

## Legendary Love. Module 2. Lesson 12.

# Getting It Right - Reflective Listening.

Now that you're aware of the four different styles of communicating (Passive, Aggressive, Passive-Aggressive, and Assertive), it's time to learn and practice how to communicate. You want to ensure your partner hears what you're saying and that you're communicating clearly.

Alan Greenspan, former Chairman of the Federal Reserve in the US for almost 20 years, said this about communication: "I know you think you understood what you thought I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant."

You'll now learn how to avoid the Greenspan problem through a process called Reflective Listening.

### **The Pain of Being Misunderstood**

You're in a hurry, your sweetheart texts you and says, "I got off early. Let's go to The Frog at 6:00." You text back, "Have meeting. See you later."

Your partner interprets your text as, "I'm busy. Can't make it," and grabs some take-out for both of you to eat together. The problem is that you arrive at The Frog at 6:30 ready to eat. You meant you'd be late, and they thought you couldn't make it.

Another miscommunication: Your partner is upset about your conversation about having children. You always wanted children and he said, "No." A couple of days says later, he says, "Why are you moping around." You begin crying about him not wanting children. He's confused. "I want children, just not now."

### **The Source of Miscommunication**

The first three lessons of this module discussed different communication styles. When you combine that with being in a hurry or addressing an emotional situation, misunderstandings can cause hurt feelings and challenges in relationships.

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When speaking to each other, and especially about emotionally sensitive issues, you want to create the best environment for understanding.

### Use these strategies:

1. **Talk in person if at all possible.** Remember that 80% of communication is nonverbal. When on the phone, you do hear the tone of voice, but you don't see the facial expressions.
  - If you can't be in the same room, use tools which allow you to see each other while you talk.
2. **Be as calm as possible.** When you're upset and overly emotional, your emotions interfere with understanding what your partner is saying.
  - A quick way to calm yourself is to take three deep breaths while focusing on the center of your chest. Imagine your feet growing roots.
3. **Remember that you love and care for each other.** You may both be hurt but remind yourself that you are important to each other.
  - Also, remind yourself that you can sort this out and have a stronger relationship.
4. **Remind yourself that you want to understand.** Your inner attitude of openness to your partner is crucial.
  - If you find it helpful, say to yourself, "I want to understand what they mean and how they feel."

### Reflective Listening

After you're both in a peaceful place, have reminded yourselves that the person you love is across from you, and are ready to understand, you begin.

### The process is deceptively simple:

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1. **Who goes first?** When both of you want to speak first, flip a coin to decide who will begin.
2. **The first person says what's on their mind.** Say what you want as clearly and calmly as possible.
  - Take a deep breath and focus on the center of your chest if you get too upset.
  - Look at your partner while speaking.
3. **The second person reflects back what they heard.** You state what your partner said in your own words.
  - Listen for the feelings behind what your partner is saying. For instance, there is a difference between angry and hurt.
4. **The first person either agrees with their partner's interpretation or says that wasn't what was meant.** Rephrase your thoughts and repeat the process.
  - Be sure and rephrase what you originally said since the first way you said it was misunderstood.
5. **Keep repeating the process until the speaker agrees that the listener understands what the speaker was saying.**
6. **The other person then gives their response and the process is repeated.**

In reflective listening you learn about each other. You hear the thoughts and feelings without your own interpretation interfering with the message. As you gain experience, you'll spend less time rephrasing your thoughts because you understand each other more easily.

Set aside each week to communicate with each other using Reflective Listening. You'll especially want to use this process when you feel misunderstood or you're having a challenging time with your relationship.

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## A Reflective Listening Example

Terry: You're gone so often I don't think you care for me anymore.

Casey: You're mad because I have to work late.

Terry: No, I'm not mad. I'm hurt because you don't act like I'm important to you.

Casey: You're hurt because I spend so much time working and that makes you think you're not important to me.

Terry: Yes, I miss being with you.

## Summary

It's easy to misunderstand each other. Take time each week to sit with each other and practice Reflective Listening. This way you can be sure you're understanding your partner's words and feelings.

There's one last piece of knowledge you need to be able to communicate effectively. In the next lesson you'll learn about words and phrases to avoid and those that can make your relationship stronger.

Before moving to Lesson 13, please take a few moments to reflect on the following.

## Reflection

1. Recall a disagreement you've had which would have been resolved more quickly through Reflective Listening. Rewrite the conversation using Reflective Listening steps.

