**STRENGTHENING YOUR MARRIAGE 6**

**CONFLICT and COMMUNICATION and FORGIVENESS in MARRIAGE**

Marital conflict is not just a difference of opinion, but rather it is a series of events that have been handled so poorly that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has gone out of the window, and the marriage relationship is in danger of being seriously damaged.

The root of almost all serious marital discord is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on the part of one or both parties, and the breakdown in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ leading to hurt feelings, emotions that run high, and it can seem as if solutions seem out of reach. When marital conflict and children live in the same home, the damage is multiplied.

Here are **four stages of marital conflict** that increase marital discord:

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Trying to settle things by avoiding \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Giving \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to each other without ever discussing the heart of the problem
* If you find yourself \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ whenever you have an argument with your partner, eventually you will find that you are tired of this pattern and you will begin shifting your attitude towards the next stage

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* After couples have exhausted themselves by ignoring their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, they often turn the opposite way
* They begin demanding that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are now met
* A wife/husband who has kept her/his opinions to herself/himself may suddenly realize that she/he is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And then she/he may start voicing her/his thoughts and attitudes at every \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Husband and wife begin \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* The third phase involves \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with each other
* At this stage in a marriage there may be more \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from parenting responsibilities, finances, and hectic schedules
* With no effective \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ style and the growing pressures of life, couples may start to doubt their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ during this stage, especially if the eagerness to use this new found communication style wears thin.

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* This stage marks a sense of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Couples in this stage are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ over the unending conflicts
* They might even feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that all the unresolved issues will ever be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_

Marriages don’t have to end up this way. With [effective communication](http://www.imom.com/6-tips-for-marital-conflicts-without-casualties/) and conflict resolution skills, couples can work through their problems, rather than avoiding or forcing the issues.

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION in MARRIAGE**

How would you define good communication?

It has been said that good communication is the art of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ a clear message, and good communication is vital if a healthy marriage relationship is to be established and maintained.

What are some of the challenges of effective communication?



















**PRACTICAL STEPS to GOOD COMMUNICATION**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Following marriage, with work and increasing family commitments, there is more and more pressure on a couple’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It is vitally important therefore that you set time aside regularly to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to and to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with each other.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Do not try and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ your partner what he or she is thinking and/or feeling, and do not try and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ your partner how he/she should feel or think. This is dangerous territory and will lead your partner to set up a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ reaction especially if he/she feels unfairly accused.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

You will never see \_\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ on every single matter, but ‘different’ does not mean ‘\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’ and ‘disagreement’ does not mean ‘\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’. Good communication comes when you work at understanding your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and when you respect those \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Poor communication often results from a partner trying to prove his/her \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in a given situation and giving the impression that ‘my way is always right’.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Give your partner your full \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when he/she is speaking to you
* Allow your partner to speak without \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Listen not only to what is being said, but to the TOTAL message. Observe your partner’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, facial expressions, and listen to the tone of voice
* DO NOT be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in your listening. Sometimes we only hear what we want to hear

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Make sure that you have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ understood what your partner has said to you. This will allow you to correct any misunderstanding and will also make your partner feel that what he/she has said is important to you.

**SCRIPTURAL STEPS to GOOD COMMUNICATION**

Open up Ephesians 4

1. **LOVINGLY SPEAK THE TRUTH to ONE ANOTHER (15 and 25)**

* There is no hope of effective communication if either partner keeps a secret from the other partner
* Love and truth go hand in hand. If you truly love someone, you will want to share truth with them
* You must be honest with each other – but it must be done in love
* Truth should never be spoken with meanness or in such a critical way that it is destructive to the other person
* The truth can be painful to hear, so communicate with kindness especially in touchy situations
* There is a place for positive criticism

1. **DO NOT LET the SUN GOD DOWN WHILE YOU ARE STILL ANGRY (26-27)**

* Prolonged anger will give Satan an advantage in your marriage, because if you hold onto your angry feelings, you are almost inviting Satan to come in an capitalize on your sin, by tempting you to do something worse
* Settle each day’s accounts before the day ends
* Never go to bed angry, even if you have to stay up for a whole week!!!

1. **BUILD ONE ANOTHER UP with WORDS of ENCOURAGEMENT (29)**

* Be your partner’s chief encourager
* Build your marriage with your words rather than demolishing it
* Give at least 5 positive comments for every negative one
* Thank your partner for what they do
* Make a point of paying your partner a genuine compliment, each day
* Speak positively about your partner to others and in front of others
* Keep good memories alive by talking about them
* People can abuse others with their words as surely as they can be physically abusive, and verbal abuse can take longer to heal
* Speak only those things that are going to be helpful

1. **LEARN the DISCIPLINE of FORGIVENESS (32)**

* True love means that sometimes you sometimes have to say ‘sorry’
* Be open and receptive to forgiveness
* Make a conscious decision to forgive your partner
* Don’t dwell on those thoughts, when images of the betrayal or hurt flash in your mind
* Refrain from throwing an error or mistake back in your partner’s face at a later date, and don't use it as ammunition in an argument
* Don’t seek revenge or retribution. Trying to get even will only extend the pain and the chances are good that this won't really make you feel better anyway
* Remember that forgiveness does not mean that you condone the hurtful behavior, but give it to God

**RESOLVING CONFLICT in MARRIAGE**

1. Understand your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, accept them and adjust to them. Remember that often ‘opposites attract!’. Accept your partner as God’s gift to you.
2. Defeat \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Our sinful selfish nature is the biggest source of marital conflict. We are all instinctively \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and want to look out for number one. We must give up, give in, and give all.
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the other person in order to resolve the conflict. Don’t bury your heads in the sand or play the avoidance game.
4. Practice \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and grant it quickly.
5. Return \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for insult. Do not retaliate with insult for insult. Don’t lash out or fight back. Yield to the power of the Holy Spirit instead.
6. Pursue peace in your relationship and do not self-\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**COMMUNICATION WEAKNESSES and STRENGTHS**

My communication strength is:

My partner’s communication strength is:

My communication weakness is:

My partner’s communication weakness is:

We are going to do the following to improve communication in our marriage: