

COUPLE'S REQUESTS

PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSIONS AND WORKSHOPS

The following four (4) communication recommendations are an addendum to Communication 101. Working with couples using the Communication 101 tools, these four (4) requests seem to come up on a regular basis. Of course there will be many more, depending on individuals. If you have a request that you think would be a good one to add to this list, I would love to hear from you.

1. HEAR WHAT I AM SAYING ALL THE WAY THROUGH.

It really does a lot to improve communication when each of you can trust that your partner is genuinely interested in what you are saying ---- and not just waiting for his/her turn to talk. Even if it feels corny or clumsy, slow down before you speak; be sure you have left room for your partner to be heard.

2. DON'T FIX; DON'T CRITIQUE.

Most everyone knows about this one. It is usually described as a predominantly male tendency (to instantly evaluate and problem solve) but either gender can have a problem with this one. The technique for this one is simply this: the person speaking is responsible for knowing the difference between just wanting to be heard and asking for opinions and advice. If your partner tells you that he/she is not asking for your opinions right then, do your very best to shift into listening mode. It is important that you understand that being asked to not fix something does not mean your input is not valued. It simply means that now is not the time.

3. STOP IF I ASK YOU TO STOP.

No matter how smart, wise or on-target you may be, there will be times when you are simply not being helpful. I ask that you respect me when I ask you to stop talking. This one can be very difficult to pull off, but it is very important that you learn how to do it. The trap that you may fall into, with good intention, is to want to keep talking – as in, “Okay, but let me just say 2 more things first.” Of course, your partner is responsible to ask you respectfully, but even when that is the case, you may feel insulted. I promise that in time, as you both build safety and respect in communication, this is not going to be a problem.

4. TRUST MY EXPLANATION AND REASONING EVEN IF YOU THINK THERE IS MORE TO IT.

It is not unusual for any of us to think we know more about what is going on with our partner than he/she does. And sometimes that is true. But that is not the point of this request. There may well be another time when you sharing your insights about him/her will be appreciated, but if you are being asked to accept an explanation or rationale without tossing in your two cents, respect the request. Keep in mind that being a good listener and accepting what someone is saying without taking exception to it are not the synonymous with agreeing with what is said.

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