

Module 2. Lesson 8.

Don't Count on Mind Reading

In the last module you examined challenges with merging two different personalities into the same household.

In this module you'll discover attributes which can impact good communication.

Your communication styles began before you met each other. It began with how you grew up. You also have different personality characteristics which affect your communication with each other.

This and the next lesson lay the foundation for healthy communication practices. To integrate the information in this module, begin practising what you learn as soon as possible.

Are You a Mind Reader?

If you believe you know what your partner is thinking and feeling, you could be setting yourself up for some challenges. You might be right some of the time, but let's look at what can happen if you make assumptions about your partner that are incorrect.

Making assumptions about another's thoughts and feelings has consequences you might not be aware of:

1. **Privacy is invaded.** Remember the "Private" area of the Johari Window? That area is special or sacred to each person.
 - It's up to the individual to share the private part of themselves. When others assume that they know that private area, the first individual can feel violated.
2. **When people assume that they know what another is thinking or feeling, they are implying they have power over that person.**
 - Rarely do people feel comfortable when others know something that they're not ready to share. They become guarded and defensive if they're feeling "read" by another.

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3. **When someone makes assumptions, they already have a fixed idea about the situation.**
 - It can be difficult to move away from the initial assumption. This can color the rest of the conversation.
 - **Making assumptions can shut down communication before it begins.** This can damage your relationship.

You Might Be Right

There are people who are more intuitive than others. They have an ability to “read” the subtle shifts in body language. Some intuitive people say they can “feel” the emotions of others. They may be right.

The longer you know your partner, the more you’ll learn about them. You’ll be able to know when they’re not themselves, when something seems “off.” You may even know how they act when there are challenges at work... or with the parents... or the bowling team.

When you know something is off, ask how the day went. You might even ask if they’re okay. If they choose not to tell you, avoid taking offense. Just give them time.

It’s Not All About You

Communication is an exchange between two people. Because honest communication is important, keep in mind that you are two different people.

Even if you’re concerned about your partner, there are times you need to give them space. Yes, you might be worried that you’ve done something or that their mood is about you. That’s an uncomfortable situation for you. Still, give them some space.

There are several reasons not to insist that someone talk before they’re ready:

1. **Some people take more time to share what’s happening.** Their being reluctant to immediately share may have nothing to do with you.

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- Introverted thinkers take time to mull things over. They want to be sure they understand what's happening within them before sharing.
 - Extroverted thinkers have a tendency to process their feeling out loud. **Extroverted thinkers often have a difficult time understanding introverted thinkers.**
2. **Family of Origin (the family you came from) communication patterns have programed you to communicate in particular ways.** Your families may have two opposing styles of communicating.
- The person who came from a family who didn't share what was happening in their lives often finds it difficult to share with their partner.
 - In some families, members are punished or made fun of for certain things they share. **If you or your partner grew up where it wasn't safe to share, you'll find it difficult to share with each other.**
 - When you or your partner have difficulty sharing, the one who finds it easier to share will need to be more patient as the other learns that it's okay to share.
3. **One of you may not think sharing is important.** This can create challenges, especially if sharing is important to one member and not the other.
- Some people want to know everything about their partner and feel hurt if their partner doesn't share. Others want to reserve a part of themselves just for them and don't share as much.
 - As neuro-scientists learn more about the brain, they've discovered that some people don't notice social cues, such as someone being upset, due to how the brain and its chemicals are working.
 - The person who is more adept at communication needs to be patient while the one who isn't as adept at communication learns how to share.

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Then again, Communication Is All about You

You can't control the communication patterns of your partner. You can, however, control your own communication style. You can also control how you respond to your partner. How you respond to challenging situations can make things easier or more difficult between the two of you.

Summary

In this lesson, you explored how the ability to communicate with each other is influenced by:

1. Your family
2. Being an introverted or extroverted thinker
3. The brain and its chemicals

You've also learned that the one who wants more sharing and finds it easier to communicate is the one who needs to be more patient.

In the next lesson, we're going to lay another level to the foundation before we begin on specific strategies for communication.

Before you move to that lesson, please take a few minutes now to reflect on what you've learned.

Reflection

1. Think back upon how you grew up. Describe how your family talked about their lives. Did they share feelings, important happenings in their lives, their schedule? How did this affect you?
2. How do you prefer to share information? Immediately or do you need time? All of the information or just some of it? Is it difficult or easy to share?
3. How do you feel about your partner's way of communicating?