



Communicating Effectively With Your Spouse

Here are some tips to help you more effectively communicate what you want from your spouse and help you give your spouse what he or she needs.

Find A Good Time

First, find a good time to approach your mate. Right when he or she walks in the door on a sweltering summer day, after being in traffic for an hour, may not be the most receptive time. When you do find a good time to discuss your needs:

- Try to maintain a positive, progressive attitude.
- Use open, non-imposing body language.
- Sit on the couch together, instead of on opposite sides of the kitchen table.
- Try touching your spouse's arm or knee, or holding hands.
- Use a firm but gentle tone of voice in stating what you need, why you need it, and what you want your mate to do.

Stick To The Point

When you begin your discussion, avoid rambling on about everything else but the precise problem at hand. If your wife is counting on you to play golf with her and her prospective client this Saturday, for example, but you find you have to work that day to finish a presentation for Monday, get to the point. She doesn't need to hear about all the problems your client has given you and how everyone at work has missed their deadline. She needs to know how much of the day you need, and whether or not you can compromise to meet your obligation to her.

After you have presented your request, be sure to give your spouse a chance to answer by listening attentively to any concerns he or she may have. Address those concerns directly and honestly, and try not to elevate your needs above your spouses'. Show that you see things from his or her perspective, but that you are stuck and need help. Ask directly for suggestions on how to correct the situation. Involve each other in the problem-solving process, emphasizing that, ultimately, you share a common goal.

You're Both Unique

Remember to approach each other from a position of equality. You both bring unique things to your relationship, and by identifying and valuing your differences, you can learn to work better together. At times each of you will perceive gaps in your relationship, or find that your respective responsibilities are too much to handle. When this happens, how and what you communicate to your spouse will determine how effectively you solve your problems.