

MID-LIFE MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT PART 2  
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LESSON 2

Studies show that couples that share their feelings have happier marriages than those who do not. That is why half of marriage enrichment material deals with communication. There is power in words. Words are a part of love. Judge Phillips F. Locke of Chicago granted a wife a divorce because her husband had not spoken to her for 16 months. It was considered cruelty, and the fact is it is cruel not to communicate. I knew a deacon who drove his wife near insane by not speaking to her for weeks at a time.

The verbal is the key to reaching a woman for she is easier reached by the ear. The visual is the key to reaching a man for he is easier reached by the eye. A girl makes her first impression by what she looks like and a boy by what he says. The result is a world where women specialize in looks and men in language or sweet talk.

Look at word power in the Bible-Eph. 4:15, 29-32 Prov. 12:25, 15:1,4

Let's try the match game where each of you respond to a question, and your mate tries to match your answer. Try to guess what your mate puts down for their answer.

Women:

1. My favorite perfume is\_\_\_\_\_
2. On what day of the week was our first child born?
3. If we could go anywhere in the US I would want to go to\_\_\_\_\_

Men:

1. My favorite ice cream is\_\_\_\_\_
2. Besides the regular screwdriver there is the \_\_\_\_\_screwdriver.
3. My ideal breakfast is\_\_\_\_\_

Jack Bolswick, Prof. of child and family development at the Univ. of Georgia, in his book Why I Can't Say I Love You, writes in the preface, "I grew up as one who had a hard time sharing his feelings with others. Saying I love you was, for me, harder than running five miles before breakfast." He calls this the inexpressive male syndrome. He feels men do have more trouble expressing feelings to others.

He studied Greek marriages and found men seldom told their wives they loved them. One wife in her 30's said, "Greek men are men of action, not men of words!" But most women wished the men would tell them also.

Intimacy is based on commitment and maintained by communication. Commitment involves rights and responsibilities. each mate has the right to expect their needs for love to be met and each has the responsibility to meet the love needs of the other.

If one mate expresses love and does not get feedback, that lack of response causes the expressive one to express less, and this hurts the whole love communication process. It is wrong, therefore, to just say, that's the way men are. They just don't express their feelings. They don't because they have been

trained not to, and they need to be retrained, and this will lead to marriage enrichment.

Causes For Men To Be Unexpressive Of Feelings.

1. Low self-esteem. They do not feel their love is a big deal, and, therefore, not relevant to be expressed. They feel it is not of any great value to be loved by them, and they fear rejection if they do express it.
2. Embarrassment. They feel awkward with feelings.
3. Cultural Training. Boys are told not to cry and be a baby, and so they learn to suppress their feelings, and put on a strong front. It is feminine to express feelings.

Cures For These Problems:

1. Wives must assure them that it is manly to be able to share feelings. They must admire their men when they do. If she too thinks it is a weakness, it will make it all the harder for him to ever change. She reinforces the false training.
2. Wives must seek to get their husbands to share on how they feel about many things.
3. She must show him by example, and open up and share her feelings.
4. She must reward him when he does share, and make it worth his while to learn to be expressive.

Lets all share an endearing term we use to address our mate when we are being loving. I have come to use the word precious, and I think it is due to having grandkids. They are so precious that that became a word I use to address my mate. What terms do you use? We need to move on and get new and fresh words to convey our feelings, for the old may lose its power to give meaning to your feelings.

Quiz

1. I would like my mate to sweet talk me more?
2. Does your mate tell you what is liked, or not liked most often?
3. Rate your mate 1-10 with 10 as the pinnacle, and 1 as the pits, and 5 as passing on their use of words to convey their love.

Communication of love by means of words is important. I love you can be said in many ways. Arthur Guiterman in his poem called Husband and Wife writes,  
Whatever I said and whatever you said, I love you.  
The word and the moment forever have fled, I love you.  
The breezes may ruffle the stream in its flow,  
But tranquil and clear are the waters below,  
And under all tumult you feel and you know, I love you.  
Whatever you did and whatever I did, I love you.  
Whatever is open, whatever is hid, I love you.  
The strength of the oak makes the tempest a mock,  
The anchor holds firm in the hurricane's shock,  
Our love is the anchor, the oak and the rock, I love you.  
Whatever I thought and whatever you thought, I love you.  
The mood and the passion that made it are naught, I love you.  
For words, thoughts and deeds, though they rankle and smart,

May never delude us or hold us apart,  
Who treasure this talisman deep in the heart. I love you.

Carl Sandburg wrote about his wife,

"I love you for what you are, but I love you yet more for what you are going to be.

I love you not so much for your realities as for your ideals.

I pray for your desires that they may be great, rather than for your satisfactions which may be so hazardously little.

A satisfied flower is one whose petals are about to fall. The most beautiful rose is one hardly more than a bud wherein the pangs and ecstasies of desire are working for larger and finer growth.

Not always shall you be what you are now.

You are going forward toward something great. I am on the way with you, and therefore I love you."

In contrast, someone wrote about how familiarity breeds contempt.

They were single and went walking,  
And her heart did ship a beat,  
As she stumbled on the sidewalk,  
And he murmured, "Careful, sweet."  
Now the wedding bells have rung  
And they walk the self-same street-  
She stumbles on the sidewalk,  
And he yells, "Pick up your feet."

Joseph Addison counseled well when he wrote, "Two persons, who have chosen each other of all the species, with the design to be each other's mutual comfort and entertainment, have, in that action, bound themselves to be good-humored, affable, discreet, forgiving, patient and joyful with respect to each other's frailties and imperfections, to the end of their lives." This is what should be, and not what often is.

#### HOMEWORK:

Poetry is the language of love. How many of you have ever written a love poem to your mate? Everyone should write at least one in their lifetime, and so make this the week you do. Write a 4 to 8 line poem, that can be serious or humorous about how you love your mate. You become more loving the more you can break through the inhibitions that hold you back from the expressions of love.

#### CHANGE

It is only hard when you think it is a major overhaul of your personality. But it is easy when you think of it as a minor alteration. Most mates do not want a new person, but the one they married with some minor changes in behavior. These are called micro-behaviors. They are the smallest verbal or non-verbal units of any interaction. They are to people's relationships what temperature, shape, color, and texture are to physical objects. A can of pop that feels warm may not be appealing, but raise the temperature a little and it is very appealing. That is not really a great chance at all, but it makes a big difference.

Most of the changes people need to make to improve their relationship are really very slight. Even as slight a change as the tone of your voice can make a big difference. The cost is not enormous, but there is a need for persistent

communication until there is an awareness of what the changes need to be. Often, we are not even aware of things we do that irritate our mate.

All behavior is caused. It is caused by what is perceived rightly or wrongly. This is why two people need to talk about their behavior and be honest about why they do what they do to figure out how to change when it is not productive behavior. Micro-behaviors are those little things that convey warmth or coldness, interest or disinterest, attraction or repulsion. They either make your mate feel comfortable or uncomfortable.

When people first meet they are likely to be more kind and thoughtful and sensitive, but after years of knowing each other these natural positive behaviors often fade.

\* Let's share. Do you think of the conflicts in your marriage as macro or micro-behavior?