



COMMUNICATION

"It takes two to speak the truth...one to speak and another to hear."

—Henry David Thoreau

ASSERTIVENESS

Assertiveness is the ability to express your feelings and ask for what you want in the relationship.

Assertiveness is a valuable communication skill. In successful couples, both individuals tend to be quite assertive. Rather than assuming their partner can read their minds, they share how they feel and ask clearly and directly for what they want.

Assertive individuals take responsibility for their messages by using "I" statements. They avoid statements beginning with "you." In making constructive requests, they are positive and respectful in their communication. They use polite phrases such as "please" and "thank you".

Examples of Assertive Statements

"I'm feeling out of balance. While I love spending time with you, I also want to spend time with my friends. I would like us to find some time to talk about this."

"I want to take a ski vacation next winter, but I know you like to go to the beach. I'm feeling confused about what choice we should make."

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is the ability to let your partner know you understand them by restating their message.

Good communication depends on you carefully listening to another person. Active listening involves listening attentively without interruption and then restating what was heard. Acknowledge content AND the feelings of the speaker. The active listening process lets the sender know whether or not the message they sent was clearly understood by having the listener restate what they heard.

Examples of Active Listening

"I heard you say you are feeling 'out of balance', and enjoy the time we spend together but that you also need more time to be with your friends. You want to plan a time to talk about this."

"If I understand what you said, you are concerned because you want to go skiing next winter. But you think I would rather to go to the beach. Is that correct?"

When each person knows what the other person feels and wants (assertiveness) and when each knows they have been heard and understood (active listening), intimacy is increased. These two communication skills can help you grow closer as a couple.



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"It is a luxury to be understood."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

CREATING A WISH LIST

In this exercise, you will each individually make a Wish List of things you would like more or less of in your relationship. Next, take turns sharing your Wish Lists with each other.

Assertiveness is the ability to express your feelings and ask for what you want in your relationship.

Active listening is the ability to let your partner know you understand them by restating their message.

In sharing your Wish List with your partner, you will be demonstrating your Assertiveness skills. In giving feedback to your partner about their Wish List, you will be demonstrating your Active Listening skills.

Make a Wish List of three things you would like more or less of in your relationship.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

SHARING YOUR WISH LIST

Take turns sharing your Wish List with each other, keeping in mind the following:

- **Speaker's Job:**
 - Speak for yourself ("I" statements e.g. "I wish...").
 - Describe how you would feel if your wish came true.
- **Listener's Job:**
 - Repeat/summarize what you have heard.
 - Describe the wish AND how your partner would feel if the wish came true.

COUPLE DISCUSSION

After completing the Wish List Exercise, discuss the following questions:

- How good were each of you at being assertive?
- In what ways did you each effectively use active listening skills?

