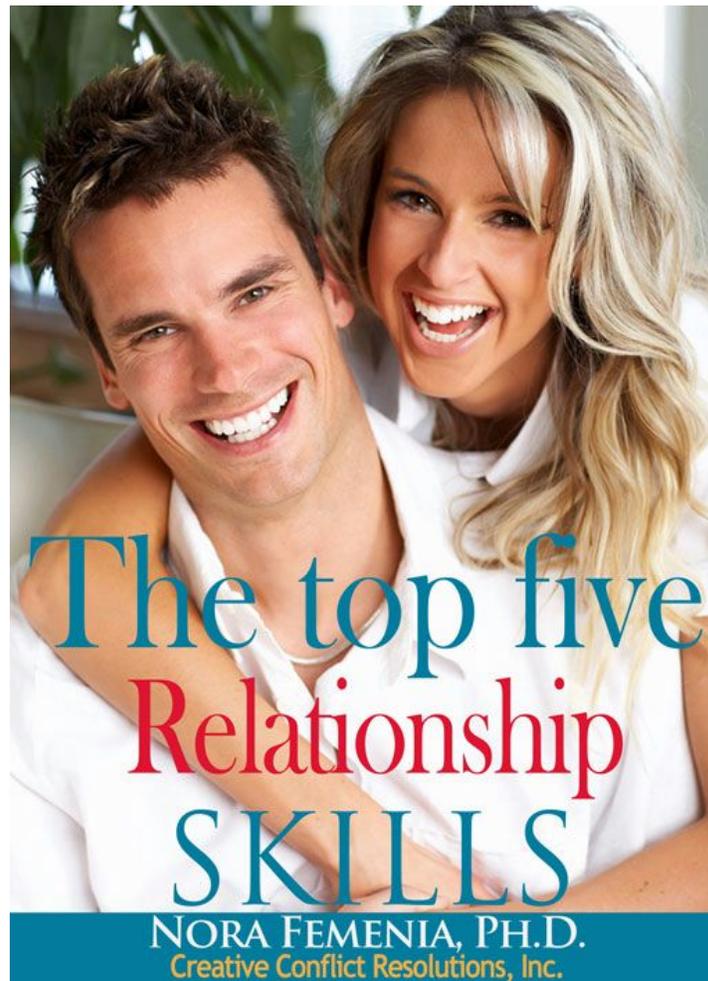


The Top Five Marriage Builder Skills



Nora Femenia, Ph.D.

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with

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<http://www.passiveaggressive.com>

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Introduction: We humans are wired to connect with each other

We know now that humans have basic needs to be solved along life. One of them is, of course, survival, which depends on babies having a loving family around to provide shelter, food and attention.

If you are alive today, you were loved. We needed to feel loved and touched in order to survive when we were infants, and that need is still at our core. Love is the ultimate survival instinct, and it comes before the baby can take care of its own basic bodily needs by himself.

Beyond survival, it is important to remember that we have psychological needs, such as the need for love and connection, and the need for appreciation.

In short, Relationship looks more and more as the place where we are given a second chance to receive the satisfaction for our always present needs for love and connection. Everyone strives for and hopes for love and everyone needs emotional connection with other human beings. Connecting with others as family and friends is the primordial way in which we learn who we are, and where we get our sense of value.

Both members of a Relationship have similar needs, and the tacit contract of Relationship between them is a hidden expectation that they will provide for each other whatever was missing in their respective childhoods.

What is peculiar of relationships is that you have neither mastery nor control — you have influence at best. If you think you can control your partner, you will be seriously frustrated. If you simply expect your partner to be or do things in a certain way, your partner will feel judged and stop cooperating.

And if you try to coerce your partner to do things in a way that doesn't reflect his or her free will, you will be perceived as controlling and thus you destroy your chances to have a satisfactory relationship, because people controlled even in the name of love

get resentful.

So you have influence at best, and you have much less control than you may have thought. That is the reason you need to learn some basic skills.

Otherwise, you need to prepare for multiple confrontations...We include here the proposition that even harsh, aggressive confrontations are needed ways of connecting with the people we care about.

If love is not openly expressed, in which way family members know that they are important for the other members of the group? Perhaps confronting and fighting allows people their only way to feel that they are important to others. They need to feel they are significant for their family!

When people feel insecure of having a legitimate and appreciated role in the family or in the workplace, they need to have frequent crises in order to have a reason to ask for help, for attention and so engage others. This means that many of your loved ones, even the most difficult of them, when they fight you, they are only calling for your time and attention!

How do you get significance? In a couple, you need to be the most important person in the world for your partner ... no ifs or buts; the first. Feeling absolutely loved in a relationship is experiencing being deeply appreciated by your partner, lover or spouse first.

This is the reason relationships are schools for connection, for learning how to experience feelings of love or rejection, and opportunities where we learn how to manage our emotions to satisfy our need to be loved/appreciated/included.

Relationship as a school for self-development

To have a better relationship, one must have basic relationship skills. First is to understand oneself: it is crucial to really know who we are and what we are capable of. This is a challenging task, but one really has to do it for his own self, and then prepare to solve whatever problem arises in his relationship. It is indeed a fact that it is inevitable in a relationship to have ups and downs in the level of perceived satisfaction: you can feel very happy or very unhappy in your Relationship, at different times.

Fights and arguments seem to be a visible ingredient in a relationship because they makes it more exciting. But not all of these situations lead to a successful resolutions, where both sides get what they need. Having constant battles where one side never gets satisfaction of inner needs for love and connection can also destroy a solid foundation- no matter how strong the mutual attraction is.

Married life is a life school where both sides get reciprocal help to overcome primitive feelings of scarcity and abandonment generated by toxic attachments in infancy.

We are not very much aware of this fact, but our previous childhood experiences determine who we are, what kind of person we marry, and how we get sometimes stuck in repetitive patterns of dysfunctional Relationships.

Some relationships can be competitive rather than collaborative, due to childhood insecure attachments which provide a scarcity mindset for both partners. Relationships faced as a competition for scarce resources (love, attention, care, etc), just create permanent conflict and insecurity. If both recognize present fears of not having/receiving enough as generated in the old bad attachment, they can accept whatever their partner is just offering now.

According to our very early childhood experiences, we are left either with a secure attachment or an insecure one. The first type is easy to identify, but insecurity comes with variations. If a person adheres to the insecure model of attachment, he or she can be avoidant, ambivalent or anxious. Some experts employ different labels to describe these approaches to relationships, but the patterns are the same. Let us explore these models of attachment.

A person with a **secure** attachment working model of the world has experienced secure attachment patterns as a child. Their mother was there, understood baby's needs, was ready to calm down and soothe the baby with the right care. Baby felt secure and protected, and had no need to panic or feel helplessly threatened by the world. This produces later a personality type that is very pleasant to get in touch with.

People with secure attachment are fully aware of themselves and want close relationships with others. They are not wary of their solitude nor of their proximity to others, because they balance independence and close relationships well.

These people also tend to derive more fulfillment from their relationships. They are confident in the quality of their connection with their partner, which allows them to explore activities and friendships outside of their relationship while loving each other. They bestow care and affection onto their partner and value self-disclosure and open communication. In addition, they are emotionally intelligent, which allows them to effectively monitor their emotions and react appropriately to situations.

If you marry one person graced with a secure attachment, you will have a partner that is patient, has a positive outlook in life, and is willing to invest emotional capital in the relationship. You can count on their easy disposition to forgive and expect the best of you; also you can see that is most difficult to engage them in destructive fights.

Insecurely attached people can occupy one of the three following categories:

Someone with an **avoidant** attachment style tends to devalue relationships and prefers to be alone. He or she will also refrain from displaying and exploring emotions and prefers logical perspectives to his or her experiences. This results in an emotional disconnection from him or herself and from others and a distant relationship with his or her partner. This tendency to distant and unemotional bonding produces the false impression that one does not need anyone or anything.

If you find yourself married to an avoidant, perhaps you know that you have more of the normal share of silent treatment, passive aggressive behaviors and all kinds of defensive maneuvers to keep you at bay, feeling rejected and lonely in a Relationship. Here you can escalate disputes to a point where you serve him with an emotional drama, only to see this person walking away, not moved by your tears. The relation-building skills here can serve you to maintain a more normal dialogue, especially if you try listening and appreciation frequently.

The **ambivalent** person tends to be insecure and seek approval from others. They are also very sensitive to rejection, which limits their capacity to trust and invest themselves fully in a relationship, although they may become overly dependent on their partner. Paradoxically, their desire for relationships is limited by their wariness of intimacy and rejection. They therefore tend to have conflicting urges to be close to their partner, while still preserving some space. They are also emotionally erratic and unpredictable.

If you are married to one ambivalent person, you need to brace yourself for ambiguity. Make the decision to always see this person as a loving person, even when he/she has to withdraw from the relationship...this is temporary and the person will be back. Deliver constant appreciation, don't be swayed by emotional storms and temper tantrums (when they perceive everything as you rejecting them) and you will develop a secure base for both of you. Be patient, keep appreciating whatever positive aspect you can identify, and keep your good humor.

Someone who has an **anxious** pattern of attachment tends to have emotional voids that he or she hopes a partner will fill. The person also tends to be obsessive toward his or her partner as he or she is fearful that his or her partner will leave, or have what could be construed as a negative opinion of her. He or she tends to view his or her partner's other friendships or independence as a threat to their relationship.

If you are married to one anxious person, avoid calling this person "dependent." Of course they are, but naming it will make the situation worse. Can you frame their need for you as a kind of love? Recognition, respectful listening, always being positive about his/her behavior will help this person trust you and stop escalating fights where recognition is badly needed but never delivered. Make the rule of giving a positive comment a day, and you will see that your Relationship improves.

Knowing oneself allows one to make better decisions, based in our real needs, which need to be satisfied through a relationship. This can be a gradual process since it requires bravery to face our own previous story, understanding negative behaviors and reactions so one can change for the better.

Identifying one's feelings is another relationship skill. Emotions can confuse you: when you know that you're feeling something, but can not identify exactly what. If you allow yourself to be controlled by your emotions without connecting those emotions with frustrated needs and making an effort to solve them, unbound emotion is a dangerous weapon.

Knowing how you're feeling on a deeper level is important so you can stay in control with your reactions. This ability to "own" your thoughts and feelings will help you combat evil thoughts that can destroy a relationship.

In addition, managing anger and conflict makes things easier. Expressing emotions in a controlled way solves problem more easily. Being able to handle criticism can

also help in problem-solving; this is learned through knowing and accepting oneself.

One of the relationship skills that is important to learn is identifying and overcoming barriers to trust. Trust is essential in a relationship. Some people do not understand its value, and disregard its importance to the point when they arrive at the point where it is too late to repair it. Trust gives strength to our relationships and gives us inner happiness. Life becomes brighter and brighter if there is trust in our relationships. It also gives us a positive mentality and it is easier for us to handle situations. With this virtue, there is a sense of deep bonding.

Communication is as important as trust. Good communication helps one to clarify the problem and generate solutions. What strengthens relationships is having the ability to understand another's feelings and words.

We need to take care of our relationships with love and attention. We should not let our negative emotions destroy our relationships. This means we need to cultivate consistency in our efforts of making relationships last, using the basic relationship skills offered here.

Skill 1: The Importance of Recognition

This skill focuses on the ability to appreciate the positive aspects of everything around you: and if you are in a relationship, it means all that concerns your partner. Instead of having a perception of a glass half empty, you should instead focus on the **"glass half full view of the world."**

It takes sustained practice, because all of us have been educated with a critical view. If you are an engineer doing a project, this is a very critical skill, because keeps you apprised of what can go wrong and derail the project. So, you are as good as you can be by being very critical and focusing on the aspects that need improvement.

But with people in relationships, it is the other way around: as much as you focus on the negative aspects of your partner and try to begin the project of **"improving him or her"** the more the other person feels not accepted and evaluated in a negative manner.

You are in a relationship to support and enhance the positive aspects of your partner. Think of it as a society of "reciprocal admiration." In a sense, you have chosen each other because **we all want and need someone else who can be for us "warts and all," who can accept and appreciate all of our aspects.** This kind of attitude is generally called love.

Remember that whatever you focus on, tends to take center stage: if you focus on a negative trait of your partner, like her tendency to be late for appointments and dates, then this trait will become prevalent and negate the perception of other positive traits that attracted you to her before. And, as you will see, this perception of yours is not so much generated by the other person's tardiness, but also by your own insecure mindset created by your childhood attachment.

So, let's begin:

- Every time you need to talk about some changes needed, begin remembering the good things done;
- Try to find a positive aspect to comment on daily;
- Don't you dare to mention negative aspects without talking about how good the positive ones are, **first**.
- If the results are awful, praise the person's good intention;

Be very creative and find unexpected aspects to praise: a busy person that accomplishes everything could be praised for her constant smile, or his good disposition even along the busiest day;

Don't be mean, don't link praise with immediate critique: "you did well, but forgot this part." In this case, the "but" will cancel the praise. The two propositions don't need to be linked.

Apply this techniques for a while and you will see a change in the quality of your relationship, having more trust, and pleasure in the mutual company. And if there is a lot of hidden anger and resentment in your relationship, remember that to cancel that negativity you need to produce five positive comments to make a negative one be forgotten!

If you care to improve the way you feel in company, and wish to make other people feel happy with you, this small effort in applying this first skill will be very productive.

Why is all this so important? Because we appear to fight to keep control of things, like anyone from the list, but actually, it is always about the hidden, vital pact under the covenant of any couple:

"We are together to confirm and acknowledge each other."

When you go through the list, please, think of the different meanings that each

issue can have for you. And imagine that each fight is a deep quest to receive support, recognition and respect from the other.

Having your partner say out loud, "Yes, you are right on this issue," validates you and makes the world right again.

Why can't we even mention our deep human need for validation? Very simple, it has to be offered, spontaneously, to be valid!

That is the crux of the matter: If we have to beg for it, it doesn't taste so good, right? It has to be proffered because it is an evident, undeniable fact that we are right, that we are intelligent and beautiful and lovable ... not because we ask people to say so!

How do you do it?

Here is a list of expressions ready to acknowledge and praise your partner:

- "I appreciate the way you... ."
- "When you do ... everything feels better,"
- "I know I can count on you for"
- "Do you know what is missing? Your magic touch to make this happen!"
- "Every time you do this to me, it feels so good!"
- "I love the way you"
- "Up until the moment you smile, I wait and wait for you to do it!"

Basically, you can use this form, to acknowledge positive behaviors your partner does spontaneously without nagging:

"When you... (describe the positive action you saw)

"I feel..... (supported, understood, loved, etc.)

"Because...(describe the impact on you)"

1. When _____ Sandy arrives on time for her work
2. I feel _____ grateful
3. Because _____ the requested orders are being delivered on time

*"When you take out the trash, each day, without me asking
I feel very grateful,
Because getting some of the tasks done is a big relief for me."*

Case Example:

Ann and Donald have spent the last five years married to each other. They are stuck in a conversation that goes nowhere, in repetitive circles. The main topic of conversation, on the surface, is his complaint that she is always jealous of other women. The dialogue can be read also as a dance, in which both are fishing for recognition from the other. Here, the underlying recognition needs are barely expressed, but they are pushing the dialogue in certain ways in order to get some satisfaction.

(Here you have the dialogue, with the hidden meaning of the words underneath:)

Ann: I have a hard time trusting you not to cheat. I guess I'm just insecure.

(Ann opens the gambit by referring obliquely to her hidden need: "Confirm me by telling me that you love only me, because I'm insecure and need you to reaffirm that I'm lovable.")

Donald: I won't cheat on you. I know what would happen if I got caught. Wait! I mean I wouldn't want to lose you.

(He doesn't hear her needs, and is only defending himself from the accusation of cheating. He is not connected with the "hidden needs" conversation ... it doesn't help their connecting.)

Ann: That's better ... but how come you're never jealous?

Donald: Because I trust you. Other guys don't threaten me.

(Again, he is immersed in an imaginary world where his worth comes from competing with other guys, and doesn't get her need to hear him declare his attraction to her.)

Ann: Could you be a little jealous?

(She can't directly ask the question: "Could you say that I'm the most important person in your world?"

If she does, and he answers "Yes, you are!" it will be worthless to her, because it is not spontaneously offered, but prompted.)

Donald: Is this a joke? Why are you asking me to play a game now?

(Well, at least he begins to see that there is "a game" being played here, but he still doesn't exactly understand the nature of the game.

This is the point where he begins to see her as crazy and demanding — suffocating him with hidden demands he can't fulfill because they are silent.

His built up and growing frustration will lead to anger, perhaps even violence.)

Ann: Oh my god!. You are so unsympathetic.

(She is ready to give up; he will never acknowledge her deep need, and that is that.)

Donald: Only in your eyes, I don't know why you get to say that!

Ann: Fine, leave me alone, you aren't capable of understanding what I'm saying. Please, go away!

(She is ready to shut down, and abandon the expectation of being recognized by him. Her frustration will appear as persistent silence, withdrawal and blaming him as an insensitive, selfish person.)

Donald: Well, I can be jealous if you want me to. I'm probably more jealous than I let on.

(He is beginning to acknowledge her needs, and validates her jealousy with his own, producing a dialogue parity that could be the beginning of a real conversation.)

Ann: Exactly, you never show your feelings! You are as closed as a clam!

(She misses the point, so enraged by her feelings of being rejected after waiting so long for his little bit of recognition that she ignores the only moment when she is being recognized ... too little, too late validation?)

Donald: Is this what I get if I acknowledge that I feel jealous sometimes?

Only to be scolded by you?

(He needs more recognition for his opening up of feelings ...perhaps some support and recognition that he is as sensible a guy as everybody else. If he could say,

"Wait, if you don't scold me, I could continue telling you how important you are to me, so you can tell me what a marvelous person I am for you," she would be happy, and he would be learning a valuable communication skill.)

Ann: Well, no ... you said something important, and I wasn't paying enough attention, sorry. Let's begin again?

Throughout this dialogue, we can see the two levels: the objective level of the dispute about jealousy and the hidden dance of recognition underneath, which is really the need prompting the interaction.

If both could begin to remember that the longing for recognition is prompting all complaints — and both would express it — then the conversation about concrete differences would be resolved quickly.

Skill 2: Build trust and confidence through listening skills

Do you want the power of making the other person feel really understood?

This is a crucial skill, the lack of which can be really damaging for your relationships. One of the most basic human needs is to feel heard and understood by the person we have personally chosen to share our life with. When you give this gift to your spouse, you are bringing the two close together, rebuilding trust and respect previously destroyed by disputes and fights,

A good listener communicates both genuine interest and respect for the other person. If we are good listeners, we will avoid jumping in to direct the conversation, or breaking in to make remarks that take the focus away from the person who is talking.

We will avoid being centered in our own thoughts, or let your mind wander or anticipate and block the person from developing his or her own ideas at their own pace.

This is an active process where we try deeply to understand what the other is saying, and why. We let others tell their stories, in their own way, while we attend to the content of the story, but also capture the feelings included in it. It is really a powerful skill, that can change your communication in a very important way.

When you do this kind of listen, you try to take a seat in front of the speaker, maintaining eye contact, and take an easy, good posture.

A) Reflective Listening Technique

Consists in paying respectful attention to the content (what is the story about) and the feelings of the speaking person. Also, it lets the other to know that he/she is being heard and understood.

B) Attentive Silence and Attentive Listening

Listening is not simply hearing what the other person is saying; listening is actively processing and interacting with the words of the other person for better understanding. In order to do this, it is important to concentrate on the speaker alone.

Listening is giving your physical and psychological attention to another person in a communication situation. The listener adopt a posture of involvement which includes facing the person speaking to you and leaning slightly toward him or her, establishing good eye contact, avoiding distraction, interested silence, and arranging to have an appropriate environment for the conversation (if possible).

Listening with intent and respect without passing on any evaluation and judgment, fosters mutual understanding, and builds a strong sense of trust.

Steps Of Reflective Listening

1. Acknowledge Responses: *"Sure...," "I see...," "Tell me more..."*
2. **Reflecting content:** *"Sandy's lateness is causing you some difficulties"*
3. **Reflecting Feelings:** *"You are feeling disappointed with Sandy"*
4. **Reflecting meanings:** (feelings and content): *"You feel upset when Sandy comes late for work and you have to cover for her"*
5. **Summarizing:** *"You are having difficulties with Sandy's consistently arriving late for work, and your not being able to do your tasks because you need to cover for her."*

The good listener should practice two skills:

1. Using feeling-included responses:

"As I hear you saying, the fact that your boss stole your presentation and used it as

his own product, made you feel abused and deceived.."

"It looks to me that John said things to you that made you feel like he is not interested in you any longer, and also he left you without warning waiting for him at the movies, and it felt to you like you were abandoned, right?"

2. Watching for behaviors that interfere with your own good listening:

Do not offer any advice.

Do not do a sermon, now is not the time to say "I told you so" or say "it happened to me a month ago, and I did this to solve it."

Do not interrupt and tell about your own time when you felt in that way! It takes the focus off the other person.

If you feel like so, make a summary:

"It appears to me, if I hear you right, that the whole situation of being fired so soon after being hired has left you very confused and unsure what to do for the search for a new job.."

And then, verify:

"Have I understood what you told me well"?

"Is this what you mean? Or there is something else that I don't get?"

It looks like it takes a lot of time to practice this skill. It can seem so at the first impression, but it saves endless hours of conflict and grief later. Learning to be a good listener will enrich your life in all your relationships in ways you can't see now.

Skill 3: Practice the top six predictors of a long-lasting relationship

1.- Learn frequent and honest communication:

Verify how the other person feels about the relationship often. Ask, ask and ask! Without asking, you will assume that everything is OK, when it is not.

2.- Accept easily your own mistakes:

Both sides know that they could eventually be wrong, regardless their perceptions, and thus they are open to verification of assertions. And, of course, both know how to apologize graciously. (See apology at the end of this paper).

3.- Accept the differences as normal:

There are many differences. What used to marvel you in the beginning, that the other was so different from your own experiences, is now a source of irritation. STOP, and remember that you are in a relationship exactly because the differences were exciting and a source of learning. Think of the differences as assets and always ask: "Do you have a different opinion?", before proceeding to implement a joint decision.

4.- Cultivate your own interests:

Don't think that you have only to pursue shared interests. Having your own pet hobbies will give you a different take on reality, from which you can share your learning with the other person.

5.- Go the extra mile:

If something is required from you, at the home or elsewhere in the relationship, just deliver promptly and with a smile. Doing something extra builds a lot of good will for the future.

6.- Keep your sense of humor:

Don't take yourself too seriously; you are only a little bit of the universe, and looking at yourself in this context is humbling. However, be certain that you are faithful to your life mission.

Skill 4: Learn to Manage Daily Disputes Escalating Out Of Control?

Escalation is the progressive use of aggressive communication during a fight, be it yelling, calling names, making accusations increasingly hostile, and in general intending to silence or scare the other person.

It is produced by our perception (probably imaginary) of the other person's bad intentions, which prompts us to defend ourselves by attacking.

If you discover that you are still reacting to any behavior from your partner as if he or she is one of your parents bent on controlling and humiliating you, STOP! Take a deep breath and focus on the differences between this person, (here and now) and the adult from your past (then and there) ...

This person has been chosen by you to be your support and loving companion, remember? Be aware again that the optimal game for couples is cooperation and not competition to win. If you feel too competitive, need to be right always, and perceive the other side as always wrong, you are heading for disaster.

You can be acting in this way because a lot of stress, or having an emotional bad time or a lot of frustration, but escalating any dispute beyond what is a normal dispute has a very high price. The other person ends up scared, intimidated and loses any hope of a rational, respectful conversation.

Look out for these signs that your fight or confrontation is posed to escalate more, and remember that NOW is time to do some repair work in order to avoid relationship destruction.

Watch out for the following indicators, before the dispute:

- Message is sent that "all is wrong," but there is no open discussion to improve.

- People sulk, whine, withdraw or explode over small slights.
- More detachment and non-involvement than ever.
- Escalation of "omission behaviors": more promises forgotten, etc.
- Demeaning partner in public by using sarcasm or criticism.
- One side withholds important information, or "forgets".
- Or refuses to share financial information with the other.
- Conversation is impersonal, only about neutral things.
- Self-destructive behavior, drinking, drug use, overworking.
- Walking around without a word, in silence, for long time.

Now, Can You Count Your Results?

How many + results did you get, from the ten situations described above?

If you get more than three or four, it is highly possible that you will have a yelling match if you want to bring up the issue of how much hurt you are because of this kind of distance in the relationship.

The situation is already tense, and there is some distance between you two. It depends from the kind of approach you use, that you can clean the tension and be in normal terms again. Can you do some sincere appreciation?

Beware of beginning any conversation with the phrase: "Because you do...."

When you feel upset, dissatisfied, ignored or simply angry, you need to focus on:

- **What is upsetting you?**
- **Who is doing such behavior?**
- **How are you going to change that?**

By confronting, of course! Here confronting is a new, not aggressive but peaceful and respectful skill.

How do you do respectful confrontation:

Plan ahead: to be able to confront effectively, you need to pinpoint precisely what is upsetting you; how such behavior is affecting you, and the negative consequences of such behavior on your plans, time, money, energy, whatever. Do only one complain at the time.

To confront effectively, use this assertive tactic after planning what EXACTLY you are you going to say and do. It is better not to improvise in the heat of the argument!

This tactic really works to call the attention of your partner and make this person be attentive and respectful of your needs.....you need to try it now.

Ready?

Here you have a three-step process:

1. Describe what the other person is doing, without blaming or reproaching:
"When you did plan my birthday celebration in a sports bar with your friends, at the same time the game was on..."
2. Explain the impact on you, how were you affected?
" I felt sad, disappointed and let down in my wishes"
3. Explain the impact of that event on the relationship:
"Because it meant for me that we don't know enough about each other's expectations."

Following this three-step method, you will be able to confront in a peaceful way, without having to deny yourself or your perceptions....

Know how to escalate safely, and refuse to allow misunderstandings that are hurting you both. Clean your relationship from dark areas that are not only frustrating but also not conducive to good, positive interactions.

And focus on finish creating a positive environment again:

"How can we do things in a different way next time?"

You need to learn how to do assertive, not aggressive, behavior:

Begin the conversation with:

- *"When you (include the behavior to talk about) I feel, because..."*

- *"When you forget to pay the bills, like this month, and we have problems with the credit card slapping a late fee on us, I feel concerned because our credit rate goes down"*

- *"When you critique my clothing in public, like last night at your buddy's home, I feel sad, because looks like you reject me and my clothes in public."*

This technique is geared towards bringing up the upsetting behavior in a way that it does not provoke a shouting match: you want to invite to a conversation on the impact of the behavior on you, but no yelling or name calling. If done with the right voice intonation, it invites to a "**conversation about us**" that focuses on how to improve the behavior, but is not accusatory.

Skill 5: Repairing a Relationship When There Is Too Much Anger

When there is anger, most likely it was there before a buildup of negative reactions. Things are said, probably with best intentions, but incomplete or ill-explained, which create a negative perception.

We are so busy that we have not the time or the skills to measure every day how our relationship is doing. We let it go in automatic pilot and then get utterly surprised when things blow up in our faces.

Anyhow, if there is anger, both partners are in a difficult situation. If you have not agreed beforehand on how to restore the relationship when the fight happens, you need to be creative:

- 1) **Avoid ignoring the situation**, because even when convenient, silence is the most damaging thing you can do! You add insult to injury in this way, and send the message that you want to ignore the other person's pain.
- 2) **It doesn't matter any longer who is right or wrong** on the disputed issue, you need now to bridge the gap by apologizing.
- 3) **If you don't dare to speak**, then send a mail message, try a MSM, or leave a postcard on your partner's side of the bed. Bringing flowers or playing music are good ideas also.
- 4) Redouble your efforts to **perceive the hurt of both sides** under the anger: What is hurting you now? What are the needs unsolved that prompted the fight? What are your partner's unsolved needs?
- 5) Next time, try **to have a conversation** when both sides are at peace and contented. The idea is to learn from the experience: *"What frustrated needs caused the explosion? How can we check the level of needs before people feel so aggravated as to need to fight? What ways of communication can we include? How*

often do we need to check needs/anger build up?

6) Explore if there is any open or hidden invalidation of feelings:

Feelings validation is an important part of the relationship, including building, maintaining, repairing and improving them. If feelings are not accepted and validated by the most important person in your life, isolation, loneliness and resentment appear. Those feelings are never going away, they keep pushing for some legitimate outlet...and it can be very well the next fight.

So, what could you do? After learning to listen carefully, now we add a new twist: the question: *"How does this situation make you feel?"* Ask your partner, frequently: *"Would you like to share how do you feel now?"*

And then, validate feelings: *"I hear you saying that you felt totally ignored at the party, when I was going around talking to other people most of the time..."* And then, ask: *what can we do now to solve this challenge?*

7) Plan for the next fight, learning how to do fair fighting. This is a wonderful way to confront without anger or resentment, so both sides are on the same page concerning solutions to their reciprocal needs.

If you are interested in learning how, here is the link to our Kindle book: [**"How to Fight Fair in Your Marriage and Win"**](#)

8) To completely repair anger situations, an apology is necessary.

Apologizing is the hardest thing we have to do in a relationship, especially when our partner is obviously hurt, but we aren't 100% sure we were in the wrong.

However, learning to accept that your actions have unintended consequences is just as important as accepting that you make mistakes. You need to learn how to apologize for both - otherwise, the inevitable times that you hurt each other as a couple will never be healed, and the rift between you will continue to get worse.

When it comes to responsibility and doing your part in the relationship, apologizing is essential. In a relationship, we each want to know that we can rely on our partner to be there when we need them, keep their promises, do what they said they were going to do around the house, etc.

When you fail to meet that obligation to be a responsible adult partner, apologizing correctly helps the Relationship grow even stronger. A correct apology has first an acceptance of responsibility (*"Yes, I did promise to pay the bills this month..."*) followed by a personal apology (*"I acknowledge that I didn't do as promised, and now we have some consequences because I forgot...I'm sorry about it"*).

Partners who desire a healthy relationship want to see behavior that is rooted in reality, so a let-down partner is waiting for the apology to include: a description of the frustrating behavior; a bit about the damage done, or of its consequences; and a show of empathy for the impact of those consequences on you (*"I see now that because I forgot, you need to take time out of your schedule to write the checks I didn't do..."*). Is it too much to expect that you realize when your behavior has a negative impact on your relationship? Of course not! This is what grown-ups do!

Owning a negative piece of your behavior is what integrity is all about: you accept that this behavior is yours, that it has an impact and that you are responsible for the impact of it on other people. No denial, no excuses, no angry responses!

Here is a very good outline about how to apologize. Although it is geared toward telling men how to apologize to women, the basic elements are still the same for any apology, no matter your gender or the gender of the person you're apologizing to. As you read, keep in mind the above principle that causing someone pain, whether you intended to or not, is still something you need to apologize for. In this way, trust in each other and respect for one another's feelings can grow.

From a very well written [Psychology Today's article](#):

“There are six elements of a proper apology. If you do not want to waste your time you must include all six:

1. Acknowledge the Wrongful Act

You need to begin by saying ‘I was wrong and I am sorry.’ There are no substitutes for this admission. If you say something dumb like ‘I am sorry that you think I was wrong,’ you might as well spare yourself and not bother. There is no getting around it. You were wrong so plead guilty and get on with it.

2. Acknowledge that You Have Hurt her Feelings

Understand that your wrongful act has hurt her feelings and made her feel disconnected from you. You cannot reconnect without attending to the feelings piece. So you say ‘***I was wrong and I am sorry that I have hurt your feelings.***’ Once again, you cannot wimp out by fudging and saying ‘I am sorry that your feelings are hurt.’ You have to connect your wrongful act to her hurt feelings.

3. Express Your Remorse

An expression of remorse and regret is the way you demonstrate your ability to feel an appropriate response to her hurt feelings. So you say, ‘***I was wrong and I am sorry that I hurt your feelings and I feel terrible that I have done something that has hurt you.***’ (It will help here if you actually look remorseful.)

4. State Your Intention Not to Repeat

This may be difficult particularly if you are a repeat offender but it is an expression of your acknowledgement of your need to reform. ‘***I know that I am sometimes insensitive to what you need but I am going to try my hardest not to do it again.***’ If you smirk at this juncture you're going to have to go back and start all over.

5. Offer to Make Amends

If you don't know what would help, ask her. '**What can I do to make it up to you?**' The particular act of contrition may be negotiated but the important thing is to express your willingness to do something by way of compensation. Of course, once you commit to do something you need to do it lest you render the entire effort useless.

6. Seek Forgiveness

Forgiving is an act that liberates the forgiver from anger so seeking forgiveness is not as self-serving as you may think. A simple 'will you forgive me?' will usually suffice but if you want to avoid appearing presumptuous, or if your offense was particularly odious, you might want to first ask '**can you forgive me?**'

As you get better at it you will feel more comfortable creating your own sequence of the elements and adding those embellishments that mark your apologies with your own stamp of individuality. Master this simple skill and you will find your domestic life ever more peaceful."

And just to help you along, here are the last ideas:

-You really need to be sincere. Whatever fake apology that extricates you from any wrongdoing will make things worse: it will look as cynicism.

-It will help if your apology is building up on your personal change plan: you mean to improve the behavior you are apologizing for, now or in the near future.

There are no guarantees with doing an apology. If you take too long, and the other person grows despondent and resentful because of your hurtful behavior, you can find that your apology is "too little, too late," and rejected.

This is now out of your control. You have made the steps to apologize. Doing it in a

productive way is the best you can do, and the other person will perhaps appreciate it now, later, or never. If you added the offer to make amends, you can have hopes that their change of attitude will come after they see you performing what you promised to do. As always, Relationship changes require sincerity and patience to keep improving oneself.

From the previous ideas, you can see that apologizing is much more complicated than throwing your partner a bone with a short "Sorry"! It is necessary to keep the connection fresh and flowing (we all will make mistakes connecting with our loved ones) and shows the other person a degree of responsibility for the relationship that is really important.

Conclusion

Developing a healthy relationship is vital for our health and takes creativity, honesty and courage. The sad situation is that we don't have places where we can learn the skills of dealing with each other lovingly and respectfully. So we are left to trial and error, and we have to bear the misery that relationship failure brings.

Here you have some suggestions to resolve the basic challenges that can destroy it. If you can resolve to make constant attempts to include all or some of them in your relationship, you will reap benefits of more intimacy, trust and overall happiness.

Wishing you to have a life full with loving relationships!

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(1) 954 607 2183

Here Is How You Can Re-ignite your Relationship:

If you have been struggling to understand her reactions, and why you don't seem able to convey your own needs and feelings in a way that your relationship grows, we have developed a short and useful set of tools to enhance communication, avoid bitter disputes and clarify reciprocal needs.

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This program has four easy steps, each one of them developed in a consecutive week, that will open a complete new perspective on how to handle your relationship. Especially for busy people like you, sessions begins when you subscribe, and goes at your own speed!

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[“Deep Love Needs Survey”](#)

Step 2.) Learn effective listening skills;

Step 3.) Use framing skills to appeal to the positive side of issues;

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Final Gift: Q & A session about your individual needs. Get your game plan ready!

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and subscribe to this program that will change your life!

Hope to see you here!

Resources

Coaching by Coach Nora:

www.norafemenia.com

<http://www.conflictcoach.me>

Connect with Coach Nora here:

<https://www.facebook.com/norafemenia>

<https://twitter.com/peacewonk>

<https://plus.google.com/peacewonk>

www.linkedin.com/in/creativeconflictresolutions/

About Creative Conflict Resolutions

Creative Conflict Resolutions is a group of people working from Fort Lauderdale, Florida to promote more harmony and joy in your relationships.

We care about:

- Providing fast and easy solutions for inter-personal conflicts;
- Managing and transforming anger into cooperation;
- Healing deep hurts that cause hostility to appear;
- Inviting people to reconcile and appreciate each other.

How do we do our work?

By developing educational materials, like our books:

- [The Art of Living with a Passive Aggressive Husband](#)
- [The Six-Steps system to Stop your Passive Aggression](#)
- [Love, Anger and Trust: Embracing the Passive Aggressive Relationship,](#)
- [Stopping Emotional Abuse: the New Workbook to Recover and Grow Resilience from Emotional Abuse](#)
- [Signs of Emotional Abuse: Know about the War for Power and Control in Relationships](#)
- [Boosting Your Self Esteem: Be Your Own Heroine!](#)
- [The Silent Marriage: How Passive Aggression Steals Your Happiness](#)
- [Escaping The Sexless Marriage: A Practical Manual to Bring Back Intimacy and Trust into a Passive Aggressive Marriage](#)
- [How to Spot a Passive Aggressive Partner](#)
- [Closing the Passive Aggressive Defiance Gap](#)

By inviting our clients to participate in live online presentations on issues of interest, like conflict solving techniques, parenting skills, listening skills, etc.

By offering coaching sessions on the phone, in Skype, through <http://conflictcoach.me>

We would like to hear from you...and what are your interests and needs! Feel free to write and tell us what are you concerned about in your relationships, and how we could provide the help you need.

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