

# When Your Best is Not Good Enough

*Dear Husbands and Wives, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

1Jn 4:11

## DIFFUSING DEFENSIVE ATTITUDES:

1. “This is my **PARTNER** who loves me and has promised to help me become all that God has created me to **BE** and all that God has created me to **DO**.”

2. I accept the fact that my partner is not **PERFECT** and will fail me. I too will fail my partner. I first choose to believe that whatever caused this misunderstanding, happened unintentionally.

3. Is it possible that what I am feeling is coming from unrealistic expectations that my Partner should automatically know what I need, how I feel and what I am thinking? I cannot expect my partner to know my need for **ATTENTION, AFFECTION, ACCEPTANCE, APPROVAL** or **APPRECIATION** unless I tell them.

4. I will walk toward my partner with a willingness to **FORGIVE** rather than prepared to **ACCUSE**.

5. Is this problem about us being different or someone being wrong?

*“Marriage is when two completely different people come together and spend the rest of their lives getting used to each others differences.”*

6. “I must remember that **TODAY** is not **YESTERDAY**.” I will choose to **PAUSE** before I **REACT**. I will not make my Partner pay for the wounds of my past.”

7. The **PART** is not the **WHOLE**. There is an 80/20 split in my partner. 80% of my partner is perfect; only 20% needs to be “tweaked.” I will not focus upon the 20% and make that 80% of the problem.

8. I will take **100%** responsibility for everything I **THINK, SAY, FEEL** or **DO**. These belong solely to me and me alone. *“Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.” Gal 6:4*

## APPROACHING THE ISSUE:

1. I will PRAY that God will give me insight into a solution; that he will always keep before me that our relationship is more important than our issues.
2. Approach **ASKING** QUESTIONS rather than **MAKING** STATEMENTS. Assume there is a misunderstanding rather than intentional self-protection by your partner.
3. Be sure that you understand where the pain is coming from.
  - a. Has your VALUE been brought into question?
  - b. Has your IDENTITY been brought into question?
  - c. Is this a matter of TRUST?
4. Be sensitive to the issue of **TIMING**, potential **DISTRACTIONS**, and **LOCATION**. (Thought worth remembering: Choose a place to talk about your differences anywhere but the bedroom.)
4. FIGHT or FLIGHT is not an **OPTION**. I will choose to trust.

## ENGAGING THE ISSUE:

1. Stay **FOCUSED**: Sometimes it's tempting to bring up past seemingly related conflicts when dealing with current ones. Unfortunately, this often clouds the issue and makes finding mutual understanding and a solution to *the current issue* less likely, and makes the whole discussion more taxing and even confusing. Try not to bring up past hurts or other topics. Stay focused on the present, your feelings, understanding one another and finding a solution.
2. **LISTEN** Carefully: People often *think* they're listening, but are really thinking about what they're going to say next when the other person stops talking. Truly effective communication goes both ways. While it might be difficult, try really listening to what your partner is saying. Don't interrupt. Don't get defensive. Just hear them and reflect back what they're saying so they know you've heard. Then you'll understand them better and they'll be more willing to listen to you.

### PROBLEMS:

- a. Sometimes one talks too much that the other quits listening.
- b. If our opinions are invalidated, we soon learn that our opinion doesn't matter. Whichever partner is the more domineering begins to proclaim policy, and the other realizes quickly that to offer an opinion leads to argument.

### TWO POSSIBLE OUTCOMES:

- a. Constant fighting over everything
- b. One shuts up giving the other the potential idea that they are always right.

3. **Try To See Their POINT OF VIEW**: In a conflict, most of us primarily want to feel heard and understood. We talk a lot about our point of view to get the other person to see things our way. Ironically, if we all do this all the time, there's little focus on the other person's point of view, and nobody feels understood. Try to really see the other side, and then you can better explain yours. (If you don't 'get it', ask more questions until you do.) Others will more likely be willing to listen if they feel heard. Remember the power of 360 degree perspective.
4. **Respond to Criticism with EMPATHY**: When someone comes at you with criticism, it's easy to feel that they're wrong, and get defensive. While criticism is hard to hear, and often exaggerated or colored by the other person's emotions, it's important to listen for the other person's pain and respond with empathy for their feelings. Also, look for what's true in what they're saying; that can be valuable information for you.
5. **OWN What's Yours**: Realize that personal responsibility is a strength, not a weakness. Effective communication involves admitting when you're wrong. If you both share some responsibility in a conflict (which is usually the case), look for and admit to what's yours. It diffuses the situation, sets a good example, and shows maturity. It also often inspires the other person to respond in kind, leading you both closer to mutual understanding and a solution.
6. **Use "I" Messages**: Rather than saying things like, "*You* really messed up here," begin statements with "I", and make them about yourself and your feelings, like, "I feel frustrated when this happens." It's less accusatory, sparks less defensiveness, and helps the other person understand your point of view rather than feeling attacked.
7. **Take a TIME OUT**: Sometimes tempers get heated and it's just too difficult to continue a discussion without it becoming an argument or a fight. If you feel yourself or your partner starting to get too angry to be constructive, or showing some destructive communication patterns, it's okay to take a break from the discussion until you both cool off. Sometimes good communication means knowing when to take a break. Set a time to resume discussion.
8. **Don't GIVE UP**: While taking a break from the discussion is sometimes a good idea, always come back to it. If you both approach the situation with a constructive attitude, mutual respect, and a willingness to see the other's point of view or at least find a solution, you can make progress toward the goal of a resolution to the conflict. Unless it's time to give up on the relationship, don't give up on communication.
9. **Look for COMPROMISE that Brings CLOSURE**: Instead of trying to 'win' the argument, look for solutions that meet everybody's needs. Either through compromise, or a new solution that gives you both what you want most, this focus is much more effective than one person getting what they want at the other's expense. Healthy communication involves finding a resolution that both sides can be happy with. Then make a plan on how to avoid this in the future.

**10. PRAY for each Other:** Intentional or unintentional wounds will take time to heal the trust.

Take the time to pray with and for each other. Let your prayers be filled with gratitude for your partnership and the gift of your marriage.

**11. (OPTIONAL) CELEBRATE WITH JUNGLE FEVER:**

- Put the kids to bed and lock their door
- Music wise put on your either Barry White, or Barry Manilow or “The Overture of 1812” or “Star Wars”. . . .whatever you are in the mood for. (*Theme from “Woody Woodpecker” is a little over the edge.*)
- Remove all breakable items in your bedroom
- Turn on strobe lights or Disco ball hanging from ceiling
- Dress up in your favorite Cartoon or Movie duo partners. (*Please make sure they are not brother and sister or like Batman and Robin.*) Caution: Tearing off one another’s clothes like in the movies can get expensive. Remember, someone else is paying for their wardrobe.
- Jumping off of Chest of Drawers or nightstands is fun, but can cause serious damage to body or bed frames. (*Breaking a hip while having sex is hard to explain at the ER.*)
- By the time you get to this point, you are going to either be too tired to do anything or you are going to have a night you will NEVER forget.

**Tips:**

1. Remember that the **goal** of effective communication skills should be **mutual understanding and finding a solution** that pleases both parties, not ‘winning’ the argument or ‘being right’.
2. This doesn’t work in every situation, but sometimes (if you’re having a conflict in a romantic relationship) it helps to **hold hands** or stay physically connected as you talk. This can remind you that you still care about each other and generally support one another.
3. Keep in mind that it’s important to **remain respectful of the other person**, even if you don’t like their actions.
4. **Ask For Help If You Need It:** If one or both of you has trouble staying respectful during conflict, or if you’ve tried resolving conflict with your partner on your own and the situation just doesn’t seem to be improving, you might benefit from a few sessions with a therapist. Couples counseling or family therapy can provide help with altercations and teach skills to resolve future conflict. If your partner doesn’t want to go, you can still often benefit from going alone.

# **HOMEWORK**

## **COMMUNICATION HELPERS**

1. Ephesians 4:15,25 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Ephesians 4:29 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Psalm 141:3 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Proverbs 12:25 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Proverbs 15:28 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Proverbs 15:1 \_\_\_\_\_

7. Proverbs 15:23 \_\_\_\_\_

8. Proverbs 25:11-12 \_\_\_\_\_

9. Proverbs 25:15 \_\_\_\_\_

10. Proverbs 29:11 \_\_\_\_\_

## COMMUNICATION JAMMERS

1. Ephesians 4:25 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Ephesians 4:29 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Colossians 3:8 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Proverbs 11:12 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Proverbs 12:16 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Proverbs 12:18 \_\_\_\_\_

7. Proverbs 17:9 \_\_\_\_\_

8. Proverbs 18:13 \_\_\_\_\_

9. Proverbs 27:2 \_\_\_\_\_

10. Proverbs 29:20 \_\_\_\_\_