

## Question:

Analyze your communication style. Are you a good communicator? In what areas are you relatively weak as a communicator? What is one communication skill would you like to learn better? What steps can you take to learn this skill?

## Answer:

Word Count: 697

Communication is vital to any successful relationship, whether they are professional or personal. When I think about communicating, I feel that I am good at conveying the important points, approaching conversations with an open mind, and being receptive to feedback that is received during those personal conversations. As I continue to learn more about meaningful ways to make connections with my partner, I have also realized that I still have some room to grow when it comes to communicating.

Communication is vital to the success of every relationship, especially those with sexual components – whether they're casual, committed, or somewhere in between. "Communication, not sex, is the one factor that distinguishes a mediocre relationship from a great one" (Knox & Milstein 2021, pg. 164, p. 1). Avoiding pain points when it comes to sex doesn't make sense – you can't bury your head in the sand and just hope that things get better on their own, but I do agree that there is an appropriate time and place to have these conversations. While they might not be as glamorous as the act itself, I think that the value that both partners get out of these conversations outweighs the discomfort that can typically come with having some of these conversations. One thing that I feel is valuable to both partners in a relationship is having a conversation before anything happens – It doesn't have to be an exhaustive conversation, but enough to know that everyone involved is on the same page. Talking about likes, dislikes, places where someone might like something, or completely adverse to the idea are great points to jump into a conversation about what might or might not happen and adds depth to a conversation that would otherwise leave both partners to figure things out as they go. In my experience, having these conversations up front with someone has helped settle nerves before things could get too intense. I feel that the ability to be comfortable having these conversations openly and knowing when they should come about speaks to my ability as an effective communicator, and I feel that as Montesi et al (2010) states, having the ability to openly have discussions around sex results in a better view of the relationship.

When I reflect on the content that I am typically sharing when communicating with a partner, I feel that I often am unable to properly convey the emotions that I am feeling. I'll be forthright and admit that I frequently remind my partners that I have the emotional range of a toddler and as a result, sometimes need to do some introspection to truly define what I'm feeling. I feel that this is my biggest weakness when it comes to communicating. Foran et al (2013) found that Alexithymia, or the inability to identify, experience, or express emotion, has direct ties to the mental state of a partner to someone who experiences Alexithymia - specifically finding correlation between it and the onset of depressive episodes in a partner. With something like this, my partner likes to have me narrate my inner monologue for them, so they can travel along the path as I try to understand not only what I'm feeling, but also why. I think that because we do this so regularly it has helped strengthen the bonds of our relationship, as it allows them to see how I process things, and I have noticed that they tend to be more mindful of how I interpret things which has significantly reduced the number of miscommunications that we have experienced since coming to this agreement.

Overall, I like to look at communication as a partnership, just like the rest of the relationship. There are going to be days where I am not able to be at my best, just like my partner can't be expected to be at the top of their game every day either. Being able to approach conversations with an open mind, knowing when it's appropriate to have these conversations, and having plans in place to mitigate negative effects of my inability to articulate my emotions are all ways that my partner and I compromise to ensure that we stay aligned in our expectations.

## References

- Knox, D., & Milstein, S. (2021). *Human Sexuality: Making Informed Decisions* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) [with Salt Lake Community College supplement]. Redding, CA: BVT Publishing.
- Montesi, J. L., Fauber, R. L., Gordon, E. A., & Heimberg, R. G. (2010). The specific importance of communicating about sex to couples' sexual and overall relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 28(5), 591-609. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407510386833> (Original work published 2011)
- Foran, H. M., & O'Leary, K. D. (2013). The Role of Relationships in Understanding the Alexithymia–Depression Link. *European Journal of Personality*, 27(5), 470-480. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.1887> (Original work published 2013)

## Question:

Select a topic from the text and conduct some independent Internet research. Topics may include infertility, reproductive technologies, gendered perspectives on fertility and reproduction, reproductive choice, abortion, childbirth options, medical interventions during childbirth, fathers and fertility, the rights of mother and fetus, the impact of technology on reproductive implications, sperm banks, and reproductive ethics. What did you learn? Report on your findings.

## Answer:

Word Count: 595

At some point in everyone's lives, they think about family. What it would be like to have a family of their own – children that they can impart lessons upon and share their lives with. For many people children are an expectation, not an option. There is no other way to feel more fulfilled than raising someone to be a proud and respectable person, and that is their motivation for everything they do in life. What happens when those individuals get told that they are unable to have children? This is a reality for nearly 20% of women and 11.4% of men in the United States today (“Infertility Statistics in the U.S. 2025 | Male & Female Infertility Facts”). Understandably, this can be a difficult situation to digest – processing the inability to procreate can be a devastating experience – and there are very likely people in our lives that experience this. Fortunately, there are methods that aim to improve fertility and reproduction rates across the world.

Reproductive Technology is not a one-size-fits-all option. It's a blanket term that encapsulates many different types of reproductive health support methods. ART – or Assisted Reproductive Technology is the one that most people think of when they think of those struggling to have children – Embryo Transfer, In-Vitro Fertilization, Artificial Insemination, and so on. What do these treatments have in common though? They are all focused on women's reproductive health. One of my biggest takeaways from this section of reading and the research I have done is that there is not as much support geared towards men. With any reproductive process, it “takes two to tango”, so to speak. That is that most of the procedures are invasive for women, but there is not quite an equivalent for men. Part of this can be attributed to the sexual dimorphism between men and women, but some can also be attributed to the stigma that only women could fail when it comes to conceiving a child – a sentiment that is parroted in media.

The most interesting part of this research for me was understanding why we preach to women about reproductive health and how the mother's health affects the children, but we never see the flip side of that – we never see how men have biological clocks that are ticking too, and while they are not running as early as women,

they do decline at a more rapid pace. Both Knox & Milstein (2021, p. 348) and *Infertility Statistics in the U.S. 2025 | Male and Female Infertility Facts* (2025) state that men play a significant role in the viability of conception. How is it that men – who are the cause of fertility issues 40% of the time (Knox & Milstein, 2021, p. 348) – are limited in the resources to remediate the issue past hormone therapy?

Men have written the history of the world but when it comes to matters of reproduction, they hide their shame and bury their heads in the sand until it is too late to address. There aren't ads targeting men for their low-motility sperm, or azoospermia. Men's reproductive health has taken a back seat to unjustly placing that pressure on the women, and seldom do men truly understand that they are the root of the problem (Almeling, 2020). When faced with the prospect of devastating entire families of the loss of could-be children, men should also be held to the same fertility-treatment expectation when the couple is having a difficult time conceiving. While I understand that it may bruise some egos - Isn't a family worth it in the end?

## References

- Knox, D., & Milstein, S. (2021). *Human Sexuality: Making Informed Decisions* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) [with Salt Lake Community College supplement]. Redding, CA: BVT Publishing.
- “Infertility Statistics in the U.S. 2025 | Male & Female Infertility Facts.” *The Global Statistics*, 8 July 2025, [www.theglobalstatistics.com/united-states-infertility-statistics/](http://www.theglobalstatistics.com/united-states-infertility-statistics/). Accessed 19 July 2025.
- Almeling, Rene. *Gynecology : The Missing Science of Men’s Reproductive Health*. 2025. Oakland, California, University Of California Press, 2020.