

STEPS TO PRACTICING ACTIVE LISTENING

STEP 1:

GIVE YOUR FULL ATTENTION

- Put down your phone; turn off distractions.
- Make eye contact and face your spouse to show engagement.
- Use nonverbal cues (nodding, leaning in, soft facial expressions).

Example:

Distracted listening: “Uh-huh . . . yeah, okay.” (While scrolling on phone.)

Active listening: “I hear you. That sounds really frustrating. Tell me more.”

STEP 2:

REFLECT AND CLARIFY WHAT YOU HEARD

- Repeat back what you heard in your own words.
- Use phrases like:
“What I hear you saying is . . .”
“So, you feel _____ because _____. Is that right?”

Example:

Spouse 1: “I feel like you don’t appreciate what I do around the house.”

Spouse 2 (Active Listening Response): “You’re feeling unappreciated for the work you put into keeping things in order. Did I get that right?”

Bad Response:

“You’re overreacting. I do appreciate you.”

Good Response:

“I didn’t realize you felt that way. Can you tell me more about what would help you feel more appreciated?”

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STEP 3:

VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS

- Acknowledge their emotions, even if you don't fully agree.

Use statements like:

"That makes sense why you'd feel that way."

"I understand why that upset you."

"That must have been frustrating."

Example:

Spouse 1: "I felt ignored when you didn't respond to my text earlier."

Spouse 2: "I see why that hurt you. I didn't mean to ignore you. I was just overwhelmed at work. I'll do better about responding."

STEP 4:

RESPOND THOUGHTFULLY, NOT REACTIVELY

- Pause before responding. Ask, "Am I listening to understand or just to reply?"
- Use "I" statements instead of blaming.
- Keep your tone gentle and respectful (Proverbs 15:1).

Example:

Bad Response: "That's ridiculous. You're too sensitive."

Good Response: "I didn't realize that upset you. I'll make sure I respond differently."

BLAMING STATEMENTS VS. 'I' STATEMENTS

Blaming statements often escalate conflicts and make the other person defensive. On the other hand, 'I' statements help express your feelings and needs without placing blame. 'I' statements promote healthier communication and help solve issues collaboratively.

FORMULA FOR AN 'I' STATEMENT

"I feel [emotion] **when** [situation] **because** [explanation].
I need [solution]."

EXAMPLES OF BLAMING VS. 'I' STATEMENTS

Blaming Statement: "You never listen to me!"

Transformed Into: "I feel unheard when I share something important, and it gets ignored. I need us to have more focused conversations."

Blaming Statement: "You always leave me to do everything!"

Transformed Into: "I feel overwhelmed when I have to handle everything alone. I need us to work as a team."

Blaming Statement: "You do not care about my feelings!"

Transformed Into: "I feel hurt when my emotions are not acknowledged. I need reassurance that you understand me."

Blaming Statement: "You are always late, and it is so rude!"

Transformed Into: "I feel frustrated when I have to wait because I value our time together. I need better communication about timing."

Blaming Statement: "You never help around the house!"

Transformed Into: "I feel exhausted when I handle all the chores alone. I need us to divide responsibilities more fairly."

Blaming Statement: "You are always on your phone and ignoring me!"

Transformed Into: "I feel disconnected when we spend time together but do not engage. I need more quality time with you."



BLAMING STATEMENTS VS. 'I' STATEMENTS

Blaming Statement: "You do not respect me!"

Transformed Into: "I feel disrespected when my opinions are not considered. I need us to listen to each other more openly."

Blaming Statement: "You never say anything nice to me!"

Transformed Into: "I feel unappreciated when I do not hear affirming words. I need more verbal encouragement from you."

Blaming Statement: "You always interrupt me!"

Transformed Into: "I feel frustrated when I am interrupted because I want to feel heard. I need us to take turns speaking."

Blaming Statement: "You never plan anything fun for us!"

Transformed Into: "I feel neglected when we do not plan special time together. I need us to schedule more date nights."

PRACTICE: TRANSFORM YOUR OWN BLAMING STATEMENTS

Below, write down some common blaming statements you find yourself using. Then, try transforming them into 'I' statements using the formula provided above.

Blaming Statement:

Transformed Into 'I' Statement:

Blaming Statement:

Transformed Into 'I' Statement:

Blaming Statement:

Transformed Into 'I' Statement:

Blaming Statement:

Transformed Into 'I' Statement:

FINAL THOUGHT:

SPEAK IN LOVE

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1 NIV).

When we shift from blaming to expressing our feelings and needs with 'I' statements, we create a more loving and understanding relationship. Practice this daily, and see how your communication improves!

STEP 1: BE PRESENT—GIVE YOUR SPOUSE YOUR FULL ATTENTION

What weakens emotional connection?

- Being distracted (on the phone, watching TV, not making eye contact).
- Only engaging in surface-level conversation.
- Not showing interest in their feelings.

How to Strengthen Emotional Connection

- Make eye contact and be fully present.
- Set aside at least 10-15 minutes a day to talk without distractions.
- Show you're listening by nodding, responding, or asking follow-up questions.

STEP 2: ASK DEEP & MEANINGFUL QUESTIONS

What weakens emotional connection?

- Only talking about logistics (bills, chores, schedules).
- Not checking in emotionally.

How to Strengthen Emotional Connection

Ask open-ended questions like:

- “What’s been the best part of your day?”
- “What’s something you’ve been struggling with lately?”
- “How can I support you better right now?”

STEP 3: EXPRESS APPRECIATION & AFFECTION DAILY

What weakens emotional connection?

- Focusing only on what your spouse does wrong.
- Assuming they “should know” you appreciate them.

How to Strengthen Emotional Connection

Give specific compliments and words of affirmation:

- “I appreciate how hard you work for our family.”
- “I love the way you encourage me.”
- Show physical affection (hugs, holding hands, a kiss before leaving the house).

STEP 4: SHARE YOUR FEELINGS & BE VULNERABLE

What weakens emotional connection?

- Keeping emotions bottled up.
- Hiding stress, sadness, or fears from your spouse.

How to Strengthen Emotional Connection

- Be honest about your feelings, struggles, and joys.
- If you're upset, instead of withdrawing, say:
- “I feel overwhelmed today because _____. Will you pray for me?”

STEP 5: SPEND QUALITY TIME TOGETHER

What weakens emotional connection?

- Spending all your time working, parenting, or handling responsibilities without fun and connection.
- Being in the same room but not engaging (both on your phones, doing separate activities).

How to Strengthen Emotional Connection

- Plan weekly date nights (even if it's at home watching a movie or taking a walk).
- Do activities you both enjoy: cooking together, playing a game, taking a drive.
- Laugh together—watch a funny show, tell jokes, reminisce about fun memories.

This guide provides a biblical approach to resolving conflict in marriages and families. Follow these steps to address conflicts with grace and unity.

STEP 1: PAUSE AND PRAY

Before responding, take a moment to pray for guidance and calmness.



STEP 2: LISTEN ACTIVELY

Focus on what the other person is saying without interrupting.



STEP 3: USE 'I STATEMENTS'

Express your feelings without blaming (e.g., 'I feel hurt when . . .').



STEP 4: SEEK TO UNDERSTAND

Ask clarifying questions to ensure you understand their perspective.



STEP 5: FIND A RESOLUTION

Agree on a solution that honors God and strengthens your relationship.



STEP 6: RECONCILE AND PRAY

End with forgiveness and prayer for unity.