

Healthy Exchange

Helping Your Company's Most Valuable Resource - Employees

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Inova Employee Assistance

Better Communication For Couples

Why do we always seem to argue about "silly" things? How can I get my partner to open up more? These are examples of the kinds of questions couples often ask counselors. While every couple's situation is unique, these general guidelines can help you improve your communication with your partner:



Set An Example – If you want your partner to open up more, set the example by sharing more of your own thoughts and feelings. Try sharing interesting things you have read or overheard. Relate an experience that happened during the day.

Keep It Light – Try talking about something else besides the "problems." Pass on a joke or bit of gossip. Make a decision not to bring up the hassles with work, kids or finances, at least not until the appropriate time.

Make "I" Statements – Avoid starting a sentence with "you." "You" messages blame and judge the other person. "You" messages often trigger defensiveness or hostility in your partner and tend to increase conflict. Instead, put yourself on the line by sharing how it is for you. Say, "I think" or "I want" or "I feel." "I" messages can express emotions in a way that is not threatening. No cheating by saying, "I think that you...!"

Use "Feeling" Words – It's not fair to expect your partner to guess or "figure out" what you are feeling, as in "If he loved me, he'd know!" Quit playing the guessing game and say it. Be

sure to use feeling words like "sad," "happy," "excited," "angry," "worried," etc. Remember to start the sentence with an "I".

Ask Open-Ended Questions Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." Otherwise, that's often all you'll get. Try starting out the question with "how," or "what," as in, "What do you think about..." or "How do you feel about..." Don't ask "why." Chances are the other person doesn't know anyway and "why" can sound like an accusation.

Do Something Together – Experience has shown that people, particularly men, are more likely to share their feelings when they are doing something together that both can enjoy.

Your EAP is here to help

If you are concerned about a particularly difficult relationship issue, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for FREE and CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. We're here to help you.



Inova Employee Assistance (IEA) is a confidential service that is designed to assist you and your household members with a variety of personal problems that can negatively impact your job performance, or your personal life. We stand ready to serve you, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For additional information, or to access any of our services, contact Inova Employee Assistance at:

800-346-0110 Telephone

877-845-6465 TDD

www.inova.org/eap

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