

Couples' Communication Strengths Finder

In mentoring couples in distress, it's tempting to place all the focus on the couples' deficits. But much can be gained by helping them focus on what they do well. In this exercise, you'll find a tool for helping them articulate their couple-communication strengths. Why? Because how they communicate impacts everything in marriage, no matter what their particular struggle. And if they can begin to recognize the areas of communication where they do it particularly well, it will give them courage and hope for overcoming their hurdles.

It is the rare couple that periodically articulates what they do well as a team. Think about it. Most couples are more prone to complain about their pitfalls than they are to praise themselves for their successes. If we aren't careful, there's something about the nature of relationships that causes us to exchange pep rallies for gripe sessions. As mentors, it is helpful to be aware of this temptation – especially as it relates to your mentorees' ability to communicate well...and yours, too.

In this exercise, your mentoree couple will take stock of what's working and what's not in their communication. *Be sure they do this exercise separately* – each having their own form before comparing notes later on. Have them begin by reviewing the list below and checking which things they do well and which things their partner does well. Once they have done this, review the column of check marks and note which items they both do well and which ones that neither does particularly well. Feel free to add to this list any communication abilities you have observed that are missing in this list. And, as always, the more honest, the more helpful this exercise will be.

Who does this well...	You	Spouse	Both	Neither
Listening without interruption				
Staying on topic				
Ready to apologize				
Controlling emotions appropriately				
Giving full attention				
Identifying and expressing feelings				
Thinking clearly before speaking				
Reserving opinion until the right time				
Maintaining eye-contact while talking				
Being appropriately vulnerable				
Permitting productive conflict				
Speaking with clarity				
Inviting and receiving feedback				
Appropriately using humor				
Coming across as personally warm				
Express genuine interest				
Being assertive with needs				
Knowing when to talk and when not				