

WHY COMMUNICATION IS THE FOUNDATION

Most marriages do not fail because couples stopped loving each other — they fail because couples stopped communicating well. **Good communication is a skill that can be learned and improved by any couple willing to do the work.**

■ Gottman Institute: couples who thrive maintain roughly 5 positive interactions for every 1 negative one. Daily habits — not grand gestures — create that ratio.

6 COMMUNICATION HABITS OF STRONG MARRIAGES

#	Habit	What It Looks Like	Try This
1	Listen to understand, not to respond.	Most arguments escalate because both spouses wait for their turn instead of hearing the other.	Make eye contact, put down your phone, and repeat back what you heard before you respond.
2	Speak in 'I' statements.	'You never listen' puts your spouse on defense. 'I feel unheard when interrupted' opens conversation.	Replace 'You always' and 'You never' with 'I feel' and 'I need.'
3	Choose the right time and place.	Important conversations held when someone is hungry, tired, or stressed rarely end well.	Ask: 'Is now a good time to talk?' Give your spouse the chance to be present first.
4	Deal with one issue at a time.	Bringing up every grievance at once ensures nothing gets resolved.	If another issue surfaces, write it down and address it separately. Finish one thing first.
5	Take a break when emotions spike.	When voices rise, the brain shifts to survival mode — not problem-solving. Pausing is not quitting.	Agree on a signal that means 'I need 20 minutes.' Commit to coming back.
6	End with a plan, not just an apology.	Without a concrete change, the same argument returns.	Before closing, ask: 'What do we agree to do differently?' Write it down if needed.

5 HARMFUL PATTERNS TO STOP NOW

John Gottman identified contempt, stonewalling, criticism, and defensiveness as the strongest predictors of divorce.

Harmful Pattern	What It Sounds / Looks Like	Healthier Alternative
Contempt	Eye-rolling, sarcasm, mockery — the most damaging pattern of all.	Express frustration with respect. 'I'm upset about this' — not 'That's ridiculous.'
Stonewalling	Shutting down or leaving without agreeing to return.	Say 'I need 20 minutes to calm down' and commit to coming back.
Criticism	Attacking character: 'You're so selfish' vs. 'I felt hurt when...'	Name the specific action — not a permanent label about who your spouse is.
Defensiveness	Immediately countering instead of hearing your spouse.	Try: 'You're right I could have handled that better.' Own your part first.
Bringing up the past	Using old arguments as ammunition in a current conflict.	Stay present. Address recurring wounds in a separate, calmer conversation.

WEEKLY CHECK-IN & OUR COMMITMENT

Weekly Check-In — 20 Minutes, Once a Week

Same day, same time. No phones. No TV. Connection — not problem-solving.

Questions to ask each other:

- What was the best part of your week?
- Was there a moment you felt disconnected from me?
- Is there anything you need from me right now?
- What are you looking forward to this week?
- How can I support you better this week?

Our check-in day and time: _____

Our Communication Commitment

One habit we are committing to build:

One pattern we are committing to stop:

How we will hold each other accountable:

One conversation we still need to have:

One way I will show up better this week:

■ KFM MARRIAGE SUPPORT PROGRAM & RESOURCES

■ KFM Marriage Support Program

Kingdom Family Ministry offers **free marriage and premarital counseling assistance** for eligible residents of **Montgomery County and North Harris County**. We connect couples with trusted providers to remove financial barriers — whether you are preparing for marriage, strengthening your relationship, or navigating challenges together.

Get Connected:

www.kingdomfamilyministry.org/marriagesupportprogram

✉ support@kingdomfamilyministry.org

☎ 936-280-0822

Open to eligible residents of Montgomery County and North Harris County.

Resources

The Gottman Institute

gottman.com — Research-based marriage tools from 40+ years of couples research.

Focus on the Family

focusonthefamily.com — Faith-based marriage resources and counselor referrals.

National Healthy Marriage Resource Center

healthymarriageinfo.org — Free tools for couples at every stage.

Prepare/Enrich

prepare-enrich.com — Couple assessments used by counselors and churches worldwide.

AAMFT — Find a Therapist

aamft.org — Find a licensed marriage and family therapist near you.

◆ FAITH & ENCOURAGEMENT

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." — Ephesians 4:2 (NIV)

A strong marriage is not built in one conversation — it is built in a thousand small ones. Humility, patience, and a willingness to keep showing up are not just good communication advice — they are the character God calls us to bring into every relationship we are given.

My Prayer / Reflection

My Action Step This Week

