

COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR COUPLES

1. If emotions are intense then take a time out and get away so you can cool down before discussing the problem (e.g. do something that distracts you, take a long walk, get some other type of exercise).
2. When discussing problems, do not attack the person and do not attack their characters. Rather, focus on the person's behavior that is distressing you.
3. Use the **BED** (Behavior – Emotion – Desire) approach when you are expressing your complaint. “When you (**B - behavior** — describe the person's actions), I felt (**E - emotion** — describe how you felt), and I would rather you (**D - desire** — describe the preferred behavior) instead.”

Example: “When you failed to call and tell me that you were going to be late for supper, I felt unappreciated, hurt and angry. I wish you would call to let me know that you'll be late.”

4. Learn to listen. Practice mirroring.
 - One partner makes a complaint (see # 3 above),
 - The other partner listens and then repeats it back, using his or her own words, which shows that he/she heard and understood what was being said.
 - The partner doing the mirroring then checks in with the disclosing partner to be sure that the mirrored response was on target.
 - If it misses the mark, he/she tries again until it is right. An Example, following the example in #3 above: “So, when I failed to let you know that I was going to be late, you felt unvalued, wounded and upset, and what you would like me to do in the future is let you know that I am running behind and will be late.”