



*Beyond
Talking*

Temitayo Ogunnaike



Everybody may be able to talk but not everyone can actually communicate.

Communication is the lifeblood of any relationship. Without communication, any relationship would be as good as dead. There is no starting right without effective communication.

From my experience in coaching couples, I have come to realize that over 50% of the reasons behind marital challenges or irreconcilable conflicts/differences is as a result of poor communication skills.

Personally, my husband and I have also had challenges understanding our different communication languages and patterns. The moment we began to figure this out, conflicts reduced drastically and understanding increased. We are still figuring it out every day. No one should outgrow learning in marriage.

In practice, communication is easier said than done. It is not just about talking; it is a lot deeper. There are a lot of dynamics involved. As a matter of fact, it is a skill that should be learned by every couple. Just as we learnt how to write A, B, C, effective communication requires learning and starting from the basics. Let me share an interesting story with you; this will help you reflect on some of the dynamics involved in communication. It would further buttress that it is much deeper than just talking or responding, as the case may be.

There is this couple my husband and I are friends with, we visited them a while back. We were engaged in a conversation when suddenly the husband turned to his wife and said:

“Wow! Baby, you took me to the heavens and back last night. I can't remember when last we had such hot sex.”

Wife: (Puts on a straight face) Really? That's nice.

Husband: Why that straight face, Baby?

Wife: (Sighs) How come you got to heaven and I did not? I was just hitting the climax when you suddenly dropped the vibes. You left me wandering in the wilderness and searching for water.

Husband: (Chuckles) What are you saying again? You have come with these proverbs, right? Must you always complain each time we have sex?

Wife: Why won't I complain when you don't care about how I feel. You just jump in and jump out of my vagina. You don't care if I'm tired. You don't bother about making me feel relaxed first. You don't listen to my needs. You really make me... (Wife began to cry).

Husband: What have tears got to do with this? Do you want to cry or you want us to talk? In fact, I'm not doing this today.

Here, we see how emotions and logic played out in their conversation. For the purpose of confidentiality, I would

name them Ben and Matilda. Now let's take a closer look.

1. Is it possible that Ben and Matilda have different sexual needs unknown to them?

2. Did they both have good intentions while communicating about their sexual concerns?

3. Could Matilda have allowed Ben savour and relish the moment while she found a more suitable time to address the issues she had with the sex and her other needs?

4. Are there better ways Matilda could have passed her message? Is there a way she could have taken responsibility for her feelings and still addressed the issues she was unhappy with?

5. Could Ben have empathized more, especially when she began to cry? Could he have read in-between the lines and listened to what was not even said by his wife?

6. Is it possible there were deeper issues beyond the sex which they needed to discuss and settle?

7. How does showing understanding and giving appropriate response come to play in a typical conversation between a husband and his wife?

8. Does emotional intelligence/intimacy come before sexual intelligence/intimacy?

We will be able to address some of these questions as we delve deeper into the subject of communication below.

The Engine of Marriage



An engine is to a car what communication is to marriage. It fuels intimacy between you and your spouse. However, not just mouthy communication, but intentional and effective communication. It should be open, honest and consistent. No marriage can rise above its communication level. Couples who do not live in the same location can also achieve this intentional and effective communication. I totally agree with what one of my colleagues in the relationship and marriage industry (Sola Chukwunyerere) said during one of our intimacy summits where she was invited to speak. She said that every couple, especially those who do not reside in the same location by virtue of their work, studies, etc., should have update and connection conversations regularly so that they can maintain connection and intimacy emotionally and in other areas.

I recall when my husband had to be on an official assignment outside our city of residence. We missed each other a lot every passing day. However, our communication pattern made it easier for the both of us. This was developed during our courtship days where we had to be in different countries for about a year. At the time, I was in the UK for my master's degree program while he was working in Nigeria. We simply replicated the same model of communication we had built back then, into this present situation. We made sure we talked everyday, updating each other of our whereabouts and engaging like we were together physically. At weekends, we talked longer and connected on a deeper level. Distant relationships should not stop communication

except in cases where there is zero access to phone, internet or courier services. Distance should not also stop your responsibilities. What your physical presence cannot do, effective communication can do it.

It is important to understand and learn the skill of effective communication.

A couple needs to learn the type of communication that brings desired results and draws them closer to each other. For this to happen, so many things have to be in place. It is one thing to communicate constantly and yet another to communicate in the language your spouse understands. In view of this, I put forward a 21-day online communication challenge to help people learn how to really communicate with their partners beyond just talking.

About 200 people participated from different parts of the world and the feedbacks I got were very uplifting and gave me so much fulfillment that I was able to help people be and do better as regards communication in their relationship. It was so fulfilling to see people implement the daily lessons. Below is one of the feedbacks I got:

“I feel so much encouragement from your mails and I try to put them to practice, and yes I got feedback from my partner when I asked how he will love to be communicated to and we have been deliberate about communication though in different geographical locations. Thank you so much for an opportunity to have this challenge. Looking forward to more” (Temitope Noro Pwol).

To communicate effectively, you would need to

understand the personality, values and communication pattern or style of your partner so that you can reach out to them where they are and at their level. You may need to also factor in where your spouse is coming from (background and past experiences) which largely contributes to how he or she often communicates.

For example, Sophie who grew up hearing “I love you” and other words of affirmation and encouragement from her parents and siblings is more likely to use them while communicating in marriage. Oscar who grew up without celebrating any birthday is likely not to consider birthday celebrations in marriage as important. He may not even remember them, let alone say happy birthday to his wife or kids.

Therefore, it is important to consider your spouse's background. Rather than take their actions personal, you are better off understanding them from that perspective and working together patiently to see where learning and improvement is needed.

During a strategy session with a couple, they lamented on how they couldn't communicate effectively. They just didn't know how to communicate and it had been like that from the inception of their marriage.

Getting to the root of the matter, we discovered that their past experiences, especially their unresolved past, had a significant negative effect on their present relationship.

There was also an absence of friendship and freedom in their relationship right from the very start. I had to walk them through overcoming those limiting experiences that

was inhibiting good communication in their marriage. Therefore, they had to put on the growth mindset to unlearn, learn and relearn.

Communication is critical to the success of every marriage. In fact, communication is everything!

For every aspect of marriage such as finance, sex, parenting, and resolving conflicts, there are unique ways to communicate. Just stay with me

Ingredients of Effective Communication



You should learn to “SLURA” appropriately. SLURA is a signature acronym I adopted in my marriage and equally use during coaching sessions for assessment and evaluation. It is an acronym for Speak, Listen, Understand, Respond and Appraise. There is no communication without these five elements. Learn to speak in love and at the right time, appropriating these five ingredients.

Speaking involves several factors such as tone, pitch and volume of voice. It also involves the use of words. To drive home your message per time, you would need to use the right words and tone of voice because how you say what you say is as important as what you say.

Listening is one important aspect of communication that is often missed. For some, it's easier to speak than to listen. In many instances, it is possible that your spouse may be talking and you are not listening but thinking and conjuring up what you want to say next in your head.

While it is all too common, nothing kills effective communication better and faster than this error.

We often interrupt our spouses when they are trying to speak or pass a message to us. I believe that God gave us two ears and one mouth so we could listen more. Thus, a great communication skill is to listen to both what is said and unsaid. That's not something you can do when you are not observant or paying attention to body languages expressed, in addition to actually hearing the words being spoken.

When you don't understand what has been communicated to you, you may not be able to give the right response. To do this effectively, say to your spouse after he or she has spoken, "If I heard you correctly, you said ABC, right?" If that was not what your spouse said or meant, he or she will be able to tell you it wasn't ABC that was said or intended. Consequently, such spouse will go over it again so that you can really understand. It is always good to clarify and not assume. As they say, assumption is the lowest form of knowledge.

It actually feels very good to be listened to. I will add that you should always Listen and Understand as you want to be listened to and understood. When these are in place, the response element would not be a problem. If you have not been getting the Response you expect, check your Speaking, Listening and Understanding patterns. Appraisal can also be referred to as evaluation or review. This provides the opportunity for feedback. You are able to know what is going well and what needs to be improved on.

There are some destructive styles of communication such as aggressive, passive and withdrawal styles, which heightens our anger level negatively and affect our communication. These styles also have some level of manipulation, unrealistic expectations and sense of entitlement that further destroys our relationship.

A better and more constructive style of communication would be an assertive style. This means that you own your communication, take responsibility for your feelings and express them without allowing a negative effect on the ego of others. Assertive communication enhances trust, respect and fosters better understanding. It involves a

proper application of the SLURA pattern described above. What style of communication are you adopting in your relationship?

In what areas of your marriage are you not getting the desired response from your spouse? You may need to check your SLURA antecedents and other elements discussed so that you can begin to re-strategize.

It is possible that your spouse has been communicating a message to you which you have not been paying attention to. It is also possible that you have not been speaking to your spouse at the right times when your message can be well assimilated.

For example, there is a pattern that exists in my marriage and it is that we seem to talk and connect more at the early hours of the morning. The flow just comes naturally and at that time, we discuss any and everything and sometimes, we start or end with a hot round of sex (smiles). We need no prophet to tell us that is our clicking time hence the need to really maximize it. It may change in the future but for now, it is what it is.

I encourage you to also identify and maximize your clicking time; the unique time both of you flow and connect naturally.

To continually get your desired results with respect to communication, take your time to understand and maximize your spouse's preferred communication style and code.

Backgrounds and Past Experiences



Let us talk more about backgrounds and past experiences. These also form a person's belief system like we established in chapter two. We are taking it further in this section especially with respect to how it could affect communication.

Can you imagine a husband who never saw his dad have a decent conversation with his mum? Also, his dad was never close to him and his siblings. Every time the children met him for anything, he would always shout and say he had no time. All the dad did was to go to work, come home, eat, watch television, and go to bed. He hardly made friends. Consequently, his son made a resolve never to treat his wife and kids the way his father did. Little did he know he had unknowingly picked some of his father's traits.

He unconsciously decided that he would rather keep quiet and not talk with his wife when angry, as opposed to using derogatory words. This singular decision, as innocent as it sounds, was the beginning of problems in his own marriage. His wife, on the other hand, battled with low confidence because her mum would always shout her down whenever she said or suggested anything. Her mum never saw anything good in her. She would always complain about everything she did. She even preferred her brothers to her. This made this lovely wife hate her brothers so much, despite the fact that they showed her love.

Eventually, she got deceived by her brother's friend who would always come to the house to say sweet things to her

and tell her how beautiful she looked. She fell for that because she never heard those sweet words from her mum or anyone else. As time went on, the brother's friend lured her to have sex with him. After the incidence, she became a shadow of herself, especially because "Mr Loverboy" stopped talking to her or paying her any attention whenever he visited his friend, her brother. She hated men the more and withdrew into her shell. She told no one about it. She became so quiet and shy to express herself to anyone, especially her family.

All these happened when they were very young. Time passed and they moved on with their lives, not observing the effects those events had on the actions they took through life and the several relationships they got involved in. They got married and all their background issues and past experiences started affecting their marriage negatively. They did not know the root of their issues until we met over a couple of sessions where I asked lots of questions that took them back to history. They underwent therapy which helped them to heal from all the emotional pains, hurt, grief and unforgiveness in their past. It was after this that they could now be coached on how to begin to communicate effectively and enjoy intimacy.

The coaching aspect took lesser time because by then, they could already see by themselves where they needed to work on. They were very intentional and I was able to help them through this process as their accountability partner. We are all products of different backgrounds and upbringing. Most of us have had both good and bad experiences right from our childhood till now. It's interesting to note that these backgrounds and experiences we have had get in the way of our marital intimacy and fulfilment later in life. It is the root cause of

many issues in marriage; yet we many times don't realize it.

What your spouse learnt from his or her parents, guardians and environment for over twenty years of his or her life cannot just be changed or wiped off overnight. It takes a process.

Some were shown so much affection by their parents while others did not experience this. Some grew up having all their needs met while others had to struggle to get their basic needs met. In what way is your background different from that of your spouse?

You may be wondering why the father/mother in the story above behaved the way they did. It is possible that's how they were also treated by their own parents and they didn't get help.

Intentions supersede actions. We all want to be judged based on our intentions, but we often judge others based on their actions alone and not their intentions.

Can you put off the blame lenses and put on the empathy lenses? Look at your spouse differently. He or she may be going through a lot that they may or may not even be aware of. When next your spouse reacts or communicates in a way that makes you feel unhappy, ask yourself these questions: Why could he or she be acting this way? What could be the possible intention? Is it possible he or she saw their parents or guardians do the same while growing up? Seek to know more about your spouse's background and past experiences, especially the significant ones.

They could be responsible for how your spouse treats you or reacts to situations. This is how to get intentional about

your marriage, build a good foundation and thrive all the way. Remember that you can't change anyone. People can only be influenced by your positive behaviours and actions. You need to first accept them the way they are and then change can begin to happen gradually.

People generally like people who are like them; people who see, hear or feel things the way they do. The closest way to achieving this is to build rapport. Get interested in what your spouse likes, pace gradually, and before you know it, you will be positively influencing them. An NLP presupposition states that everything is possible in the presence of rapport.

Ingredients of Effective Communication



Understanding the personality and values of your spouse helps you communicate better. For example, an introverted person is naturally reserved while an extrovert is naturally outgoing. However, we have extreme, mild and low cases. Also, the way a task oriented person communicates is different from the way a people-oriented person communicates. It is important to become aware so that you can both adapt where necessary. Understanding and maximizing your differences effectively contributes to the stability of your relationship. When you are aware, it would be easier to communicate effectively in the language your spouse understands and get transformational results.

Felix is a very social person who loves to attend parties and hang out with his friends. He spends a lot on outings and travels. He is the life of every party he attends. He just can't keep calm when there's no activity around him. He is one who loves and values fun. His wife, on the other hand, prefers to stay indoors. She is on the reserved side. She would rather read books and take care of the house than go out. She gets her drive and motivation from solitude and books. She values her privacy. She is introverted while her husband is an extreme extrovert. These differences have been a conflicting issue for them since they got married. Suffice to say that it is what attracted them to each other in the first place. But at the moment they can't seem to see eye to eye on this matter, and are always at loggerheads on issues. Felix feels his wife is too boring while his wife sees him as too forward. Opposites attract, but can attack when not well managed.

According to Milton H. Erickson, “Every person's model of the world is as unique as their thumbprint. There are no two people alike, no two people who understand the same sentence the same way. So, in dealing with people, you try not to fit them into your concept of what they should be...” In the story shared above, Felix and his wife can handle their situation by choosing to first discuss, understand, accept and learn to maximize their differences in the marriage. They need to specifically discuss the differences in their personalities; identify, clarify and analyse their values to see how they can still live in peace and enjoy their relationship, regardless of their differences. Coming to a point of having 'shared values' is also something they might need to consider.

Value can be said to be the worth or importance of something. It can also be your moral principles or standards of behaviour. Values are those things that are important to you as well as give you the boost and motivation to keep moving. They also change over time based on different experiences.

Our values originate from our families, environment, media, religion, culture and society. The reason you act the way you do can be easily traced to your personality or values. When you are not with one who shares the same values with you or at least understands them, there's bound to be misunderstanding and conflicts.

Your values dictate your decisions and actions. Consequently, they help you to decide what, who and where you invest your time, energy and resources. There is a saying that people don't fight, it is their values that clash. Examples of values are leisure, responsibility, honesty, wealth, learning, helping people, adventure, orderliness,

self-expression, loyalty, spirituality, faith, purpose, health, fitness, giving, self-development, money management, family, intimacy, leadership, punctuality, children, hard work, and purpose. The list is endless.

In Felix and his wife's case, that they can't see eye to eye on an issue doesn't mean they hate each other. It just means that they are yet to really understand how their different personalities and values come to play, clash and affect their intimacy.

The meeting point or 'shared values' is that point where you ask each other a peculiar question: even though we value different things in this particular area or subject matter, what do we need to do in order to get the results we need or desire? For Felix, are there times he can be home with his wife? And are there other times the wife can go out with her husband to have fun? When discussing about shared values, it should be very objective and based on the positive results it would bring to your marriage.

It is critical to understand the pros and cons of your personality type and how you both can create a balance without necessarily imposing change or trying to fix your spouse. Everyone has been wired a certain way, so what is more important is to see how you both can live in peace and love regardless of your differences or even similarities.

As long as you love and chose each other, then you can both work and thrive together if you focus on your strengths and unique vision and marriage culture.

It is a hard process, but absolutely practicable. For example, if some employees have their way, they wouldn't wake up so early to go to the office. However, because they

know something is at stake, such as their appraisal, promotion, income, they jump out of bed every morning and get set for the office. They don't necessarily like the idea of waking up so early but have to do so because of their end goal.

Now let me ask you, what is at stake in your marriage? What is your end goal? By being an extrovert or an introvert, what other things does it affect? What do you gain and/or lose? Does it take you further apart or bring you closer to your spouse? Where can you adjust and come up with a shared value? Remember, having a shared value is you both acknowledging your individualities and coming up with ways to have a common ground.

It is important to note that new values can be learnt and developed. Don't say, "This is how I have been, how I am and how I will always be; after all, you met me like this and still decided to marry me, so why are you now complaining?" People evolve, so you need to be flexible enough to adapt.

I never used to be experimental or adventurous with food, but I married one who is. He loves to travel. He is very procedural with food, which I usually complained as being stressful to me. However, over a period of time, I got to the point of embracing that part of him wholeheartedly, learnt a lot, and picked up this new value of adventure which I'm beginning to value deeply whilst still learning.

Old values can be unlearnt if they are not producing the results you need. Every behaviour you have today was learnt at one time or the other in your life, so there's really nothing that should be cast in concrete. There should always be room to learn and grow in marriage.

Discuss the differences in your personalities and how you can both maximize them in your marriage. Try to identify and write down your core values, at least five of them for each of you; then harmonize them. You may just find out the reasons that particular issue keeps repeating itself in your relationship or marriage for months or years. Your discovery will definitely tell you more about each other. You will be surprised to see that there are some things you thought you knew but never really knew about your spouse. Discuss how you can create SHARED values.

EXERCISE

1. Discuss the differences in your personalities and its impact on your relationship.
2. List ten of your core values in order of importance.
3. Compare with your partner's list to see if or how they align.

OTHER CHANNELS OF EXPRESSION

Website: www.ogunnaiKETemitayo.com

Email: connect2temitayo@gmail.com

IG: @coupleconnect09

X: @coupleconnect09

Youtube: Couple Connect with Temitayo

Enquiries: +234 (0) 802 2644 900

INFO-PAGE

• RESOURCES

Our resources will be of great benefit to you; taking you on a journey from where you are to where you desire to be as regards relationship and marriage.

Visit our website to start your journey.

⊗ www.selar.com/m/CoupleConnect

⊗ www.ogunnaiкетemitayo.com

SERVICES

- Life and Relationship Clarity Session
- Professional Matchmaking
- Heal and Rebuild Session

COURSES:

- Master Communication Course
- Spouse Design Workshop
- About-to-Wed Workshop

BOOKS

- Choose Right: Practical Answers to 22 Real Questions Singles Are Asking and the Clarity You Need to Choose Right.
- Talk Before the Walk: 120-Question Pre-Marriage Checklist.

- Start Right: A Young Couple's Guide to Thriving in Marriage from Day One.
- 21 Days to Better Communication: A Journal to Unlock Hidden Conversation Rules and Build Deeper Connection.
- Emotions Tracker: A Practical Guide on Emotional Fitness for Successful Relationships

EVENT

Annual Couple Connect Conference.

CONTACT

- ☎ +234(0)802 2644 900
- 📧🐦 @coupleconnect09
- 📺 Youtube: Couple Connect with Temitayo
- ✉ Email: connect2temitayo@gmail.com
- 🌐 Website: www.ogunnaiketemitayo.com

About the Book

Over 50% of the reasons behind marital challenges or irreconcilable conflicts/differences is as a result of poor communication skills.

Everyone can talk but not everyone can communicate. Communication is the oxygen of every relationship. An engine is to a car what communication is to marriage. Without it, your relationship dies. No marriage can rise above its communication level. It fuels intimacy between you and your spouse. However, not just mouthy communication, but intentional and effective communication.

As a matter of fact, it is a skill that should be learned by every couple. Just as you learnt how to write A, B, C; effective communication requires learning and starting from the basics. To have a thriving relationship and marriage, you must be able to communicate effectively. You must understand the art and science of communication.

This book exposes some of the dynamics involved in effective communication. You will get to understand what communication really is and how you can succeed at it. You will understand the reasons you don't get results when communicating with your Partner and how you can begin to get better and more sustainable results.