

Introduction

Communication is the soil in which marriages continue to grow and bear good fruit. Like the flow of a rushing, mountain stream giving life to the vegetation all around it, the flow of good communication gives vitality to any marriage. That's why this communication resource was created. It offers an easy-to-use guide for busy couples to find time to talk in meaningful ways. The removable talksheets in this book will guide you on a conversation journey that will open the flow of life in your marriage. Each talksheet is duplicated, one is "His Copy" and one is "Her Copy." They are perforated for easy removal from the book. The book itself provides a place to "file" the talksheets after you have completed each conversation. Please read this introduction thoroughly before beginning the conversations.

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What is the purpose of this communication resource?

"Does our marriage need to be refreshed?"

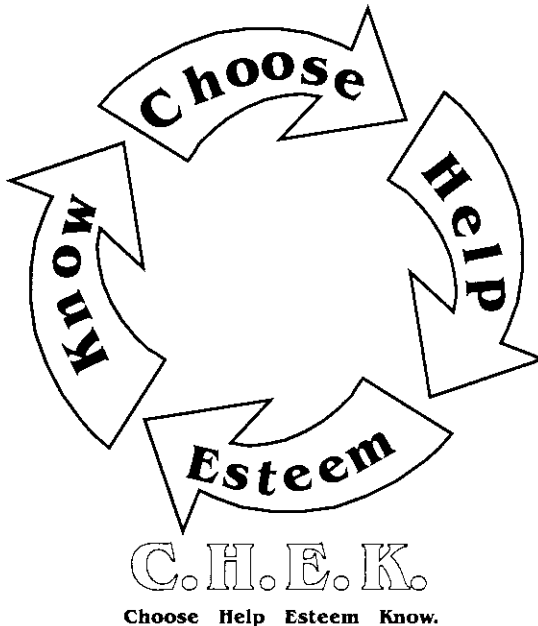
The answer is always YES! To refresh is to make fresh and new again. Satisfying and long-lasting marriages don't just happen! A lifetime of joy and understanding in your relationship will depend on the flow of open, honest, loving and effective communication between you. Effective and loving communication is the single most important skill you can learn and practice in your marriage.

Good communication is essential to loving and healthy marriages!

What is a loving relationship?

Those who are in healthy, loving relationships
CHEK each other out!

The word CHEK reminds us of four activities that
help to create healthy relationships:
Choose Help Esteem Know.



Introducing the TalkPoint Communication Process

The talksheets in this resource give you a conversational road map to follow and an easy way to create an environment for positive and satisfying couple communication. Here is process:

1. Read and discuss the introduction.
2. Use a pen or pencil to write (in silence) a response for each sentence completion on Side One of the page. Complete the page before talking.
3. Take turns talking about each of your responses.
4. Continue the process on Side Two.
5. Try the suggested activity/activities.

The Importance of Silent Communication

A part of good communication is the ability to be together without talking. As you read, think and write in silence, you are communicating.

This tool invites you both to take time to think in silence about what you want to say before you say it! Some may be tempted to skip this step and dive into the conversation without writing. Good communication, however, is helped when you are together in thoughtful silence. Silence is "golden" in communication.

The Importance of Verbal Communication and Active Listening

Good communication also involves clear, verbal conversation and careful listening. The second step in the process is to take turns talking and listening.

Good communication is mutual, which means that both in the conversation have an equal chance to express thoughts and feelings. This communication process helps to "level the playing field" by putting both "on the same page." You'll soon discover an atmosphere in which you are more free to Choose, Help, Esteem and Know each other - free to love. This love is what enriches and renews your marriage.

It's Time to Experiment with the Process

Turn to the first talk entitled "Refreshing Our Marriage" and remove both perforated copies from the book. You'll find the step-by-step instructions on page 8. You will discover the maximum benefit of this conversation format by finding a time to experience the writing and talking together. However, there may be times when a busy schedule means that you will need to fill out the front and back of the talksheet on your own, then come together for the talk.

*Thanks for taking this time to renew for your marriage
with meaningful conversations.*

May your love deepen and grow as you CHEK each other out in LOVE.

Read and Write

1. When we first met, one thing that impressed me about you was...

And I remember thinking, that you were...

2. Some of your best qualities include...

- * *
- * *
- * *

This is a sample conversation

3. To say that I appreciate you means that...

I appreciate the way you...

And I appreciate that you express your love by...

I appreciate that you have been willing to...

And I appreciate that when I'm with you, I feel...

4. One of our most enjoyable times together was...

5. I remember feeling especially close to you when...

6. The best things about our marriage have been...

7. One of the best years or periods of our life together was...

Introduction to Counselors/Pastors

Suggestions for using TalkPoints with married couples.

(Please remove this section before giving the book to the couple.)

Introducing TalkPoints

Good communication is the key to healthy marriages!

TalkPoints help couples to communicate by guiding them through a process of reading, writing, talking and listening (the four ways we communicate). With TalkPoints people are on the same page with each other and there is an atmosphere of equality and mutuality. The single most important skill we can teach to couples who want to continue to renew their marriage is the skill of effective communication.

The TalkPoint Process

Step One: Read & Write

Silence is golden when it comes to good communication. As those in the conversation are guided to read and write in silence, they are engaged in reflective communication. TalkPoints invite talkative people to be silent for a period of time.

Step Two: Talk & Listen

Listening is as essential to good communication as talking. TalkPoints invite those with quite personalities to talk more easily. Those involved in the conversation are asked to think and speak in the first person "I".

Suggestions for Using this Resource as a Marriage Enrichment or Counseling Tool

Marriage Enrichment or Encounter Weekends:

This resource works well as a part of a group process. During the event, offer couples the time for one-on-one private conversation followed by small group interaction with other couples.

Marriage Enrichment Monthly Date-Nights:

Invite a group of couples to commit to a Saturday date each month for nine months. Couples go to a restaurant for a relaxed dinner, then gather at 7:30 with other couples for interaction and teaching on the marriage enrichment topic for the evening. (Allow couples to have a private space and time to complete one of the talksheets in this resource.) Invite couples to meet afterward at a neighborhood restaurant (or home) for dessert.

If you use a marriage enrichment inventory:

During Session One plan to get acquainted and then review the outline of your marriage enrichment process. Introduce this resource. Invite the couple to fill out the

background inventories in this Appendix. Introduce and administer the inventory. If there is time (usually in a two hour session there is) try to include the conversation, "Refreshing Our Marriage" which may take about 30-45 minutes. After the results of the inventory are tabulated, be aware of the most urgent issues this couple needs to deal with. Choose those TalkPoint conversations that will address those issues first. Some TalkPoints can be used as home assignments, but you may want the couple to complete some of them in your presence.

A three-session format for marriage enrichment:

1. During the first session take time to...

- 1) Get acquainted.
- 2) Invite the couple to fill out the background sheets included in the Appendix section of this resource (remove ahead of the session).
- 3) Introduce the TalkPoint resource by going over the introductory material with the couple.

Provide a writing surface (a card table works well) and invite one to read the introduction on page 8. Have them remove the two pages of the conversation from the book and then give plenty of time for them to fill out the entire front side of the page (provide pens or pencils). Encourage the couple to take their time. When both have finished writing, instruct them to take turns, one response at a time, talking about each item on the page. (During this time the counselor listens without comment or interruption.) After their dialogue, affirm, make observation, identify strengths, etc. Continue the process by turning the talksheet over and proceeding with Part Two.

Make an appointment for your next session. Let the couple know that during that session they will be having the "Faith" conversation. Assign (as a requirement to be completed before the next appointment) the next three talks entitled "Our Parents," "Our Love Life" and "Leisure and Work." Encourage the couple to set a weekly talk-date, and ask them to bring the completed conversations when they return for your next appointment.

2. During the second meeting, use "Faith" to discuss the faith dimension of marriage. (While they are writing, you may want to review their answers from their take-home assignment.) Enter into the discussion only during the Talk & Listen section. Offer your encouragement, insights and observations. Continue with Part Two. Assign "Children," "Money," and "Doing My Part" as conversations to be completed before the next appointment.

3. During the next (and final) appointment, use "Issues" during the session. Help the couple identify one issue, conflict or decision they need to talk about, and listen as they move through the step-by-step process.

Recommend that they return to this process for their next wedding anniversary, review page 62 with them, and encourage them to enjoy "Our Wedding Anniversary" as they celebrate.