



Learning to Listen...

Learning to Listen to your spouse is an important first step and allows you to relate more effectively with your spouse. Listening means that YOU pay attention without deciding whether you agree or disagree with what the person is saying, and without planning your response. You simply listen with openness and intensity.

Learn How to Communicate WITHOUT Getting into an Argument...



Sometimes in a relationship you and your spouse are going to disagree, but it doesn't have to come to a yelling match or the endless "I'm not talking to you first" battle. Even though getting to solutions is important, it's actually harmful to jump to solutions before each of you get the chance to share what is on your mind. When couples do not listen to each other, they get stuck in their relationship and start displaying destructive styles of communication. These destructive styles can be remembered with the acronym WINE!

BEWARE of DESTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATION STYLES:

Don't let the WINE get to you...

Withdrawal

Invalidation

Negative Interpretation

Escalation

If you are or begin to experience any of these signs of poor communication, try the Speaker-Listener Technique as designed by PREP. It's a safe way to share and not let the WINE get to you as a couple! What do you have to lose? Try it!

Identify Your and Your Spouse's Communication Style...

There are three common styles of communication in relationships, let's see if you can identify you and your spouse's:

- **PASSIVE** communication is characterized by an unwillingness to honestly share thoughts, feelings and desires.
- **AGGRESSIVE** communication is characterized by blaming and accusatory actions.
- **ASSERTIVE** communication allows people to express themselves in a non-defensive and non-insistent way. It means asking clearly and directly for what one wants and being positive and respectful in one's communication. It is the healthiest and most effective style!

TRY the SPEAKER-LISTENER TECHNIQUE

Rules for the SPEAKER:

Speak for Yourself. Use "I" Statements (an overview of "I" Statements is on the next page) and talk only about your own feelings or beliefs.

Don't go On and On. To be fair to the Listener, keep your statements brief and to the point.

Stop and Let the Listener Paraphrase. Allow the Listener to say in their own words what they think they heard. If the paraphrase was not quite accurate, politely restate what you intended to say. Your goal is to help the Listener hear and understand your point of view.

Rules for the LISTENER:

Paraphrase What You Hear. Briefly repeat back what you heard the Speaker say using your own words and make sure that you understand what was said.

Focus on the Speaker's Message. Don't rebut. In the Listener's role, you may not offer your opinion or thoughts. Wait until you are the Speaker to make your own points. As the Listener, your job is to speak only in the service of understanding your partner.

Rules for BOTH:

The Speaker has the Floor.

The Speaker keeps the Floor until the Listener is able to successfully paraphrase.

Switch roles so that the Speaker becomes the Listener and vice-versa.

Use the LDD Method - Listen, Don't Defend

Once both of you are satisfied that you have been heard and understood, then move on to problem solving. At first, using this method may seem stiff and uncomfortable, but over time it will become second nature and heated arguments should become a thing of the past.

Turn the page to Learn about "I" Statements...