

"The Honey Jar" As A Starting Point
To Improve Your Communication
By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

If you are surfing the net looking for some sort of inspiration on how to get the romance in your marriage jump started, there are a number of resources available. What is inspiration, if not a burst of creativity?

You may be sensing that you are drifting away from your spouse or that your marriage is becoming lifeless and operating on automatic. If you have stopped having fun together and think that you just don't have anything to talk about, you can do something that rekindles that spark.

Structured and semi-structured communication exercises can be the vehicle for the desired changes in your marriage. Feeling taken for granted, or bored with your relationship can set the stage for a multitude of marital difficulties.

We have all heard about the ounce of prevention that is much better than the pound of "cure". Revitalizing your marriage through revamping your communication behavior can restore positive feelings, re-engage interest in each other, and renew a sense of partnership, all of which can go a long way in preventing marital discord, infidelity, and dissolution.

And who could not benefit from improving one's ability to listen? One of the factors that fuel circular arguing and dirty fighting is the drive to feel heard and understood. The more compelled that one feels to make himself or herself understood, the less s/he is able to listen to the other person. As s/he becomes more and more demanding, communication behavior gets progressively worse. The longer this process continues, the more likely the result will be that they will not be heard and will not feel understood.

A structured or semi-structured communication exercise, like "The Honey Jar", can reduce some of the anxiety or awkwardness about changing up an interaction pattern. It can feel less threatening or stressful to use a communication exercise. Instead of being on the spot to risk bringing up "touchy" subjects, you gain practice on neutral topics. When couples schedule a time daily or weekly for a communication exercise and make it a "sacred time" where nothing gets scheduled in on top of it, it will become a habit and communication will improve.

The "Honey Jar" is a conversation starter for couples. It consists of 250 sentence stems, each one serving as an open-ended prompt to discuss one of a number of individual or couple subjects. It is designed to generate conversation about oneself and about the relationship in a non-threatening way. Although designed to assist couples that have been in the marriage for a long time and who seem to have run out of things to talk about, it has been found to be very helpful to couples at any stage of their committed relationship.

The "Honey Jar" can assist most couples with "breaking the ice" to begin to once again share themselves with each other. Each numbered item is a sentence stem that can spark the revelation of information forgotten and as yet unknown about you or your significant other. The sentence stems are random in subject and depth. Some examples of items from The Honey Jar include these:

2. I always wanted to...

6. I wish we would talk more about...

7. The main thing about me is...

108. I like it when you...

113. I sometimes feel guilty about...

175. When I look across the room at you, I feel...

198. The biggest influences on my life...

226. I want a hug when...

235. You know I need time alone when...

245. One of the most valuable things my father ever told me...

Pick a good communication exercise, like "The Honey Jar" and get started today.

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