

Legendary Love. Module 2. Lesson 13.

Words That Destroy, Words That Build

Congratulations! You've made it to the last lesson in the communication module. You've learned a great deal about communication patterns and styles. In the last lesson, you learned how to ensure that you and your partner understand each other through Reflective Listening.

In this final communication lesson, you'll learn about words and phrases which can increase conflict and the wonderful words which can assist in communicating with each other.

The Nature of Disagreements

People disagree because they're different people. **It's normal, no matter how good your relationship, to have differences of opinion.** The key is to speak and act in such a way that you can sort out the disagreement in a way that is mutually beneficial to both of you.

There's no need to be concerned that you don't agree all the time. Just learn and practice how to keep any communication challenges to a minimum.

Substitute Words that Separate with Words that Unite

You're partners. You hurt when things come up which separate you. You want to feel comfortable with each other. You want to enjoy each other. You also want to resolve challenges in your relationship peacefully and happily.

Words have power to create or destroy.

Use these techniques when talking with each other:

1. **Avoid the word "you" when you're angry.** It usually comes off as blaming your partner.
 - "You forgot my birthday" is like pointing your finger in their face and blaming. Your partner is on the defensive and the disagreement escalates.

Legendary Love. Module 2. Lesson 13.

- Express your feelings beginning the sentence with “I.” “I felt hurt when you didn’t celebrate my birthday.” **Expressing your feelings makes it about you, not your partner.** You’re accepting responsibility for your part when you use “I.”
2. **Avoid absolutes, such “never” and “always.”** When you use such words, your partner may respond as if attacked.
 - When you say, “You always leave your shoes in the hallway,” your partner will point out the times they put them in the closet. This separates you.
 - “You never take out the garbage” will elicit, “I took it out last week.”
 3. **“Should” is a word to avoid.** Telling someone they should do something implies they are guilty of not doing something.
 - Who says they should? Was it God, your mother, the government?
 - Rephrase your statement to: “I would appreciate it if you would...” You’re accepting responsibility of your preference.

Remember Reflective listening. When you sit down with the intention of understanding each other, you’ll both begin with “I” sentences to express your feelings.

Phrases that Separate and Phrases that Build

Imagine your partner saying with a sarcastic tone, “Well, what’s the matter with you?” That’s an aggressive statement and tone of voice. It automatically forms a wedge between the two of you.

When someone asks a question in a sarcastic manner, two things are revealed:

1. **Something is going on with your partner.** It could be your relationship, or it could be something at work.
 - When the time is right, you might ask, “Are you okay?”

Legendary Love. Module 2. Lesson 13.

2. **You both have something important to talk about.** You have an opportunity to build your relationship or join your partner in separating the two of you.
 - As hurt as you may be, take a deep breath and form a response such as, “Yes, I might be laid off. May we talk about it later?”
 - Sometimes, the best response is to take a break. “Why don’t we take a time out for 10 minutes?” This works better if you’ve already discussed taking a time out when you need to.

To build your relationship you want to establish intimacy.

A wonderful way to bring you and your partner closer is to show your interest in them.

A great way of showing your interest is by asking open-ended questions:

1. **Why did that upset you?** An open and inquisitive tone of voice is important when you ask this question.
 - You’re not attempting to challenge your partner. You want to know what happened.
 - Even if your partner says things you disagree with, let them talk. They may need to vent to relieve some emotional pressure.
2. **How are you viewing this?** Listen to what they’re saying rather than trying to form your response. As we discussed in an earlier lesson, people want to be heard and understood.
 - When appropriate, respond with, “What I’m hearing is _____. Is that correct?”

You can also make short comments that let the other know you are listening. “I understand,” “Yes, that makes sense,” and similar phrases acknowledge you’re listening and understanding what they’re saying. It doesn’t mean you agree, but you’re hearing them.

Legendary Love. Module 2. Lesson 13.

Summary

Now that you know about words that separate and words that build, watch the way you speak to others and to yourself. Do you use “always,” “never” and “should” when you talk to others or to yourself? Practice on yourself using words that build. This will enable you to easily use positive communication patterns with your partner.

The next lesson will summarize the information in this module. You’ll have an opportunity to reflect on all you’ve learned about communication.

Before you go, please take a few minutes to reflect on this lesson.

Reflection

1. Consider how you talk to yourself. What words and phrases do you say to yourself that would best be changed? Write down alternatives which would build a positive, supporting relationship with yourself.

2. What words or phrases do people say to you that trigger an angry or hurt reaction in you?

3. In your last argument with someone, what words did you each use which made the argument worse than it needed to be?