



Now Hear This! Listening is a Key to a Great Marriage

Expressing yourself to your spouse these days is a hard thing to do. You open up to share your opinions, wants, feelings and your innermost thoughts only to find that your spouse isn't really listening. If you're honest with yourself, you would admit that you could probably be a better listener as well. What can you do?

Avoid Distractions

One of the most realistic ways for couples to improve their listening skills is to avoid distractions and set aside some one-on-one time every week. Trying to talk over the television or the kids doesn't work. You need to make time every week to get to a quiet spot to discuss what matters most to both of you. The spot could be a nearby park, your backyard or even your bedroom with the door closed. If you can find a quiet place to talk and listen, you will tend to migrate to these spots when you really need to discuss something important.

Do Unto Others

How many times have you tried to tell your spouse something great or difficult about your day only to find them looking into space? Did you feel rejected? Without being listened to, your feelings are hurt and you don't want to talk anymore. Pay attention and listen to your spouse just like you would want your spouse to listen to you. This means doing your best to understand what your spouse is really saying and taking an active role by asking questions and staying focused.

Cooperation and Not Competition

Are you listening to your spouse or are you spending the whole time plotting a response? When you rehearse an argument in your mind you are essentially ignoring what your spouse has to say about the finances or the kids until it is your turn to say something. You don't learn anything or gain wisdom from your spouse when you are more concerned about being right or competing. Listening is about cooperation and coming to the best choice. Focus on listening to your spouse to discover new information that is important for wise decisions to be made.

The Temptations

One of the greatest temptations you will face in listening to your spouse is to interrupt them. A thought will occur to you that is vitally important to the conversation and you have two choices: (1) Interrupt; (2) Don't interrupt. Let your spouse finish what they are saying every time. Make it a habit to never interrupt your spouse. As soon as your spouse's thought is complete, then share your thoughts. Not interrupting shows you respect what your spouse has to say and you love them enough to hear them out completely.