

## Communication Tools



Some excellent tools are available to help improve a couple's communication. We must remember that not all tools will work equally well for us as a couple. A couple may find one tool extremely helpful and other tools less than satisfactory. Experiment with different tools to discover which one works for you as a couple. The goal is to build effective communication into the marriage relationship to strengthen the marriage and help us as a couple to work together through the challenges and problems we will face.

**ABC Method of Communication** (from Michael J. Speakman: [www.mikespeakman.com](http://www.mikespeakman.com)).

A) I Realize...    B) I Feel...    C) I Would Like...

A) (Put yourself in your spouse's position); "**I realize** that you didn't mean to interrupt me."

B) (Tell your spouse what your true feelings are); "**I feel** disrespected when you interrupt me."

C) (Tell your spouse what you would like him or her to do); "**I would like** you to stop interrupting when I am speaking."

**Couples Dialogue** (from Harville Hendrix and Helen Hunt; *Getting the Love You Want*).

Mirror: repeating what was heard in your own words.

Validate: Communicating that the speaker's thoughts and feelings are valid for them.

Empathize: Communicating that the speaker's feelings are understood.

*Speaker*: "It hurt me when you criticized me in front of your mother."

*Listener*: "I hear you saying that you were hurt when I criticized you in front of my mother. Is that correct?"

*Speaker*: "Yes, that is what I said."

*Listener*: "I understand that you would not want to be criticized in front of my mother or anyone else."

*Listener*: "I imagine you felt disrespected or maybe betrayed."

**Speaker-Listener Technique** (from PREP—[www.prepinc.com](http://www.prepinc.com))

### Rules for the Speaker

- Speak for yourself, don't mindread!
- Keep statements brief, don't go on and on
- Stop to let the listener paraphrase

### Rules for the Listener

- Paraphrase what you hear.
- Focus on the speaker's message, don't rebut.

### Rules for Both

- The speaker has the floor
- Speaker keeps the floor while the listener paraphrases.
- Share the floor.

**Palms Up** (to deescalate a situation; from Tony & Alisa Dilorenzo: [oneextraordinarymarriage.com](http://oneextraordinarymarriage.com))

Say "Palms Up" to get you both aware of the escalating conversation.

Put your palms up in front.

Take moment - inhale and exhale a couple of times allowing you and your spouse to calm down.

Acknowledge the situation, take responsibility for your part in the escalation.

Look down and then up; look at your hands and then at your spouse, say "I love you," and continue.

**Additional tools can be found at:** <http://www.marriagemissions.com/communication-tools-for-couples/>

The GIFT Exercise

The PAUSE Principle

The STOP Strategy

The H.A.L.T. Method

Peacefully Resolving Anger