

1. What has been on your heart lately? What was 1 good thing that happened today?
2. Is anything troubling you? Anything you're anxious or worried about? What is the thing that consumed your mind for most of the day today?
3. What negative thoughts have been consuming your mind lately?
4. What is your internal dialogue when it comes to thinking about yourself?
5. What do you think God thinks about all that? How does God's truth compare to your thoughts lately?
6. How can I be praying for you?

WEEK 2

This week we will focus on tone of voice and body language. Most experts agree that 70-93% of communication is nonverbal. That means tone of voice and body language matter A LOT. This week will require hard conversations about your nonverbal communication and making plans to improve.

In these conversations it's important to be honest with each other, be open to your spouse correcting you and giving you feedback, and also to have grace with each other.

Improvement is the name of the game here! No one is going to have perfectly pleasant nonverbal communication 100% of the time. Perfect is not the goal. But if nonverbal communication is an issue in your marriage, the goal should be to see some improvement over time. If nonverbal communication is 70% or more of how we communicate, we want to make sure we strive to be loving in that communication towards our spouse.

DAY 1

Today you are going to give each other permission.

Here's your challenge: Give each other permission to talk to each other about your nonverbal communication.

Give each other permission to talk to each other about your nonverbal communication and seek to understand each other instead of succumbing to miscommunication. Say no to the "no I didn't" argument and decide together today that you will listen to your spouse. If your spouse hears something negative in your nonverbal communication - it IS there. Whether it's intentional or not, it's what they perceive and it needs to be addressed. So give them permission to do that from here on out.

Here is how I recommend this conversation go: If you perceive mean, hateful, or confusing nonverbal communication from your spouse, seek to understand. Tell your spouse "I hear you saying _____ with your words but in your body language I hear _____. Can you help me understand?"

Give each other permission to do that moving forward and resist the temptation to defend yourself or be dishonest about what your nonverbals are saying. Talk about how you each might like these types of conversations to go down. What do you need from each other in order for this to go well?

WEEK 2

DAY 2

Today we are going to focus on tone of voice. It's not just what we say, it's how we say it. We can cause our spouse a lot of hurt if we use an unkind tone. We can also cause a lot of confusion and miscommunication if we say one thing with our words but communicate something different with our tone.

Here's your challenge: *Talk about tone of voice together today. Ask each other these questions.*

1. On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not often at all and 5 being very often) how often would you say my tone is unpleasant?
2. On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not confusing at all and 5 being very confusing) how often would you say my tone is confusing?
3. Where and how does my tone of voice affect you? Especially in an argument?
4. What is one change I could make that would make you feel more loved when it comes to my tone of voice?

Most importantly, pay attention to your tone of voice moving forward and remember to keep giving your spouse that permission to speak up when they are confused or hurt by your tone. Seek and strive for clarity and kindness in your nonverbal communication with your spouse.

WEEK 2

DAY 3

Today we are going to focus on facial expressions. This includes what we do with our eyes. Eye rollers - I'm talking to you!

Here's your challenge: *Talk about facial expressions together today. Ask each other these questions.*

1. On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not often at all and 5 being very often) how often would you say my facial expressions are unpleasant?
2. On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not confusing at all and 5 being very confusing) how often would you say my facial expressions are confusing?
3. Where and how do my facial expressions affect you? Especially in an argument?
4. What is one change I could make that would make you feel more loved when it comes to my facial expressions?

Again, most importantly, pay attention to your facial expressions moving forward and remember to keep giving your spouse permission to speak up when they are confused or hurt by your facial expression. Seek and strive for clarity and kindness in your nonverbal communication with your spouse.

WEEK 2

DAY 4

Today we are going to take a break from the hard constructive feedback conversations to do something fun: enjoyable nonverbal communication!

Here's your challenge: Create some fun new nonverbal communication between the two of you.

1. Make up a sign or a "look" that says something sexy to each other.
2. Make up a sign or a "look" that says something silly to each other.

Now the two of you can enjoy your own special little nonverbal language that no one else knows about!

WEEK 2

DAY 5

Today we are going to focus on body posture. Our body posture most often says how engaged or disengaged we are in a conversation. Slouched shoulders, a body facing away from us and neglecting to make eye contact says, "I'm not really listening."

Ideal body posture for talking to your spouse is facing each other, making eye contact, and being alert, especially when discussing something important or in an argument.

Here's your challenge: *Talk about body posture together today. Ask each other these questions.*

1. On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not often at all and 5 being very often) how often would you say my body posture is unpleasant?
2. On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not confusing at all and 5 being very confusing) how often would you say my body posture is confusing?
3. Where and how do my facial expressions affect you? Especially in an argument?
4. What is one change I could make that would make you feel more loved when it comes to my facial expressions?

WEEK 3

This week we will focus on looking back. We will be looking back at the past for fun and also to make action plans for correction.

DAY 1

Today, think back to when you first dated each other. We are going to look at where it all began.

Here's your challenge: *Talk about what it was like when you first began dating. Ask each other these questions:*

1. What do you remember about our first date?
2. What is one of your most fun memories of us when we were first dating?
3. What did we used to do for fun when we first began dating?
4. What is one thing we can do to bring back some of that same fun?

DAY 2

Today we are going to think back to the last time you felt really connected.

Here's your challenge: *Think about what makes you feel connected to your spouse.*

When was the last time you felt super connected to your spouse? What were you doing? What happened? Share your thoughts with your spouse. It may be that different things make you each feel connected. Narrow in on what does it for you.

WEEK 3

DAY 3

Today we are going to look back at your last conflict. The point of this exercise is not to get angry or rehash what the other one did wrong but rather to think about what you could have done differently to make it go better so that you can plan to do better next time.

Here's your challenge: *Independently think about and pray about the last conflict you had*

Pray and seek God's guidance. Ask God what your part in the conflict was and what you could have done better. Once you know what you could have done differently, communicate that to your spouse. Apologize and let them know what you plan to do better next time.

DAY 4

Today we are going to think back to your early married years. The newlywed days!

Here's your challenge: *Talk about what it was like when you were newlyweds. Think about how you've each grown for the better. Ask each other these questions.*

1. What do you remember about our newlywed days?
2. What is one of your most fun memories of us when we were newlyweds?
3. What is one way we have grown for the better since our newlywed days?
4. In what ways am I a better husband/wife than I was when we first began?

WEEK 3

DAY 5

Today we are going to look back at your last miscommunication. The point of this exercise is not to get angry or play the blame game but rather to work together to learn how to communicate more effectively as a team. Remember - you are on the same team!

Here's your challenge: *Independently, each of you think of a recent miscommunication. It may be that you two think of different events and will talk about each one.*

Calmly explain your perception of what happened. Don't argue with your spouse about what "actually" happened. Instead work together to come up with a plan for next time.

Ask: What went wrong? How can we both work to effectively communicate next time?

WEEK 4

This week we will focus on feelings. Our emotions come out in how we communicate with each other and it's important to empathize with your spouse. How we communicate our feelings and respond to our spouse's feelings affects our communication and connection with our spouse. We can't neglect emotions when it comes to communication.

DAY 1

This week we will focus on feelings. Our emotions come out in how we communicate with each other and it's important to empathize with your spouse. How we communicate our feelings and respond to our spouse's feelings affects our communication and connection with our spouse. We can't neglect emotions when it comes to communication.

Here's your challenge: Today as you go about your day spend time prayerfully thinking about how you first learned about emotions, how emotions were dealt with in your home growing up, and what you think about emotions now. Ask each other these questions at the end of your day:

1. Who taught you about emotions? What was that like?
2. How were emotions dealt with in your home growing up? What was healthy about it? What was unhealthy about it?
3. Do you have any unhealthy thoughts about emotions today? If so, what are they?
4. How do you think God wants us to view our emotions?

God gave us all our emotions. We were made in his image and he is an emotional God. (Isaiah 62:5, Psalm 106:40, Romans 5:8, Genesis 6:6, Nehemiah 8:10, and many more.) Jesus also expressed emotions while he was here on earth (Isaiah 53:3, Luke 5:16, Psalm 69:9, Matthew 17, John 15:10-11, John 11:35, Matthew 23:33, and many more). Emotions are not bad. God gave us all our emotions, and He wants us to deal with them in healthy ways.

WEEK 4

DAY 2

Today we are going to pray to be self-aware of our feelings. We can't communicate our feelings well to our spouse if we don't even know what we feel. The first step is being self-aware of our own emotions.

Here's your challenge: *Pray that God would help you to be self-aware when it comes to your feelings.*

Pray that God would give you clarity in understanding yourself and your own emotions. Here is a guided prayer to help.

"Lord help me to understand what I feel and believe on a given day. Bring clarity to my mind. Help me to determine what I am feeling, why I'm feeling it, and most importantly, what you say about my situation. Help me to secure truth and throw out lies when it comes to my emotions. Enable me to deal with my emotions as opposed to stuffing them down. Grow me more in tune with how I am feeling and what I am thinking. Help me to deal with my feelings in a healthy way."

WEEK 4

DAY 3

Today we are going to think about our primary feelings. What do you both feel on a typical day? By learning each other's go-to feelings you'll better understand each other and learn to communicate better when it comes to your feelings.

Here's your challenge: *Look at [this Feelings Chart](#) together.*

Look up any of the feelings words you don't know to define them better. Think about a typical week for you and what your go-to feelings are. Share which 5 feelings you think you feel the most with your spouse and why you think that is.

DAY 4

Today we are going to talk about how to express our feelings to our spouse. If we misjudge how our spouse is feeling, miscommunication can occur and cause more hurt.

Here's your challenge: *Talk about healthy ways to express your feelings to your spouse. Ask each other these questions:*

1. What is a healthy way to express to you that I am stressed?
2. What is a healthy way to express to you that I am happy?
3. What is a healthy way to express to you that I am sad?
4. What is a healthy way to express to you that I am angry?
5. What is a healthy way to express to you that I am discouraged?
6. What is a healthy way to express to you that I am (insert any other feeling you feel regularly here)?
7. If I am unsure of how you are feeling, what is the best way for me to ask you?
8. If it seems like we aren't on the same page in understanding each other's feelings what can we both do to bring clarity to the situation?
9. Have there been ways I've misjudged your feelings in the past? What do you need from me going forward?

WEEK 4

DAY 5

Today we are going to talk about our responses to our spouse's feelings. When it comes to emotions, it's important to respond to our spouse with empathy and to strive to respond in loving and appropriate ways.

Here's your challenge: Try to define what you need from your spouse when you feel certain emotions. Ask each other these questions:

1. When you're angry, what do you need from me? How can I help?
2. When you're sad, what do you need from me? How can I help?
3. When you're stressed, what do you need from me? How can I help?
4. When you're happy, what do you need from me? How can I help?
5. When you're discouraged, what do you need from me? How can I help?
6. When you're (insert any other feeling you feel regularly here), what do you need from me? How can I help?
7. Have there been inappropriate ways I've responded to your feelings in the past? What do you need from me going forward?

WEEK 5

This week we will focus on communication breakdowns. We will look at common issues couples face in their communication so you can determine which ones you struggle with and how to overcome them.

In order to do this we will look at the past for these common issues - but only in order to correct them for next time, not to relive arguments. If it gets to a place where you aren't able to have a productive conversation, stop, put a pin in it and make a counseling appointment so that you can finish the conversation with the help of a professional.

DAY 1

Assumptions are a major communication breakdown. When we make assumptions about each other they are often harsh and untrue. We love to assume the best about ourselves and the worst about others. We judge others by their behavior and ourselves by our best intentions. Assuming things about your spouse will set you up for miscommunication and misunderstanding.

Today we are going to invite the Holy Spirit to convict us of any unfair assumptions we've been making about our spouse.

Here's your challenge: Today think and pray about all the negative assumptions you make about your spouse on any given day. Prayerfully ask yourself:

WEEK 5

DAY 1 (CONTINUED)

1. What negative assumptions do I make about my spouse?
2. Are these fair assumptions? Why do I assume these things?
Specifically think about assumptions you might make when you are angry with your spouse, in conflict with them or when something doesn't go your way.
3. Am I assuming the best about my spouse? Why or why not?
4. How can I grow to assume the best in my spouse?

Write your assumptions down. At the end of the day confess them to your spouse and let them know you want to do better and that moving forward, you want to start assuming the best about them.

Clarifying questions can be a great tool to overcome assumptions. Ask questions like: "Why did you do that?" "Help me understand" "Here is what I hear you saying (insert what you think they are saying). Is that what you're trying to say? I want to understand."

Follow Up Challenge: Together develop a few phrases or questions that can be your go-to clarity tools to bring accurate transparency to your conversations.

WEEK 5

DAY 2

Speaking in superlatives is a great way to irritate your spouse and shut down their ability to communicate well with you. Saying things like: “you always,” “you never,” or “every time.” No one does anything “always” or “never.” Using these vast dramatic statements is harmful and sets your spouse in a defensive position, making it hard for them to hear you and communicate well. Today, think about whether or not this is an issue in your marriage and how to break the cycle if it is.

Here’s your challenge: *Talk to each other about superlatives as a breakdown in communication. First, repent and apologize if you know this has been an issue for you. Tell your spouse you’re sorry that you’ve been using this language and that you want to try and stop.*

Ask each other:

1. Is this an issue for me? Confess where you have been using superlatives unfairly. Give each other the opportunity to confess your own mistake before pointing it out to each other.
2. Is there anything you need to say to me about how my use of superlatives has hurt you? When do I use them and how? Now you can point out your spouse’s mistakes if they aren’t aware of them but remember to be graceful and loving as you do this. Remember - you two are on the same team. So work together and really listen to each other here.
3. What happens when we use superlatives? How does it harm our communication?
4. What should we do to overcome this?
5. The next time one of us uses this language, how can we lovingly correct each other and move forward as a team?

Pray and ask God to help you overcome this communication breakdown.

WEEK 5

DAY 3

Playing the blame game leads to communication breakdown. You are both on the same team. You are one. So it's never "me" versus "you," it's always "us" working together to solve the problem. There are no winners and losers on the same side; there's only a problem out there for you to solve. So make the "turn" Dr. Kim talks about: Turn from facing each other fighting to facing the problem, side by side, fighting the problem together.

Here's your challenge: Decide together today that you are going to work on viewing your marriage more like a team. Pray and ask God to help you avoid blaming each other and instead act like great teammates who solve problems together.

The next time you are in a fight, try to visualize "the turn." Visualize standing next to your spouse on the same team. Then figure out what the real problem is and face it together.

WEEK 5

DAY 4

Speaking to be understood instead of seeking to understand is another communication breakdown. If all you are trying to do is get your point across, you set yourself up for continued conflict with your spouse. Instead of falling into this trap, both of you can aim to understand each other as you talk moving forward. Humbly think of your spouse as greater than yourself. Think of serving them and knowing them as you talk with them.

Here's your challenge: *Talk to each other about speaking to be understood first instead of seeking to understand as a breakdown in communication. First, repent and apologize if you know this has been an issue for you. Tell your spouse you're sorry that you've been trying too hard to get your point across and not trying hard enough to understand them.*

Ask each other:

1. Is this an issue for me? Confess where you have been doing this. Think specifically of arguments or conflict you've had where you might have done this.
2. Is there anything you need to say to me about how I do this? When do I do this and how?
3. What happens when we focus too much on being understood as opposed to seeking to understand? How does this harm our communication?
4. What can we do to overcome this?

Pray and ask God to help you overcome this communication breakdown.

Follow Up Challenge: Come up with five great questions you can ask each other in an argument to better understand each other.

WEEK 5

DAY 5

Bringing up the past and scorekeeping are two other communication breakdowns that go hand in hand. You can't keep dwelling on the past and rehashing what happened there. A better use of your time is to figure out what needs to change for next time. Focus on the now and the future.

Scorekeeping is another way of holding onto the past. Remember, you two are on the same team. Holding onto your spouse's past losses (mistakes and sins) is a damaging strategy when it comes to your marriage.

Here's your challenge: Decide together today to forgive each other for all the past issues. Decide that you will focus on the here and now when you have conflict without bringing up baggage from the past.

Talk to each other about bringing up the past and scorekeeping as breakdowns in communication.

Ask each other:

1. What happens when we focus too much on the past as opposed to dealing with the issue at hand? How does this harm our communication?
2. What can we do next time there is a conflict to make sure we focus on the problem at hand and not our past baggage?
3. Are there any past issues that you are truly struggling to forgive? What can we do to move past that? Do we need counseling to resolve this?

Pray and ask God to help you with any unforgiveness. Pray and ask God to help you overcome this communication breakdown.

WEEK 6

For this last week we will end the challenge with some lighter connection-building challenges as well as a plan to revisit and tackle any lingering communication issues.

DAY 1

Worshipping together and communicating about worship are great ways to connect. It connects you on a spiritual level. Today we are going to talk about worship.

Here's your challenge: *Browse worship music today and find a worship song that really speaks to you. Share it with your spouse this evening and tell them your favorite verse from the song and why.*

DAY 2

Gratitude and appreciation go a long way in a relationship. It's easier to hear someone when we feel appreciated by them.

Here's your challenge: *Share with each other three things you appreciate about each other.*

WEEK 6

DAY 3

Today, celebrate any wins you've seen so far. Part of being a team means you celebrate your victories together! Take advantage of each and every opportunity you two have to celebrate.

Here's your challenge: *Think back over the last five and a half weeks. Ask each other:*

1. What challenge has opened your eyes the most?
2. Where have you seen growth in yourself?
3. Where have you seen growth in our marriage?

Then celebrate together by doing something fun! Plan a date night! Toast with your favorite beverage. Give each other high fives. Spend the evening celebrating in your favorite way.

DAY 4

Doing this challenge for 6 weeks only to forget everything you've learned about each other would be a major missed opportunity. Today let's define what issues still need work when it comes to your communication.

Here's your challenge: *Both of you prayerfully think about what your top two communication issues still are. What is your plan to tackle them? Write out a plan together of how you will both continue to work at solving this communication issue. This plan might include calling a Christian marriage counselor to set up an appointment. You will not regret the time and money you spend on your most important earthly relationship!*

WEEK 6

DAY 5

Laughter is one of the best ways to communicate with your spouse. Laughter bonds you together in a special way.

Here's your challenge: Make your spouse laugh today. Find something funny that you know will make your spouse laugh and share it with them tonight. It can be a funny YouTube video, a funny meme, a funny or silly gift that will make them chuckle - anything that will make them laugh!



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