

Communication Workbook For Couples



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About the Authors

Earnie and Debbie are both professional Christian coaches who have worked with hundreds of struggling individuals and couples. They have developed tools that will help individuals and couples remove roadblocks and hurdles in order to uncover underlying issues and work towards healthier relationships. Their goal is to guide people toward a healthier life and a more intimate relationship with God.

This **Communication Workbook For Couples** is just one of the tools to help couples have healthier discussions. The systematic methods explained in this workbook have helped a number of couples who were deadlocked in solving a problem to break through areas where they disagreed. Everyone who uses the tools in this workbook will improve their life.

They have also coauthored another book on forgiving. The **How to Forgive: Finding your way to Peace** workbook is just one of the tools they have developed to help their clients live fuller and more balanced lives by working through forgiveness issues. If you want more information, visit their website at www.earnieanddebbiesolutions.com.

Earnie has a Master's Degree in Clinical Social Work and Debbie has a Master's Degree in Nursing and they currently live in the Charlotte area. They have both been through the carnage of divorce and have dealt with the damage and turmoil involved in the destruction of a marriage.

After working for several years with hurting and separated people in a divorce recovery program, they took their understanding and experiences of a failed previous marriage and created programs to offer couples to prevent common pitfalls and mistakes in relationships. They utilized what they learned and created tools, techniques, and mentoring processes in order to teach new skills to couples so they can rebuild their marriage foundation.

Together they work with couples and individuals to enable them to deal with the challenges of everyday life and being married; focusing on practical solutions in a safe and supportive environment.



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Credits

Many people have contributed to the creation of this book. Our clients have shown us what people are struggling with and have invited us to come alongside for support and guidance in their journey towards strengthening and growing themselves or their relationship with their spouse.

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Table of Contents

Communication Guidelines Overview.....	6
The Power of our Words.....	7
Reckless Words.....	8
The Heart and Communication.....	10
How Men and Women Talk Differently.....	12
Feelings	19
Conflict Resolution.....	20
Identify and Address the Problem.....	23
Step 1 - Prepare to Have a “Talk”	24
Step 2 - Guidelines for Gathering Information.....	26
Step 3 – The Process for the Discussion.....	30
Step 4 - Work Towards a Solution.....	34
A Good Decision Making Process.....	36
What to do if You do not Find a Solution.....	38

Communication Guidelines Overview

This workbook will enable you to have better communication skills and provides an easy-to-use structured process to have even the most difficult conversation with anyone. Most couples have those topics that are emotionally charged and always seem to end in an argument when discussed. Couples may have a difference of opinion, different priorities, or just see the situation from a different viewpoint; but what is clear is the difficulty in having a conversation about these topics without a “blowup.” To help you prepare for the discussion this workbook will provide information and then outline a systematic guide to complete the conversation in a more productive, healthy, and peaceful way.

How you communicate in your marriage can be a barometer for assessing the health of your relationship and studies have shown that improving your communication will increase the quality of your relationship more than anything else you do. We have heard from many couples that they need to communicate better. This seems to be a common theme that something happens along the marriage road and couples find themselves not understanding how their spouse thinks. They are not able to talk about certain subjects or events and as a result, the relationship grows silent.

There are two sections to this workbook. The first section covers how to prepare to have a conversation. It includes conflict resolution during the conversation, identifying the correct problem, understanding, and leveraging feelings, managing words, and dealing with the different needs of men and women.

The second section outlines the four major steps to having a conversation. These steps include suggested guidelines, a decision making process, how to agree on the real issue, talking through the problem, and working out a solution.

The Power of our Words

Being able to communicate with another person is powerful. Have you ever realized that God created all things through His words? At the time of creation, each time God spoke He created a different part of our world. Genesis 1:2 starts the creation with the first spoken act: “And God said, ‘let there be light.’” He went from there to create the sky, the seas, the sun and the moon, the birds, the animals and finally, in the culmination, He created man. Man is made in God’s own image and it is the only group to which He gave complex speech and the ability to communicate.

Words are a powerful tool that allows you to communicate and share your thoughts and ideas in order to move towards an understanding between two people. Words are a gift to be opened and shared to help others be all they can be through encouragement and insight. The tongue is one small group of muscles with the huge potential for good or evil; it can build up, tear down, empower, or devour. It depends on the words created and allowed to be spoken from your mouth that will determine the effect they will have on another person. With our words, we can put a smile on a person’s face, brighten their outlook with hope, lighten a burden, cheer someone on, and amazingly bring the message of salvation to another person. Some words can bring out the best in us, encourage us to move in a new direction,

set new goals, and perhaps to attempt the unfamiliar. The potential of words is amazing when we use them in a positive way.

Self-Reflections

- Describe a time your spouse has used their words to encourage you in some positive way.
- Is there someone you admire who uses words in a powerful way to communicate with their spouse?
- Do they talk in a way that does not wound the other person?
- How do the words you use impact your spouse?

Reckless Words



Words can build up or destroy a dream, make or break a marriage, strengthen a friendship or create a barrier. We need to be aware of what comes out of our mouth. Be wise with our words because once

said, we cannot take them back. Because of this, I often pray before I speak and ask for God's wisdom to lead me. Proverbs 12:18 says, "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Bringing our tongue under the submission of the Holy Spirit is one of the greatest and hardest disciplines.

Sometimes our circumstances can cause us to be reckless with our words. If a woman has been home all day with the kids and she has been constantly correcting them, you will find that correction can become part of her maternal nature. Unfortunately, wives can carry this over into their marriage and through a continuation of correction, tend to mother their husbands. Mothers need to stop and take notice of the words they use with their husbands and be aware of how he receives them.

Often when we are tired, we do not have the energy to effectively manage the words we speak. A reckless word can be spoken as soon as we come home from work and have not had time to transition to being home. People find it helps to arrive home and take time to transition to home life through a few minutes of personal time just to change clothes, check in with themselves, and mentally prepare for being with their family instead of thinking about work. That transition usually takes 15 to 20 minutes before family *time* can be quality time.

Being aware of these tendencies and taking the time to notice the effects of our words and how they are received can prevent conflict in our marriage. Matthew 12:35 takes it a step further and says "But I tell you that men (and women) will have to account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they

have spoken.” That speaks to the criticality of our words. They are all recorded!

We have a choice every time we open our mouths and our words should be like gifts that are cherished and kept deep in a person’s heart. Words of love to our spouse are inspirational and healing. Our uplifting word or verbal pat on the back can make a difference in how a person deals with a situation.



Self-Reflections

- Do you have any careless words you will be held accountable for this week?
- Do you encourage your spouse to take time to transition from work to family each day?
- What would you like to do differently to provide a place of safety from reckless words?

The Heart and Communication

Communication is very intricate because it is tied together with your emotions and feelings; it is not just the thoughts in your mind. If it was just what was in your mind, I do not think we

would have as many problems. However, what you are thinking is very intertwined with your emotions and what is in your heart about the issue.

Matthew 12:34 says, “For out of the outflow of the heart the mouth speaks.” Whatever is going on in your heart will impact what comes out of your mouth. We send messages with our tone of voice, inflections in our words, and our body language. All these communication mechanisms influence the way our message gets across to the other person – it is not just the words we choose to speak.



In reality, what you say to your partner is far less important than how you say it – your body language can speak louder than words. In an article [Nonverbal Communication Accuracy in Married Couples](#), it shows that nonverbal communication accounts for 58% of the total message (facial expressions, body position, gestures, posture, and attention). Tone of voice makes up 35% and the last 7% is represented by the actual words.

When we see negative communication patterns start to emerge, there is usually something going on in the background that is affecting communication. The person may or may not be aware of what it is but a feeling has been stirred up or there is an issue not being addressed. In this workbook, we want to explore ways to have healthy conversations. We will discuss the how, when and why of having a conversation with your spouse about an emotional issue.

Self-Reflections

- Have you ever had someone stand in the middle of the room with their arms crossed and in a loud, angry-sounding voice say “I’m not mad.” I do not think I would believe them. Although that is what their words are saying, what are they really communicating?
- Do you have words you use that always seem to have some emotion behind them? “OK,” “fine,” “all right”, “yea sure,” “whatever.” It is not what you are saying, rather you are sending the real meaning in the tone and inflection of your voice. Do you use words that might fit into this category?
- Do you have nonverbal body languages you use to make you feel comfortable when you talk with someone under stress? For example, arms crossed, voice gets louder, pacing?
- Which body languages might your spouse use to communicate silently how they feel to you?

How Men and Women Talk Differently

It may surprise some people that men and women think differently, but I talked with a woman just the other day who has been married 20 years and she said she just



realized her husband does not think like her. This leads to conversational differences between males and females. It is always important in any conversation to ask for clarification if you are not able to follow the story.

Here are some examples:

Men need to fix it.

Most men are analytical and assess things for how they can be fixed. Men ask other men questions to help them figure out something they do not know how to do or to gather ideas on how to make something they are looking at better. When a woman talks with a man, she needs to understand he will often automatically respond in “fix it” mode.



Men talk in code.



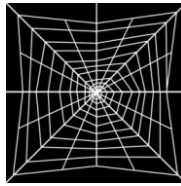
Often men communicate in a succinct pattern. They use hand gestures and grunts to express agreement or disagreement. If they talk they try to use as few words as possible and have those words convey a poignant meaning. They go straight to the bottom line. They just want the information or answer and assume women have the same purpose in communication.

Women need to talk.

Women are typically, though not always, more verbal than men and use words as a means to connect with the other person. They will use more words to describe something or provide a detailed view conveying all the information available so you can understand the issue. They are not always trying to solve a problem but their goal is to share information. Other women understand this and share their information in order to show understanding without trying to “fix it.” Women also work through their problem by just talking about it so they often do not *need* the other person to fix it.

Spider-webbing.

Women tend to share information in a pattern different from men in that they do what some call “spider-webbing.” That means they will share one piece of information, which would be one of the spider-web links, and then share another piece of



spider-web link information that may be in another part of the web. Women understand this process and simply listen until all pieces of information or web links are shared and then they see the entire spider web of information. Women automatically know the other woman will do this and they wait until they are finished. Men do not understand this female process because men share information as if they were building something from the foundation up.

Clarification may be necessary if you get lost in the spinning of the spider-web tale.

Nagging.



Nagging is the continued questioning, reminding someone that something is not done, or needs correcting. The nagging originates from the nagging

person's fears that something bad will happen or result from the inaction by the person they are nagging. When you find yourself feeling like the other person is nagging you, you need to shift from being annoyed or irritated to seeing it as that person is seeking help to feel protected or safe in the situation.

Self-Reflections

- Have you seen any of these differences in your communications with your spouse?
- Are there any adjustments you need to make to better communicate with your spouse?
- What other differences have you noticed between men and women?

Feelings

Feelings are neither good nor bad. They are a gift from God that gives us information and we must learn how to use them effectively. We should not base our decisions on feelings alone.



Women usually are more aware of their feelings than men due to the thickness of the Corpus Callosum, which divides the two halves of the brain. However, feelings alone can lead us astray because they are based on emotions and how we feel rather than a complete analysis or objective perception of the situation. “But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these things can defile a person.” (Matt 15:18)

Feelings are neither right nor wrong. This is a new concept for many people but it is a perspective that sets them free from guilt and completely opens up a new awareness. Because feelings are neither right nor wrong, there should be no judgment for correctness placed on feelings. Feelings are information that God gives us to use in deciding what to do in life and discern what is going on around us. What a blessing it is to be able to be safe enough to experience feelings and actually explore and think about them; rather than feel guilty because of them.

We need to ask ourselves “What are the feelings that I am experiencing in this situation?”, “How intense are the feelings that I am having at this time?”, “What specific word or words describe the exact feeling or feelings I am having?” The more

exact the word is that describes the feeling the more we can understand what is going on inside of us.

We have provided a list of feelings that can help you discern exactly what feeling you are experiencing. It is actually fun to look up the different words in the dictionary to understand their specific meaning. It is powerful to be able to use the exact word to describe a specific feeling at the right moment. Learn to practice using a more accurate word and enjoy the power of the right word for the right moment.

Feelings are information about a particular situation that help us have insight into what is influencing us. We should learn to take note of the feelings and use them. We use them by thinking about what they mean to us, what we might need to do about them, and then use our minds to decide if something needs to be done and to what extent it should be done.

Example: If you are feeling fatigued, you will probably need to get some rest soon. So you think with your mind you need a nap, but since you are driving a car it's probably a good idea to drive home first and take a nap in your own house, or pull off to a highway rest stop and take a 20 minute power nap. You need to put both feelings and thoughts together to make a good decision.



If you are angry, you need to figure out what underlying feeling is causing the anger. Anger is like the top of a floating iceberg. Most of it is under the water out of sight. If you are angry, it


may be because you are feeling rejected because your husband forgot it was your birthday or anniversary; or your wife had a rough day and started talking about it as soon as you see her. Use your feelings to give you information but use your mind to make the final decision after subjecting your feelings to the logical, unemotional thinking of your mind.

Self-Reflections

- What words do you frequently use to describe your feelings?
- What words does your spouse typically use to describe what they are feeling?
- Look at the Feelings List on the next page to see if there are words that more accurately describe your feelings.

Feelings List - This list will provide specific words to describe in more detail how we feel.

AFRAID Scared Panicked Petrified Worried Frightened Anxious Apprehensive	ANGRY Aggravated Annoyed Irritated Furious Irate Incensed Provoked	ANXIOUS Uneasy Nervous Worried Edgy Jittery Tense Troubled	ASHAMED Embarrassed Humiliated Guilty Betrayed Grieved Disgraced Inferior
CONFUSED Perplexed Disoriented Baffled Chaotic Dazed Disorganized Bewildered	DEPRESSED Hopeless Empty Grieved Broken Discouraged Distressed Unhappy	DETACHED Disconnected Distant Withdrawn Rejected Cut-off Isolated Abandoned	GUILTY Remorseful Repentant Sorry Humbled Apologetic Disgraced Shamed
HELPLESS Insecure Vulnerable Inadequate Unprotected Exposed Weak Overwhelmed	HURT Anguished Wounded Pierced Crushed Rejected Let down Used	SAD Depressed Fatigued Disappointed Unhappy Discouraged Empty Hopeless	TIRED Fatigued Burnt out Weary Exhausted Sleepy Worn out Given up
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