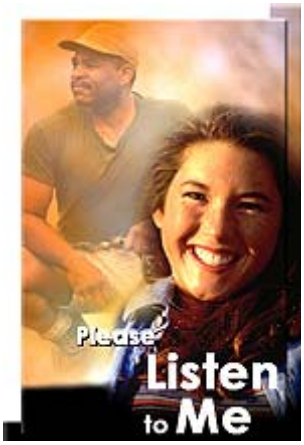
How can I get Through to my Husband?



Dear Ray:

My husband and I don't talk like we used to. He avoids my attempts at conversation, most notably on relationship issues. When we do talk he often seems distracted. How can I get through to him?

M. E. (F) 32
Ribeirão, SP, Brazil.

Before two partners can open up the channels of communication, a foundation of honest, sensitive discussion must be created. The essence of that foundation is understanding and agreement -- an true understanding of each partner's needs and an agreement to work at satisfying those needs. The reason is simple. All the advice in the world will not help a relationship unless both partners are willing to empathize and compromise.

I'd suggest that you first focus clearly on what you want to say to your partner. My suggestion is that you try to clarify the two key points just mentioned -- understanding and agreement. Don't use the old standards, "we never seem to talk anymore," or "why are you growing so distant?" These will only put up defensive barriers in his mind. Instead, set out to make clear to him what you feel is at the root of your problem and your suggested solution.

Having clarified and focused your thoughts, be sure you've got his full attention -- without those distractions you mentioned. Pick a quiet time when he's not busy and you know he doesn't have a lot on his mind. When you feel the time is right, start by saying something like:

"I'd like to talk with you about something important to our relationship. I've been waiting for a time when we can both focus and give it our full attention. Is now a good time?"

If he says "yes," so far so good. If he says "no," push for a specific time and make the point again that you feel it's very important to the relationship.

When you do talk, the next step is to be crystal clear, sensitive and level headed. In other words, you must penetrate his person communication barriers without seeming aggressive or one-sided. You can do this by avoiding emotion and vague ideas that he might misinterpret. Be specific and focused by saying something like:

Copyright © 2003 Couples Company
All Rights Reserved

"I'm getting more and more frustrated because I don't feel we're communicating. In my mind, we need two things. First, we need to clearly understand both of our feelings on this, and second we need to make an agreement between us to work on improving things. Understanding and agreement. Can we do that?"

If the answer is positive, you're in the home stretch. If it's negative, there may be deeper problems in your relationship. If a partner is not willing to be sensitive to your feelings, share his own feelings and agree to improve the situation, often times this signals deeper troubles. In that case, I'd suggest a professional counselor.

Hopefully he will agree and at that point you should, again, be very clear. Look him directly in the eyes and say something like:

"The truth is the less we talk openly, the more I feel very uneasy and disconnected from you. I don't have that comfortable feeling I used to have that we were clear and sensitive to each other 's feelings -- that we were on the same wavelength. I love you very much and having that secure connection is a deep part of what I need as a partner. Without it I feel kind of out there and lost from you. Do you see?"

Hopefully you gotten through to him and he will then understand that this issue is a major problem for you. He should also realize that communication is an important ingredient in your relationship. If he does agree that he understands, next go for the agreement to work on it. You might try something like:

"I think if we both agree to work on it, we'll be fine. I'm positive it just takes a commitment to compromise and be sensitive to each other's feelings, but we have to agree to commit. And remember, I don't mean I want all your time. You need your own space and so do I. What I think we should do is just agree that we'll both stay conscious of how important it is to keep talking and make sure that we work at it. Okay."

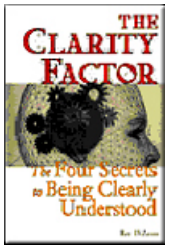
Again, if you get a "yes," you're doing fine. If you get a "no", and in fact at this point in any case, what you'll want to do is listen carefully, openly and objectively to his point of view. If he has issues and this makes him decide to bring them out in the open, you've got to remain level headed, and willing to do just like you've asked him to do. It take two sides and that has to remain upper most in your minds, even if he tells you things you don't particularly want to hear.

Once you've got any issues out in the open and worked through them, you need a rational and workable agreement to compromise and make the changes necessary. This is something you can work on together. It should be a plan to: speak regularly about how you're feeling, remain open to constructive criticism, empathize with the other partner and actively work to satisfy each other.

Remember, again, that it takes both sides to make it work and it takes effort. If you create a foundation of open and sensitive communication, you've got half the battle won.

Good Luck!

Ray DiZazzo



THE CLARITY FACTOR:
FOUR SECRETS OF BEING CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD

by Ray DiZazzo goes to the heart of verbal communication in a completely unique way. Covering the essential skills in Business and Personal Communications, this book lays out in an easy to understand and easy to implement the critical elements to effective communication most people take for granted. By implementing and learning the simple steps outlined in this little 107 page book, you can dramatically effect the quality of your business and personal relationships for years to come!

Copyright © 2003 Couples Company
All Rights Reserved