

## THREE TO GET MARRIED

# *Communication in Marriage*

### Overview:

Introduction to communication skills that can enable you to more effectively share your feelings, solve problems, avoid misunderstandings, and create a deeper understanding of each other.

### Communications is About Attitude & Gratitude

**5:1**  
*The Happiness Ratio*

Dr. John Gottman is well-known for his 5:1 ratio of positive to negative language and how it can predict successful relationships. But actually, much more than the 5:1 is important.

### Communications Tools: Empathy & Expressing

#### Empathy: What is it?

Empathy is “putting yourself in another’s place.” It is a “deeper understanding of and respect for another’s perceptions, feelings, beliefs, motives, attitudes, and wishes.”

#### How to do it:

- Listen carefully to what your future spouse is saying and respond with your understanding of what was said.
- Try to block out judgments. That can come later.
- You should not say anything from your point of view while you are in the role of Empathizer.
- IT’S NOT: agreeing, mirroring, nor active listening.

#### 5 Goals of Empathy

1. Have your future spouse feel understood and accepted.
2. Deepen your future spouse’s self-understanding.
3. Encourage your future spouse to go deeper in self-exploration.
4. Embrace your future spouse’s feelings.
5. Foster a sense of intimacy.

#### Guidelines for Empathy

- Put your own thoughts on hold. Give full attention.
- Listen intently, as if you are experiencing what he/she is expressing.
- Read between the lines. What is he/she trying to say?
- You are trying to deepen his/her self-understanding.
- Use direct declarative sentences.
- Don’t ask questions when being empathic.

NOTE: Empathy is not the same as agreement!! If a disagreement or defensiveness occurs, go straight to empathy!

<sup>1</sup>Scuka, Relationship Enhancement Therapy: A Guide to Highly Effective Couples

These ideas come from Dr. Bernard Guerney. For more information on this communication model you can visit the websites of the National Institute for Relationship Enhancement at: [www.nire.org](http://www.nire.org)

### Expressing: What is it?

Expressing is communicating in such a way that the expressor increases his or her awareness and understanding of what he or she values, feels, and desires. It focuses more on the internal world of the speaker, increasing personal understanding to achieve two objectives: (1) to make it easier to reach our personal and interpersonal goals; (2) to make it easier for others to support us in the attainment of these goals. It can help reduce anger, distress, and defensiveness with others when you communicate, especially in problem resolution or in conflict situations.

### How to do it:

- Start with the underlying positive: articulating your appreciation and acknowledging the “community of loving persons” in your family.
- Your future spouse should respond to your expressive statement with empathy.
- Then you switch empathy and expressive modes.

### Guidelines for Expressing

- As soon as possible, talk about the positive feelings and attitudes you have about your future spouse and be sure these are related to the issue.
- Be subjective. Talk about your experience and your perception, particularly if he/she might disagree with it.
- Be cautious about the past. Don't talk about other's views. Talk about your present feelings as much as possible.
- Avoid generalizations (“always” or “never”), personality, motives, or character (for example: cruel, lazy, indifferent, depressed, unloving).
- State your interpersonal message.
  - What you want him/her to do.
  - How you feel about it.
  - The benefits it will bring to you.
  - The benefits to him/ her.
  - The benefits to the relationship.

## FEELING WORDS

The following is a list of some feeling words to help you express yourself. This list is by no means complete. However, it should provide you with some feeling words if you get stuck.

### Happy

animated	exuberant	light-hearted
blissful	festive	lively
bright	free & easy	merry
brisk	frisky	peaceful
buoyant	genial	playful
cheerful	glad	pleased
cheery	gleeful	rapturous
comfortable	high-spirited	satisfied
complacent	hilarious	saucy
contented	inspired	serene
delighted	jaunty	sparkling
ecstatic	jolly	spirited
elated	joyful	sunny
enthusiastic	joyful	tranquil
exhilarated	jubilant	

### Sad

cheerless	dreary	moping
clouded	dull	mournful
crestfallen	flat	out of sorts
dark	frowning	somber
dejected	gloomy	sorrowful
depressed	glum	spiritless
despondent	heavy-hearted	sulky
disconsolate	ill at ease	sullen
discontented	in the dumps	unhappy
discouraged	down	woeful
disheartened	joyless	
dismal	low	
downcast	low-spirited	
downhearted	melancholy	
dreadful	moody	

### Angry

acrimonious	indignant	sullen
annoyed	inflamed	turning
bitter	infuriated	up in arms
boiling	irate	virulent
furious	irritated	worked up
enraged	offended	wrathful
in a huff	provoked	wrought up
in a stew	resentful	
incensed	sulky	

### Afraid

aghast	hesitant	shocked
alarmed	horrified	suspicious
anxious	hysterical	terrified
appalled	in fear	threatened
apprehensive	insecure	timid
awed	irresolute	trembling
chicken	menaced	tremulous
cowardly	misgiving	upset
diffident	nervous	worried
dismayed	panicked	yellow
doubtful	petrified	
fainthearted	quaking	
fearful	restful	
fidgety	scared	
frightened	shaky	

### Interested

absorbed	engrossed	inquisitive
affected	excited	intrigued
concerned	fascinated	nosy
curious	inquiring	snoopy

### Eager

anxious	enthusiastic
ardent	hot-headed
avid	intent
desirous	keen
earnest	zealous





### Fearless

audacious	determined	resolute
bold	encouraged	secure
brave	enterprising	self-reliant
certain	gallant	spirited
courageous	hardy	stout hearted
daring	heroic	
dauntless	reassured	

### Doubtful

distrustful	questioning	wavering
dubious	skeptical	
hesitant	suspicious	
indecisive	unbelieving	
perplexed	uncertain	

## Preventing the Four Horsemen

<u>Four Horsemen</u>	<u>Antidote</u>
 CRITICISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn criticisms into complaints by using the Expressive Skill.</li> </ul>
 DEFENSIVENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a <i>soft-startup</i> by using the Expressive Skill and acknowledging your own responsibility for the issue.</li> </ul>
 CONTEMPT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a <i>culture of appreciation</i> by taking time to communicate about feelings, concerns, dreams, desires, etc. and using the Empathic Skill to more deeply understand and honor your partner's viewpoint.</li> </ul>
 STONEMALLING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strive to stay emotionally connected and help each other deal with emotional arousal.</li> <li>• Learn <u>your</u> and your partner's signals of emotional flooding.</li> <li>• Use the Empathic Skill to calm your partner.</li> <li>• Agree to talk about the issue at a specific time (using your Expressive &amp; Empathic Skills) after you've both had a while to cool off.</li> </ul>

*The notion of the Four Horsemen comes from John Gottman, Ph.D., who used this biblical image from the book of Revelation to describe four types of communication that he observed through years of painstaking research to be very destructive of marital love. The antidotes are borrowed from Gottman as well as Dr. Bernard Guerney's Relationship Enhancement Therapy, especially as articulated by Robert F. Scuka, Ph.D.*

## Things to Remember

- Best first step: improve communication with Christ through prayer asking for the grace to communicate better with your fiancé.
- How To Really Listen: Empathy.
- How To Express Ourselves: The Underlying Positive.
- Goals of Good Communication:
  - A happier marriage: Remember the 5-1 ratio of good to not good!
  - Enhance the intimacy and depth of our marriage.
  - Acquire skills to provide mutual understanding and to reduce & resolve conflict.
  - Create that "community of persons" which is the essence of a family.
- The Virtues to Cultivate: Openness / Cooperation / Mutual Understanding.
- The Enemy: Defensiveness.
- Most common error: Mixing the empathy and expressive skills. Keep them separate.

# The 5 Love Languages

*Falling in love is easy, but maintaining healthy relationships is a lifelong pursuit. Once you understand “love languages,” you’ll be able to nurture not only a romantic relationship, but also casual, business, and familial relationships effectually. With more than 8 million copies sold, Dr. Gary Chapman’s The 5 Love Languages will help you succeed in having joyful, enduring relationships.*

## Words of Affirmation



Actions don’t always speak louder than words. If this is your love language, unsolicited compliments mean the world to you. Hearing the words, “I love you,” are important – hearing the reasons behind that love sends your spirits skyward. Insults can leave you shattered and are not easily forgotten. Kind, encouraging, and positive words are truly life-giving.

## Receiving Gifts



Don’t mistake this love language for materialism; the receiver of gifts thrives on the love, thoughtfulness, and effort behind the gift. If you speak this language, the perfect gift or gesture shows that you are known, you are cared for, and you are prized above whatever was sacrificed to bring the gift to you. A missed birthday, anniversary, or a hasty, thoughtless gift would be disastrous – so would the absence of everyday gestures. Gifts are visual representations of love and are treasured greatly.

## Quality Time



In the vernacular of Quality Time, nothing says, “I love you,” like full, undivided attention. Being there for this type of person is critical, but really being there – with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and tasks on standby – makes your significant other feel truly special and loved. Distractions, postponed dates, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful. Quality time also means sharing quality conversation and quality activities.

## Physical Touch



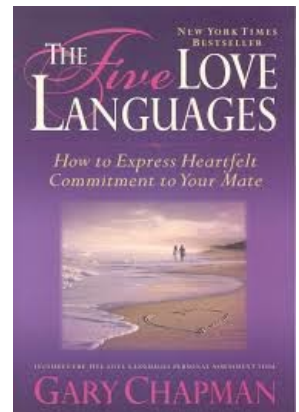
This language isn’t all about the bedroom. A person whose primary language is Physical Touch is, not surprisingly, very touchy. Hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and thoughtful touches on the arm, shoulder, or face – they can all be ways to show excitement, concern, care, and love. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse can be unforgivable and destructive. Physical touch fosters a sense of security and belonging in any relationship.

## Acts of Service



Can vacuuming the floors really be an expression of love? Absolutely! Anything you do to ease the burden of responsibilities weighing on an “Acts of Service” person will speak volumes. The words he or she most want to hear: “Let me do that for you.” Laziness, broken commitments, and making more work for them tell speakers of this language their feelings don’t matter. Finding ways to serve speaks volumes to the recipient of these acts.

For more information about Dr. Gary Chapman and The 5 Love Languages, please visit the website [www.5lovelanguages.com](http://www.5lovelanguages.com)



*Available in our bookstore!*

## Keep Learning!

### Books

- ◆ *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts* by Gary D Chapman (Northfield Publishing, 2010)
- ◆ *Created for Connection* by Sue Johnson (Little Brown and Company, 2016)
- ◆ *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail* by John Gottman (Simon and Schuster, 1994)

### Websites

[www.foryourmarriage.com](http://www.foryourmarriage.com)

[www.5lovelanguages.com](http://www.5lovelanguages.com)