

## Love & Language

I meet couple everyday who state that the problem in the relationship is communication. They say they cannot talk to each other without fighting, disagreeing, or misunderstanding each other. Most people have the common misconception that communication in marriage is done with words and talk.

However, if you think about it, very often words are the very cause of problems and distress. Have you ever considered that the so-called cure, talking to each other, may actually be the source of your problem? That your use of words, words, and words is actually the poison in your relationship.

When it comes to verbal communication couples can argue for hours; fight back and forth about trivialities; be hurt by words; be distressed by tones of voice; be misquoted; pounce on phrases or unintentional words; verbally berate each other; give the silent treatment; or use foul language to abuse each other. What is common in all of these things? It is the use of words and language.

You tend to assume that talking and expressing yourself in words is good for you – particularly when there is a problem. Now, in many instances it is, but there are so many instances where it is not. Think about misunderstanding: Most of the time you feel misunderstood is because something you have said has been taken up the wrong way. The source of the problem is often the words themselves. What you said and what he said.

This is not unusual because language in relationships simultaneously create and solve problems. Language itself has a forked tongue because when you speak to someone you are trying to do two things – you are trying to solve a problem and you are trying to connect. Very often you cannot do both in families – you cannot always connect and solve the problem at the same time. One usually has to give way to the other or else the person you are talking to feels you are being duplicitous.

It is interesting to realise that language originated from the mating calls of animals and continued in the expressions of pleasure or distress by infants. The primary purpose of language is to connect. The original purpose of language was to draw closer to someone else. The raw energy that powers the use of words is this desire to connect. As language evolved it began to serve a second function – that is to help people co-operate and problem solve. However, problem-solving assisted people to connect. Therefore, when you are talking to your husband or children about a problem you are doing so because you are wanting to connect and love. If you had no bond with these people, you would have no reason to really problem-solve. It would serve little function. So don't let your need to solve a problem drown out your need to connect.

Couples who argue a lot do so because their desire to connect is repressed by themselves and frustrated by the other. This is where the anger and irritation comes from – the frustrated desire to connect, play, and be safe. If you had no such desire there would be no energy to fuel your arguments - you would not even bother.

All arguments and negativity are expressions of a self-frustration, a self-destructive impulse. Your anger is your frustrated desire. It is love turned against itself. The desire to negate your partner's point of view is based on your own self-frustration.

Language originates in the play. It originates in the joy, pleasure, and love between a parent and child. Co-operation between child and mother through language is fuelled by this love. Talk was the language of love and the senses long before it becomes the language of co-operation and learning. Words stand on the base of an uncomplicated desire to give expression to simple joy.

The beginning of language was not to solve a problem but to give a kind of magical expression to simple pleasures, joys, and pains. Language is always a metaphor, a sign pointing to something felt. But, as the Zen monk pointed out, do not mistake the finger that points to the moon for the moon itself. Do not mistake your partner's words for your partner himself.

The problem with language is that there is a big gap between your words and your sensual self. What you are trying to say is so often light-years behind what you want to say. This is the magic and frustration of words. For this reason, being misunderstood is more common than being understood.

This is why so much of marital problems are based on the idolatry of words and language. Men and women pride themselves on what they say, they think that what they say is right, and they treat their words like they were gospel. Yet I find in my work with couples that what they say, and how they say it, is an ocean away from what is necessary and justified. Your blind belief in your own thinking and your self-absorbed conviction that what you say is true, is a form of mental illness all of itself!

Wittgenstein, a wise thinker, suggested that the work of philosophy was to overcome the insanity of language and words! He went on to say that "those who understand me recognise my propositions as senseless". In everyday language, he was saying that a lot of what you say is bulls\*\*t. That is, your arguments are put together to disguise the fact that you don't really know.

Language is a compromise between your emotional life and reality. Words are beautiful chains that entangle you. Can you untie yourself from your arguments? Can you recover the power of sensual rather than persuasive speech?