

GTO Seeds for Growth

Commit to a Time to Talk

by Bob & Yvonne Turnbull

To have good communication in marriage is more than just learning effective skills.

It's about *making time* to communicate. Why is that important? Because communication is the way we connect - feel close to one another - grow together. If we are only having snatches of communication - like - "What's for dinner?" "Meatloaf." "Oh, okay." Or, "How was work?" "Fine." "Oh, okay." We often find ourselves drifting from one another. Years ago we realized this was happening to us.

We became aware that our communication always centered around work and we weren't spending any time just enjoying each other's company through our conversations. We were missing out sharing our thoughts and ideas with each other. Plus we found when we only had snatches of communication we noticed a tension developing between us and we started bickering more and more. For our marriage to grow we needed some healthy adjustments.

So this month we would like to give you our four own communication times that we installed in our marriage that made a big difference. . Maybe these can help you as well.

DAILY TALK TIMES

We make sure we have time **every** day to talk. There are multiple times for conversation "snatches" - phone calls, passing each other on the stairway en route to our respective offices, dealing with a grievance - but we have also disciplined ourselves to have faithful and longer daily talks.

For us it's our dinnertime. Mealtimes has always been important conversation time for our family. When our son was living at home that was our family connection time (with the television OFF). Our son is now married with a family of his own, but

our main talk time is still around the dinner table.

We also decided that this was not going to be just a time to discuss dreaded bills, upcoming appointments, or discussions on work, but it would mainly be a time to learn something new about each other. We call it our Information 'n Appreciation time. We'd talk about every day life, ask each other creative questions, plus we'd talk about current events and politics. Also we would tell each other one thing God taught us that day and one positive experience that occurred that day.

For some we realize dinnertime might not work with a gaggle of giggly ankle biters around the table, but we'd like to encourage you to find a talk time that works for you. It could be when the kids go to bed or as one couple did with toddlers, they were able to have lunch together and would place the kids on two blankets near them for a rest time as the parents talked.

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WEEKLY TALK TIMES

Our weekly talk time is a special time when we get out of our house and go to a local eatery so we can get away from the hustle and bustle of the house. We turn our cell phones **off** so as not to be interrupted. We first go over our calendars and schedules for the next couple of weeks to make sure we're on the same track about our family and business life. Doing this has alleviated hassles that used to sound like this - "You never told me about the Carlson's coming over for dinner Saturday night." Whoops. During our weekly talk time we also discuss any future plans that we may have in the hopper like an upcoming vacation, etc. This is also a time to problem

solve if there is something in the family or our marriage that needs to be dealt with.

Some of you may be thinking, "We have small children so how do we do this weekly time bit." Maybe a friend or neighbor could watch them for an hour or two. If you decide the weekly time is a priority you will find a way.

We know one couple who couldn't get away for that time period, so they set aside Saturday mornings as their time. They would get up, feed the kids, put on a children's videotape, and hang a "Do Not Disturb" sign on their bedroom doorknob. They would have their breakfast in their room and spend at least an hour talking. Their kids were all for it and even reminded Mom and Dad if they failed to do it some Saturday morn. Ask God to guide you in a creative way.

Because we have made a daily and weekly talk time a part of our life, our marriage has benefitted. Over the years we have found ourselves growing towards each other rather than drifting away. It has also lowered our tension level because Yvonne now knows there will be times to talk so she doesn't store things up for week and then unload them all at once when she garners a few moments of Bob's attention. Often that would place Bob on overload and cause him to shout "Incoming, Incoming" and he would dive for cover!

In Proverbs 15:23 it says, "A man finds joy in giving an apt reply. How good is a timely word."

When we have time in our schedules to talk we find ourselves giving each other more timely words. Find out what personal system works for you. Discuss it. Pray about it. Then mutually implement it into your lives. You will honor each other and God will honor your conversations as you continue to draw closer to Him - and to each other.

Time to Talk (cont')

What you don't maintain will deteriorate! It doesn't go forward or stay the same. It goes backwards!

Take your house for example. With the small amount of time it takes to maintain your house - like clean the gutters, change the air filter, fix a *small* leak - your house will give you years of trouble free living. But if you neglect these little areas of attention - what happens? - things deteriorate and before too long you have major problems that will take a lot of your time and money.

HANGING-OUT TIMES

Have you discovered, like us, that some of your best conversations are not planned but happen spontaneously? We've discovered this with children, especially when they're teenagers. Hanging around them, with no set agenda, we've experienced many good chats since they are more relaxed and tend to bring up a myriad of subjects.

It's the same way in your marriage. It's those times you make to just hang out with each other that may illicit some wonderful conversations. It's often those small blocks of time when you share your thoughts and heart with each other. For us it's when we do fun activities together, like going to the gym, going for walks, swimming in our local community pool. Sometimes during those activities we'd have playful talks and other times, deep and meaningful.

When couples tell us they haven't been communicating they often say,

"We don't have anything to talk about." That's why we recommend Hanging-Out Times because when you share activities together such as walking, gardening, skiing or serving together in a ministry in your local church, you have something in common to talk about. Or maybe start sharing a hobby together, e.g., Bob sharing his interest and knowledge of World War Two (No, no, he didn't *fight* in the war - he's not *that* old) history with Yvonne, who was never a history buff. Bob is never short on words to share with some of the most interesting battle strategies he just studied. We have had some great conversations over this hobby.

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ESCAPE TIMES

Escape times for us are when we get alone for a date or *romantic* interlude which can be right in our own home - an overnight stay at a nearby hotel - or sometimes even a weekender. All of us need these times away from the kids and all the interruptions and schedules that can bombard us at home. These times give us the ability to just focus on each other which has enhanced our relationship.

Yvonne thought that when we were first started these escape times, she had such high expectations that we would

spend all our time having deep, meaningful conversations. She found out that these deep conversations didn't always happen, and then she would be disappointed. She has changed her thinking since we started having more opportunities to talk. She now just goes with the flow wherever we are. She's learned to enjoy just being in Bob's presence, and if a deep conversation comes out of it, it's an added treat.

This brings up our last point on communication with your mate. Some of you may be like Yvonne who for years believed that Bob should meet all of her communication needs, but unfortunately she was often disappointed and Bob felt like he couldn't please her because the reality is that it's nearly impossible for your mate to meet *all* your communication needs. We need others in our lives to fill in that gap. Yvonne realized she was running short on having girlfriends to talk with over coffee, or doing a craft together, or in a Bible study. As she pursued these relationships it helped balance her communication needs and it took the pressure off of Bob having to do it all.

If any of you are pressing your mate for more communication, could it just be that you need some friends of the same sex to fill that need? Please think on it and pray on it.

Visit Bob & Yvonne's website at www.turnbulministries.org.

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