







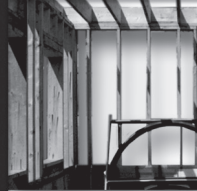







# Communication

I feel funny about talking to my partner about how we talk	My partner expects me to "just know" what they want me to do			How can we avoid confusion on our Team?
I need to talk & get things settled but they want their space, - who is right?			My partner just wants to fix it and move on – No talking	
		I'm afraid my partner will feel upset if I talk about how we talk		
My partner stomps and sighs - they are upset and it gets me mad				We mix up talking with how to build our projects & get nowhere

# Communication

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**A Home Team talks.** You will develop many communication skills as you proceed in your project together.

These skill habits can either become a great asset to your team, or you can practice bad habits, depending on how you approach this end of teamwork. Your habits may be negative if you are careless about this skill area. If you don't bother working on your communication skills, the results may be evident in miscommunication, misunderstanding, and many hurt feelings. Practice of negative patterns can become automatic negative habits, and can build resentments and strife in the home.

Yet, with some attention, this area can be an opportunity for a fresh level of sharing and trust between you. You will create a basis for establishing new patterns and habits in the relationship. Aren't you ready to learn how to get over those dead ends in talking?

Discussion opportunities met with tense feelings and abrupt endings? Yes? With some focus you can tackle these skills in your project teamwork. The benefits of paying attention to communication during your renovation project will overflow into the home, and can lead to precious results. More than a new sink or patio – but very enduring family improvements that will strengthen your bonds, affection and acceptance of each other.

**You will practice communicating. Whether they are good habits or bad ones - which patterns do you want to become your family's routines?**

*So - How do we get started?*

*A new kind of talking –*

**ABOUT each other – and TO each other:**

**Giving and Receiving Feedback.**

**Y**ou will need to talk about your teammate **TO** your teammate in order to figure out who will do what tasks, how a job can be handled most efficiently, and when to offer and receive help. Think of two rock climbers tied up to one rope and helping each other climb the slope. If one notices slack in the rope and says nothing, both could slip to their deaths. Instead,

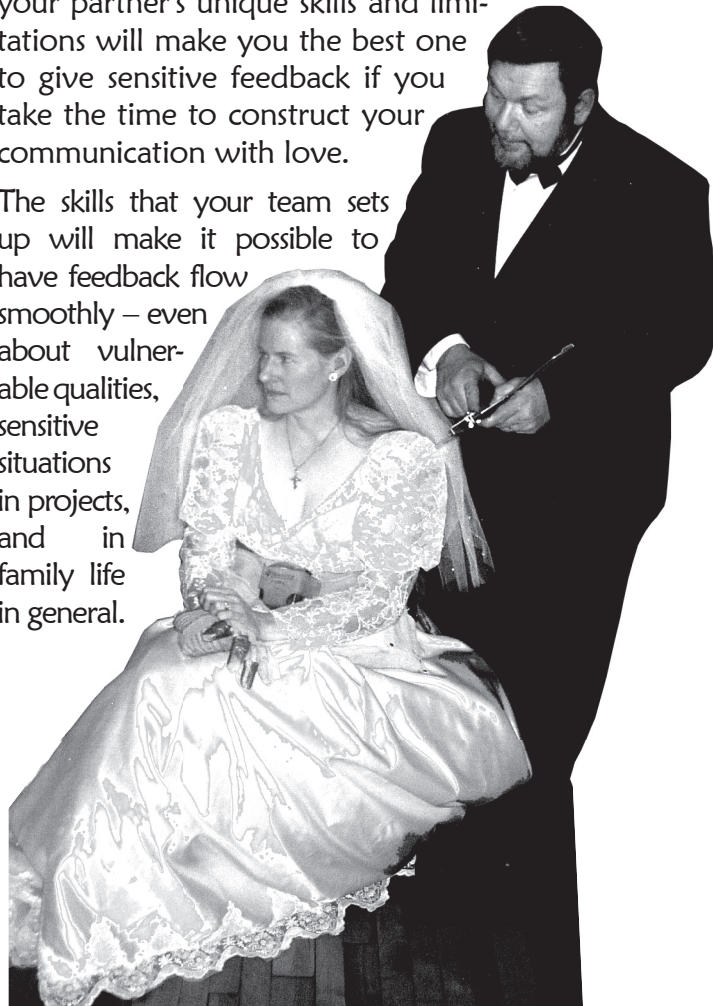
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they are continually giving information to the other about clearances, footing, and their own state of strength or fatigue.

The **Home Team** has intimate communication needs. Your task is to develop the ability to notice your partner's footing and to communicate when you or the other appears to need rest. You can anticipate overwhelming tasks and offer assistance. Your view of the terrain can have the advantage of perspective if you are not up close, but you will need to send and receive the message with detail and tact – and in the right time. Your knowledge of your partner's unique skills and limitations will make you the best one to give sensitive feedback if you take the time to construct your communication with love.

The skills that your team sets up will make it possible to have feedback flow smoothly – even about vulnerable qualities, sensitive situations in projects, and in family life in general.





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## **Some Ground Rules**

*to review or revise for your Home Team*

**Use respectful words.**

**Be polite.**

Sometimes in anger, the tongue can slip. But put your hand on your own mouth if you need to. Spend a little time in your head to translate your message into plain civil words. It will help your situation immeasurably.

**Take turns. Listen and reflect.**

Only one person can speak at a time and really be listened to. Listening is more than just being quiet – you need to absorb the words, connect the meaning, clarify what is heard. Be sure you have caught it correctly.

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**Praise in public;  
Correct in private.**

Always a good motto. Especially in the home. You will advance the cause of harmony by following this simple rule.

**Enter Communication only with consent.**

Do both parties agree that this is the time & place to discuss this?

How long will we talk about it? Who is involved? Is this the best time? Can it wait until the daily review or a later decision-making time?

**Respect each other's need for space or talking.**

Talk about your plans and needs ahead or at other times to understand when your partner needs time to think or to talk. Don't take it personally that they might need this. But set the limits tactfully when you cannot oblige their desire.

**No mind reading.**

If you want it known, it must be said.

Don't hold the other in resentment because they did not read your mind.

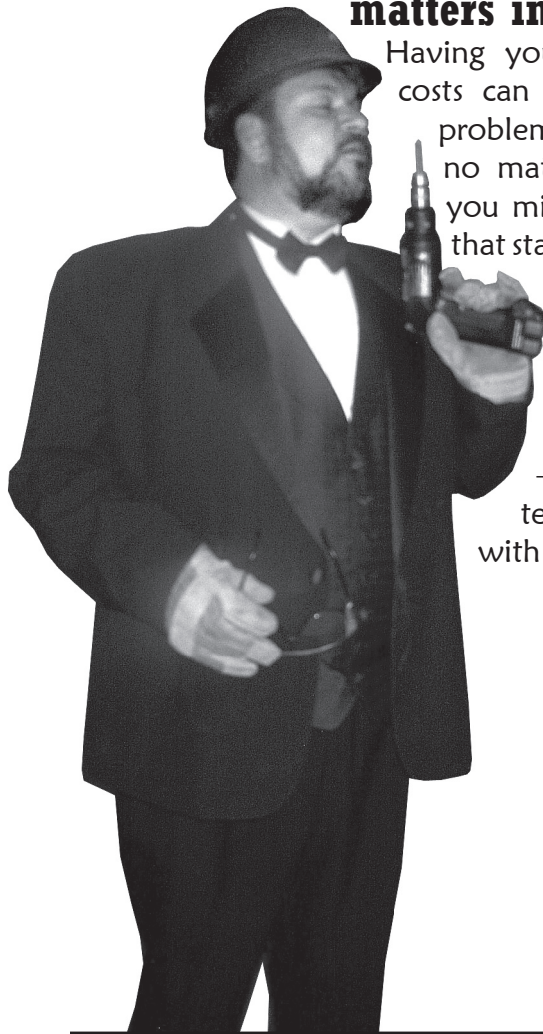
If you need quiet, say so. If you want to eat early – say so. Then deal politely with the reality you discover.

**Stick to what is said.**

You may be very sensitive to the unspoken communication from your partner.

But give them credit that they refrained from saying something. Let your partner and yourself off the hook from dealing with the endless unspoken irritations that can pollute a project and a home.

## **We may be very tempted to take matters in hand**



Having your way at all costs can present many problems to the team, no matter how mad you might get. In that state of mind you might feel you simply must do it your way - but just think - the whole team will live with the results.

### **Glitches**

When you encounter a glitch in communication and understanding, try going through this book and browse for issues that ring a bell. Then sit at the communication table and look at it together. See what fits and then take a break to mull over solutions. Come back again later and share your suggestions. If it appears that you have conflict about the project instead of just misunderstandings, go to the conflict settling steps in the chapter Deep Communication.

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### **The Communication Center**

Find a spot that you can set up your plans and lists so you are able to walk by or sit and casually review your project's details.

You may need a bulletin board, a 3-ring binder, some sketches, even models if you use them.

It's a good idea to list your resource people and their phone numbers in that binder, along with bids and permits. Kind of like a little construction office.

Post an on-going materials shopping list on the board so that trips to the hardware store can be organized.

This is a good place to sit together to focus discussion on the project and even make decisions.

If you cannot have a separate space for this (that *is* why you are renovating, isn't it? – for needed space?) Use a common space such as the eating area. You can post the project bulletin board on one of the walls with the pictures and so on, or inside the cellar door – or on a stairwell.

The communication-center-in-action can be converted from the usual eating function by opening the project binder book and pulling out the project models. This will be a signal to the team that you are interested in inviting their viewpoints or engaging in communication.

## To give

**Self-control** – prepare to remain tactful. This may be the 200th time your partner has done this, but – they will only hear you if you deliver news in a welcome fashion. Remember that your partner is likely to be embarrassed by their limitations and the incomplete project. Remember that some input is disruptive to the flow and can cause tension. So don't be impulsive about chiming in with your observations in every situation. You can save many of these for later when it is communication time.

**Prepare** – take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Think of the feelings of your partner. Pray or center your thoughts. Love.

**Understand your partner** – remember: this is your family partner, not a professional contractor. Give them some room to be who they are. Forgive them for their limitations. They will need help in forgiving their own limits when there is frustration with a task that may not be going well. Awareness of limitations can also give rise to fear of rejection (like the old junior high school feelings that can emerge at such times). They may be overwhelmed with the belief that they must be perfect at this or they are a failure. Know your facts – Look carefully before you leap. If you enter a scene and it looks awry, step back a bit and do some checking before you offer too much input.

**Give positives first** – Be sure to acknowledge the efforts and details that are positive about the project. The listener will understand what you appreciate and will feel that they should continue their worthwhile efforts. If you leave off the positives, the listener may give up all effort in a gasp of frustration.

**Use detail talk** – not broad generalizations. Try to be specific about the project so that you are not using broad statements such as, "That looks awful." Or, "I don't see how anybody could live in there." Instead, use details like, "The wallpaper is usually hung vertically – from what I have seen before." Or, "I think the trap in the sewer line will need to be installed to meet codes before we open the connection."

**Give space** – Not all input is welcome. Be prepared to back off and address an issue later. But give credit that your partner may have changed many facets of their technique in the mean time. Listen carefully. Give them room to absorb and think.



## To receive

**Speaking up is your partner's job.** Remember that you are part of a team. Keeping the team informed is the responsibility of each member. Your partner is trying to help by providing information.

**Information is not an insult.** We all need information – NFL quarterbacks, astronauts, and deep- sea divers all require feedback. It is not evidence that they must think you are incompetent. Develop a welcome attitude to information – you'll be getting it anyway.

**Input doesn't mean your partner is trying to take over the controls.** Input does not change the decision-making process. Developing a decision method is also an important skill to cover. Have faith in your family's decision process results.

**You can't change the past.** If you just ruined \$500 of materials, it cannot be changed. Only clear thinking and creativity from here on will help you retrieve some other value from the item, or perhaps a change in plans is called for – by consensus.

**"Please give me some time."** You can ask for time to ponder the situation without input or before discussion. If you have a bunch of feelings already, go ahead and politely ask your partner to please give you some time to think about it.

**"Please . . . later."** Later is an option. You may need to get some distance from the situation yourself and let things straighten out in your head in order to solve the problem. In fact, the right side of the brain can be very busy solving problems while you move on to other tasks. Give yourself a chance to think with all parts of your brain.

**Breathe and listen.** You do not need to defend yourself. Remember you married for better or for worse. If this seems worse to you – remember – they are stuck with you. (Smile.)

**Remember you are loved and accepted as you are.** Your partner already knows you are not perfect. You have not fooled them. If you let them give you input, it does not mean that you admit defeat and –imperfection nor that you will suffer loss of face and total rejection. Nope, not that at all. Smile, you are loved!

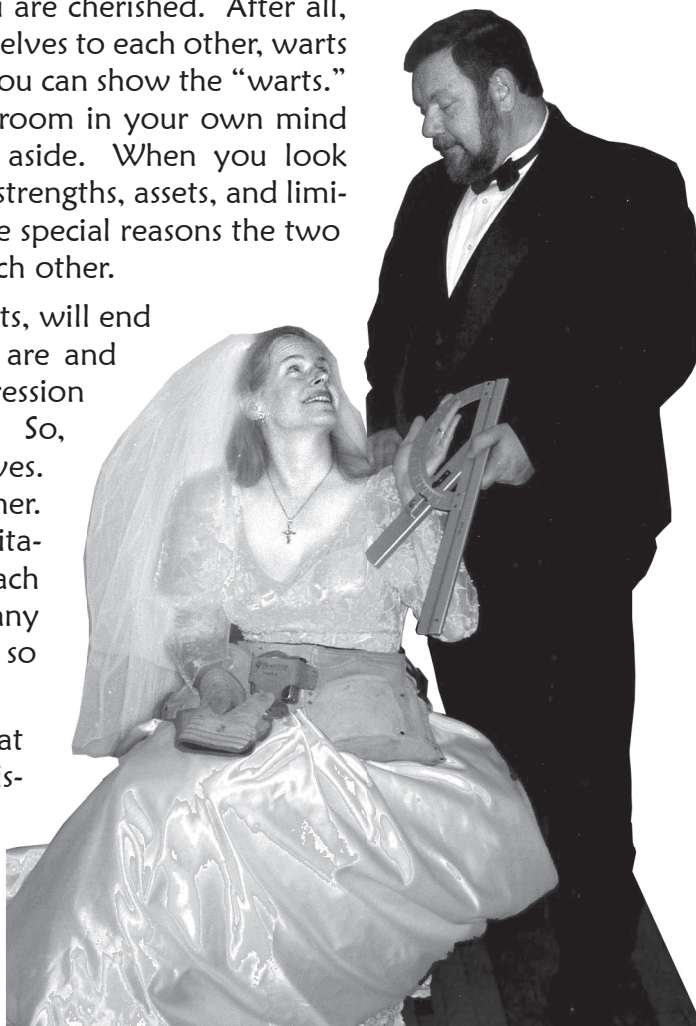
## *Our Attitude about hearing each other*

You chose your mate for good reasons; and your ideal is deep trust. Well, here is where you exercise that trust. You get to share your best and your worst with your spouse and know they will still love you. We get into trouble when we do not face our own limitations and try to be what we are not.

When you face your limitations together with someone you love, you are cherished. After all, you have pledged yourselves to each other, warts and all... That means you can show the "warts." So, give yourself some room in your own mind and move your pride aside. When you look accurately at your own strengths, assets, and limitations, you will find the special reasons the two of you are drawn to each other.

Your home, your projects, will end up reflecting who you are and become a special expression of your unique assets. So, fearlessly face your selves. Gently reflect the other. Lovingly accept the limitations. Give grace to each other. God made so many unique people and so many special strengths.

When we try to be what we are not, we are misusing God's gifts and will find ourselves in ugly situations. As an analogy, one might have a nice violin, but to use it to



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paddle a canoe will find one with a ruined fiddle and a spinning boat. We need to accurately see who we are and understand our special uses, in order to truly express beauty in our results.

The process of home renovation, of reaching toward an ideal, gives us an opportunity to bring about a new reality, but it also challenges us to face who we are and what our special purposes are. The process of discovery is part of the growing we do as adults; and in our family it is the special gift that loved ones can give — to accept each other and help with the tender realities of how we really fit into this world.

Are you a hammer or a violin? Do you make music or hold things together? Your distinct talents may be your fondest quality in one situation, but misapplied, may be a key to ruin. It is with love and kindness, that we discover ourselves. Love goes both ways, in the speaking and in the hearing.

In this manner, a family matures. In learning how to lovingly help one another see the limits of our abilities, in lovingly accepting the possibility that we are not all things; we are mortal, and are still loved.

*Send in your favorite ground rules for listing on our website to share with other families. Visit us often and share as well as find many suggestions. at [RenovationPsychology.com](http://RenovationPsychology.com)*

## **Notes from Communication**

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### **Try some of the things from the chapter~**

#### **Receiving**

Read the Receiving Table again, by yourself, and imagine following it during a conversation with your partner.

Practice breathing and listening at the same time.

Set up some times to talk - set them up ahead of time.

#### **Make a Communication Center**

Following the suggestion in the chapter, adapt the ideas to a variation that makes sense in your home.

Where is it?

What are the signals that it is open - or invitation to communicate?

What is stored there?

Try it out for a planning/communicating exchange.

#### **Feedback**

Read the Feedback Table again, alone, and think up how you can say a few things to your partner within those guidelines.

Think of 3 positives to begin with.

With their permission, share them.

#### **Feedback - advanced**

Translate one negative into a tactful non-personal statement in your mind.

Be sure to remember 3 positives that relate to it to say first.

Now, with your partner's permission, try the feedback.

Take it slow, pause. Breathe. In your own view - did you stay on track?

Breathe again and let them know how you think you did.

Breathe again and take a break.

Sit back down again and ask them for feedback about how they felt during the feedback and how they liked how you did it.

**Now, reward your selves.**

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