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DEALING EFFECTIVELY
WITH MARITAL CONFLICT

Conflict in marriage is normal and should not be viewed as a reason for division. The critical issue is not "whether you have conflict" in your marriage but "how you deal with conflict" in your marriage. Fighting fair is dealing with the issue without attacking the person. Conflict must be dealt with and if ignored will only worsen. Learn to effectively deal with conflict BEFORE it gets out of control.

"The beginning of strife is as when water first trickles from a crack in a dam, therefore, stop contention before it becomes worse and quarreling breaks out."

Proverbs 17:14

When Dealing With Marital Conflict:

- (1) Do not accuse or attack – simply express your feelings.
- (2) Watch your words, expression and tone of voice.
- (3) Avoid extremes and absolutes such as "never" and "always."
- (4) Use words such as "when you do this, it makes me feel _____"
- (5) Don't exaggerate, distort or stretch the truth.
- (6) Be specific – avoid generalities.
- (7) Seek a solution – "getting even" is not your goal.
- (8) Attempt to see your mate's side of the issue.
- (9) Refuse to get mad and walk away from the discussion.
- (10) Be willing to say "I'm sorry."
- (11) Be willing to forgive and accept apologies.
- (12) Refuse to hold a grudge.
- (13) Avoid "name calling" (stupid, lazy, irresponsible)
- (14) Never bring up the past (forgiven offenses.)
- (15) Don't criticize each other's family
- (16) Never use physical blows of any kind (hitting, slapping, etc)
- (17) Avoid the temptation to discuss your conflict with others. (unless seeking professional help)
- (18) Decide what you have learned and how to never let it happen again.
- (19) Be quick to acknowledge your own failures.
- (20) Hold each other and verbally reassure your love and commitment.

**YOUR ABILITY TO COPE WITH THE BAD TIMES
WILL BE THE PROOF OF YOUR MARRIAGE!**

*Remember, your worst enemy is willing to have a good time with you
but it is the one who truly loves you that will stick by your side during the tough times.*

COMMUNICATION DO'S AND DON'TS

DON'T

- Don't be judgmental
- Don't expect too much from one conversation
- Don't bring up your mate's past
- Don't interrupt or be rude
- Don't use absolutes such as "You always" or "You never"
- Don't lose your temper
- Don't pout or give the silent treatment
- Don't tell endless stories
- Don't compete
- Don't think in terms of "winning or losing"
- Don't belittle your mate

DO

- Be accepting and tolerant
- Plan to talk about it again
- Be forgiving
- Be as courteous as to a stranger
- Be accurate by saying "Sometimes" "Many times" or "To me it seems..."
- Be in control of yourself
- Be positive, outgoing and unselfish (even when you don't feel like it.)
- Be concise and to the point; value your mate's time
- See yourself as an equal partner
- Be cooperative and flexible, learn to compromise
- Be affirming and build up your mate (greatest fan)

THE BEST COMMUNICATORS HAVE LEARNED THE ARTS OF BOTH TALKING AND LISTENING. IN EITHER CASE, UNDERSTANDING IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL!

Confession Over Your Marriage

Father,

I desire your best in my marriage and I confess peace, love, joy and prosperity over every aspect of my home. I ask you to be the Lord over my life, my mate and my home.

I repent of the hindrance I have been to Your perfect work in my home and mate by my thoughts, by my words and by my actions. I turn from every thought that does not glorify You. I put away from me bitterness, anger and malice.

I put away from me the temptation to dwell on hurts and abide in self pity.

I resolve, with Jesus' help, to think only on those things in my home that are good, honest, pure, lovely and the things for which I can praise my mate. By the power of Christ, my mouth will speak only good, and my actions will line up with the meditations of my heart and the words of my mouth. Father, if I fail in these things, I will not abide in failure, but I will confess my failing to you and receive my forgiveness and cleansing so I can go forward in the power of Your Spirit.

I REPENT OF SPEAKING OF THINGS AS THEY ARE AND HOLDING THEM IN THAT STATE IN THE SPIRIT WORLD. I resolve to be like You and to speak of things as they WILL BE as a result of Your work.

I know that when you begin a work, it is as good as done and therefore, You speak of that work as already completed. I will be like You and speak of Your work in my home and in my mate as though it were already COMPLETE.

It is written, "The eyes of the Lord go to and fro upon the earth seeking upon whose behalf He may show Himself strong." By returning your Word to You concerning my home and my mate, I know I am releasing you to show Yourself strong on my behalf.

Thank you, Jesus, for all You are doing even now.
I believe Your hand is at work in my life and in my mate. I praise You for victory in my home and in my marriage.

In Jesus' Name

*"Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen;
it gives us assurance about things we cannot see."*

Heb 11:1

". . . a man of understanding holds his tongue."

Prov 11:12

*"Reckless words pierce like a sword,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing."*

Prov 12:18

*"The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life,
but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit."*

Prov 15:4

*"The tongue has the power of life and death,
and those who love it will eat its fruit."*

Prov 18:21

*"So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire,
and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."*

Isa 55:11

"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."

Prov 23:7

*"Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and
lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise
God for and be glad about."*

Phil 4:8-9

*"For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose
hearts are fully committed to him."*

2 Chron 16:9

DATE YOUR MATE

Getting back to the "way we were" before the pressures of life began to compete for our attention.

- (1) Spoil each other.
 - prepare his favorite dish
 - call her from the office
 - put a note in his lunch
 - open her car door

- (2) Consistently do random little acts of kindness.
 - bring his coffee to him while he shaves
 - fold the laundry for her when the dryer stops
 - polish his shoes for him
 - clear the dishes from the table for her after a meal

- (3) Show concern and volunteer to help.
 - “You’re tired, let me do this for you”
 - “Sit down and I’ll put the kids to bed”
 - “You’ve had a hard day, haven’t you?”

(You may not be able to solve the problem but your sympathy and desire to help carry the load makes the burden seem lighter)

- (4) Say “thank you.”
 - Simply “expecting” your mate to do something because its their job is taking them for granted.
 - Verbalize your appreciation even if it is something done regularly
 - “Honey, that was a great meal”
 - “That was so thoughtful of you to wash my car”
 - “I appreciate you helping me bring in the groceries”
 - “I am grateful for the way you provide for our family”

- (5) Apologize quickly.
 - Being quick to admit one’s faults demonstrates a desire to keep the relationship healthy.

- (6) Be proud of your spouse in public.
 - The way you introduce your spouse says much about your relationship
 - The pride you take in your spouse will encourage them to be all you see in them

(7) Set aside "alone time" with your spouse

- A meal in a restaurant
- A movie
- A ride in the country
- A hotel for the weekend

(8) Greet each other with affection

- A smile, a kiss or a hug
- Never greet one another with the bad news of the day
- Your treatment of your spouse makes them eager to be with you or causes them to avoid spending time with you

(9) Learn to laugh together

- Don't take yourself or life's struggles so seriously...."this too shall pass"
- Share a joke
- Develop little sayings that bring humor to stressful situations
- Laughter is the second most powerful human emotion (love is first)
 - laughter dispels anxiety, helps manage stress, drives off depression, fear and worry and stimulates healing.
- A sense of humor helps us stay optimistic in the face of tough times

(10) Give gifts regularly

- Everyone loves to be remembered and feel important – gifts say both
- Gifts say: "I'm thinking of you"
 - "I know what you like"
 - "You are important to me"
- Expense is not the issue – it truly is the "thought that counts"
 - a card
 - a flower
 - a favorite candy bar
- Special occasion gifts (birthday, anniversary, etc) should never be overlooked but the "no occasion" unexpected gifts mean the most.

* * *

***DATING YOUR MATE TAKES TIME AND EFFORT
BUT ALWAYS REMEMBER . . .
IT IS FAR EASIER
TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY MARRIAGE
THAN TO REPAIR A BROKEN ONE.***

WAYS TO SHOW YOUR LOVE

DAILY

- Spend at least 10 minutes a day focused on one another without the distraction of your kids, the TV, the phone, etc.
- Kiss your spouse in the morning, before leaving the house, when you go to bed, and several other times during the day and evening.
- Say I Love You.
- Hug your spouse several times each day.
- Affirm something your spouse said or did and say something nice.
- Be kind to your spouse (courtesy)
- Do something caring and romantic for your spouse (compliments)
- Don't criticize your spouse
- Laugh & have fun together

WEEKLY

- Hide some love notes for your spouse
- Do a few things together, like working in the yard, taking a walk, watching a favorite movie, or planning and cooking dinner.
- Encourage both yourself and your spouse to have some alone time Respect one another's need for privacy and space.

MONTHLY

- Plan and have a date with one another.

YEARLY

- Celebrate your anniversary
- Write a letter to each other recommitting yourselves to your marriage
(Why I'd marry you all over again)
- Decide together how you will celebrate holidays
- Make a big deal about your birthdays.

ALWAYS

- Fight fair.
- Don't try to change your spouse.
- Be willing to forgive. Let go of past baggage & hurts and be willing to move forward with your lives.
- Don't expect your spouse to be a mind reader and don't try to be a mind reader
- Accept that there will be some small issues that you two will never resolve and that it is normal in successful marriages.
- Continue to build intimacy -- both sexually and emotionally -- throughout your marriage.
- Continue to be committed to each other
- Like one another and be friends with each other.
- Comfort, encourage, and affirm one another.
- Be able to stand on your own feet as a couple and not be dependent either financially or emotionally on either of your parents.
- Parent together.
- Deal with a crisis and adversity together

NOTES

Good marriages are not free of conflict but the conflict is handled with a respect for the partner's deepest vulnerabilities."

ROMANCE & INTIMACY

Unmet needs are the #1 cause for lack of intimacy in a marriage. The needs of a man and those of a woman are very different. Understanding and meeting these needs are a priority if lasting and satisfying intimacy is to be expected.

HIS NEEDS

1. Sexual Fulfillment (biological need)
2. Recreational Companionship (someone to have fun with)
3. An Attractive Spouse (a wife who takes care of herself)
4. Domestic Support (a peaceful and organized home)
5. Admiration (the assurance that his wife is proud of him)

TOP 5 ROMANTIC NEEDS OF A MAN

1. He needs his wife to respect and celebrate who he is as a man and how God made him sexually.
2. He needs his wife to make it a priority to frequently and creatively meet his romantic needs.
3. He needs his wife to desire him and make him feel wanted sexually.
4. He needs his wife to be fun and imaginative sexually and not passive about the use of her power as the woman in his life.
5. He needs his wife to let him know he is a great lover and that he brings her great pleasure.

HER NEEDS

1. Affection (emotional need)
2. Conversation (she needs her husband to talk and listen to her)
3. Honesty and Openness (she needs to trust her husband totally)
4. Financial Support (she needs the security of finances to meet needs)
5. Family Commitment (she needs her husband to be a good father)

TOP 5 ROMANTIC THINGS TO DO FOR YOUR WIFE

1. Talking
2. Kissing & Touching (hugging holding hands)
3. Talking to her eye to eye
4. Flowers
5. Acts of Service (helping with tasks, opening doors, etc)

30 WAYS TO LOVE YOUR WIFE

1. Hug and kiss her every morning
2. Hold her hand in public
3. Leave her notes..."I'm crazy about you"
4. Call her from work
5. Take her to a movie
6. Tell her something you appreciate about her
7. Go to bed at the same time with her for a week (talk, hug, etc)
8. Compliment her hair and eyes
9. As she looks at herself in the mirror, tell her she is beautiful
10. Remove the TV from your bedroom
11. Send her an email and ask her how her day is going
12. Make breakfast for her on Saturday
13. Take her car to the gas station and fill it for her
14. Write her a love letter telling her how she has blessed you this year
15. Open the car door, pull out her chair, help her with her coat, etc.
16. Help her fold the laundry
17. Put the toilet seat down
18. Put down the newspaper and turn off the computer to take a walk with her
19. Compliment the way she does something
20. Pray with her daily
21. Say "thank you" when she cooks a meal and help her clear the table
22. Tell her you admire her for being a godly woman
23. Express appreciation for the way she cares for the home
24. Say "I love you" everyday
25. Thank her for ironing your clothes, buying the groceries and cooking your meals
26. Hug her each morning when the alarm goes off
27. Take her to dinner and let her choose the restaurant
28. Brag on her in public
29. Tell her what a great lover she is
30. In her presence, tell your children what a great mother they have and that you love her

All of these things demonstrate a husband's love and bring strength to the relationship. The effort required to demonstrate your love for your wife will not only build love and confidence in her life but will reward you with great dividends in your marriage.

A husband's attention to those things that mean so much to his wife will draw her to him like a magnet.

"A man who invests himself in his wife will enjoy a satisfying relationship with a woman who will love him in ways he never dreamed possible."

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THE FOUR RULES OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE

1) Rule of PROTECTION. Stop killing romantic love. Protect your spouse from "Love Busters".

- a. Selfish Demands
- b. Disrespectful Judgments
- c. Angry Outbursts
- d. Dishonesty
- e. Annoying Habits
- f. Independent behavior

2) Rule of CARE. Care for your spouse. Find out what his/her needs are and become an expert at fulfilling them.

Admiration, affection, attractive spouse, conversation, domestic support family commitment, financial support, honesty and openness, recreational companionship, sexual fulfillment

3) Rule of HONESTY. Be honest. Of course avoid deception, but also, let your spouse know your history, present, future plans, and what you're thinking and feeling now.

4) Rule of TIME. Spend time with your spouse. Make time to spend alone without family, friends, or kids. Get as close to 15 hours per week as you can.

COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES FOR THE SPEAKER/LISTENER

SPEAKER:

1. Address one topic at a time: Be brief in what you have to say. Try to limit yourself to two sentences. You can make your point in a few, well-chosen words. This avoids addressing too many topics, saying what you don't mean, and being boring or irritating to your mate.
2. Be specific: Avoid vague, general remarks. For instance, instead of complaining, "I wish you were neater", say, "I would like you to hang up the towel after you use it". If you give your spouse a clear target, they are more likely to hit it.
3. Avoid insults, accusations, and blaming: It's better to follow the no-fault rule: "A problem exists. Let's see what we can do about solving it." Pretend you are a mechanic: you see that something is loose and needs tightening, and you simply suggest corrective action without blame. This is a solution-focused approach. The problem isn't "you", but an "it".
4. Avoid naming your spouse with labels such as "sloppy", "selfish", or "careless". These create defensiveness and keep you from solving anything.
5. Avoid absolutes like "never" or "always". These are usually inaccurate and only beg for an argument.
6. Make requests, not criticisms. Try to state what you would like, rather than what you don't like. Say, for example, "I'd like it if you would help with the dishes" rather than complain "You never help with the dishes."
7. Avoid mind-reading: Your guesses are likely to be wrong much of the time, which will only irritate your mate. There's no benefit in telling someone what they're thinking or how they feel. For example, don't say, "You're mad," or "You did that on purpose". But it's okay to check out your beliefs by saying, "I get the feeling you're annoyed at me."

LISTENER:

1. Disarming: Find points of agreement or mutual understanding so you don't sound like an opponent. "I agree with you that this needs some work." "You're right about that."
2. Disregard your mate's negative statements. When your mate is hurt or angry, he/she is likely to exaggerate the problem or use aggressive language. Try to focus on the cause of the anger and ignore the expressions of blame and criticism.
3. Ask yourself questions: Sometimes your mate's complaint may be clear to him/her but not to you. Ask yourself, "What is the point my mate is trying to tell me?" Resist the temptation to only think about what you're going to say next.
4. Confirm your understanding of your mate's message by speaking it back to him. "You're telling me that you need help with the housework." The speaker will then correct you if the message wasn't completely received.
5. An effective apology is important. Loving includes expressing regret when you have hurt your mate. Take responsibility for your contribution to the problem. A true apology means admitting what you did was wrong and stating that you will make an honest effort to not do it again. Simply saying that you're sorry your mate is upset without an apology will usually make things worse.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BAD COMMUNICATION*

1. **Truth**—You insist that you are "right" and the other person is "wrong."
2. **Blame**—You say that the problem is the other person's fault.
3. **Martyrdom**—You claim that you're an innocent victim.
4. **Put-down**—You imply that the other person is a loser because he or she "always" or "never" does certain things.
5. **Hopelessness**—You give up and insist there's no point in trying.
6. **Demandingness**—You say you're entitled to better treatment but you refuse to ask for what you want in a direct, straightforward way.
7. **Denial**—You insist that you don't feel angry, hurt, or sad when you really do.
8. **Passive Aggression**—You pout or withdraw or say nothing. You may storm out of the room or slam doors.
9. **Self-blame**—Instead of dealing with the problem, you act as if you're an awful, terrible person.
10. **Helping**—Instead of hearing how depressed, hurt, or angry the other person feels, you try to "solve the problem" or "help" him or her.
11. **Sarcasm**—Your words or tone of voice convey tension or hostility which you aren't openly acknowledging.
12. **Scapagoating**—You suggest that the other person has "a problem" and that you're sane, happy, and uninvolved in the conflict.
13. **Defensiveness**—You refuse to admit any wrong-doing or imperfection.
14. **Counterattack**—Instead of acknowledging how the other person feels, you respond to their criticism by criticizing them.
15. **Diversion**—Instead of dealing with how you both feel in the here-and-now, you list grievances about past injustices.

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THE FIVE SECRETS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION*

LISTENING SKILLS

1. **The Disarming Technique.** You find some truth in what the other person is saying, even if you feel convinced that what they're saying is totally wrong, unreasonable, irrational, or unfair.
2. **Empathy.** You put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to see the world through his or her eyes.
 - **Thought empathy:** You paraphrase the other person's words.
 - **Feeling empathy:** You acknowledge how they're probably feeling, given what they are saying to you.
3. **Inquiry:** You ask gentle, probing questions to learn more about what the other person is thinking and feeling.

SELF-EXPRESSION SKILLS

1. **"I feel" statements.** You express your feelings with "I feel" statements (such as "I feel upset") rather than with "you statements" (such as "You're wrong!" or "You're making me furious!").
2. **Stroking:** You find something genuinely positive to say to the other person, even in the heat of battle. This indicates that you respect the other person, even though you may be angry with each other.

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