

## *Watch Your Words*

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Q. What is the healthiest way to confront immediate issues and what about in front of the children? How about angry outbursts, abusive statements, stubborn and defiant attitudes, disregarding the kids hearing or waking up?

~Cynthia—Takoma, Washington

A. Among the most important basics in healthy relationships is good communication. The opposite is also accurate; poor communication is often at the root of harmful relationships. And, while keeping the proverbial air clear is necessary for a good relationship with one's spouse, achieving this is less about being confrontational and more about finding nonthreatening ways to approach issues which must be managed without delay.

Married people must be conscious of how easy it is to upset the stability of their relationship if it is to remain good. A hasty answer to an emotional trigger often comes with harmful consequences. This means it is significant how we decide what issues to talk about at once, and be aware of the importance to approach such conversations softly, rather than with too much steam. The calmer our manner, the easier it will be for our spouse to hear us and respond thoughtfully.

People with strong and healthy marriages have an easier time of dealing with issues that come up during the course of the day, than couples with strained and unstable relationships. Healthy marriages are recognized by the ability of husbands and wives to speak openly about significant matters on a regular basis.

These couples love, respect, and like each other, and daily affirm and show value for each other. The stronger and healthier the marriage relationship, the easier it will be to talk about issues in a calm and respectful way.

Couples whose relationships are known to be toxic, lethal, and poisonous, often approach conversations with their spouses filled with sarcasm, anger and disrespect. Those exchanges are often self-righteous, loud, and have no regard for the presence of children. This method will solve no problems, further damage marriage, and wound the capacity of the children involved from having the ability to be in stable and happy marriages in the future.

On the other hand, couples who have respect and regard for each other, with an awareness for teaching their children the importance of developing healthy relationships, do well to talk in front of them even about issues they may have different opinions about. When parents conclude a conversation on opposite sides of an issue, it is important for children to observe that there is still love and respect between the parents despite their differences. Of course, parents must also use good judgment in determining what conversations are better held in private, rather than in the presence of their children.

We believe angry outbursts, abusive statements, stubborn and defiant attitudes have no place in homes that welcome the presence of God. Although it is true many Christian homes often witness this type of behavior on a regular basis, this approach needs to stop if we

are to continue to give honor and glory to God.

In order to turn things around, each spouse must take responsibility for his or her part and determine by the power of God not to participate in this kind of behavior any longer. The next step is to find a good marriage conference or retreat you can attend together to learn effective methods of communicating. The more you practice communicating in a patient, kind, and loving way, despite differences of opinion, the easier it will be to make this the rule in your home rather than the exception. This is not easy. However, we believe with God all things are possible,

including the turning around of bad communication habits.

We hope that *from this day forward* you will trust God for patience, a good attitude, and the determination to learn to communicate effectively, so that you may build a healthier marriage and family that gives honor and glory to God. You will continue in our prayers.

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