

Pitfalls of Communication:

Three pitfalls that make communication virtually impossible... and what you can do instead



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Couples who feel trapped have lost the ability to communicate

When you're trying to tell your partner something important, and they don't hear you, the two of you become as dangerous as two trapped animals.

Your partner is yelling at you that they need help now! But in their panic, with the jaws of the trap closing down on them, they can't explain this to you – they just attack. They don't bother to explain that they feel hurt or stuck – they just yell, name-call, or make demands.

Unfortunately, this puts you in a trap, too. As the target of the yelling, you feel unfairly accused and backed into a corner. It often feels like your only defense is to shut down or lash out too.

Now both of you are in self-preservation mode, acting like wounded animals.



What went wrong?

In these ill-fated interactions with your mate, your real hope is to get their help. But it's hard to explain that well when you're hurting. So understandably, you start telling them what they have to change to make you feel better and loosen up the trap. They react by protecting themselves. Now, you're both yelling for help – and nothing is happening.

One of you has to say, "Wait – what's really wrong? What's going on here?"

If you want to save your relationship, it is important to know the three main Communication Pitfalls and work to loosen their grip. These are the traps. Do you recognize them?

1. Withdrawal, silence, avoidance.

When you shut down, you are trying to protect yourself, but you're actually rejecting and dismissing your partner. They don't know what is going on in your head, so they make up stories to explain your behavior. With your silence, you are not helping them disprove their theories.

2. Shaming or guiltning them

This is also a way to self-protect. When you blame, you're really just enacting a hidden hope: that by becoming more powerful than your partner, you'll force them to change, to meet your needs, or pay attention to your wishes. The belief is that they need to change their behavior so you can get relief.

3. Resentful compliance or avoiding conflicts

Using this protective reaction is looking for peace at any price. But there is a very real cost to this choice. You either pretend your partners' needs don't affect you, or you ignore your own. No talking – no problems, right? Wrong. Over time, putting your head in the sand creates a wide gap between you. Eventually, you and your partner become strangers.

What can you do?

All three of these reactions make connection and communication virtually impossible. You've put up huge barricades to avoid the hurt. Each time you engage in self-protection, you stack another brick in the wall that separates you. You try to deny or ignore the pain that your partner is suffering.

You're both stuck, on different sides of that enormous wall. How do you get over it?

Here's a game-changer: Communicate differently!

But how?

For each trap, there is an escape:

1. If you withdraw or go silent...

Speak up up. Let your partner know what you are experiencing. It is hard to have a collaborative team if your partner doesn't know what's really going on for you. You can tell them you feel criticized or feel blamed.

2. If you engage in shaming or guiltning...

If you guilt or shame your partner, you may get what you want for a short time. But the results won't be long lasting, since your partner is acting to avoid the pain of guilt rather than because they see your hurt. This could lead to having a resentful partner down the line.

If you can start to talk about what is important to you and work as a team you can make big things happen.

Try this. Try talking about a subject by only saying what is going on with you. When couples are restrained to only talking about themselves, it becomes almost impossible to shame or manipulate their partner.

Going back to our first example, what you really need to say is: "Honey, I am stuck in this trap over here. I am in a lot of pain and I wish that you could help me. It really hurts."

3. If you resort to resentful compliance...

It's likely that it is hard for you to speak up and express yourself. If you can think about what is important to you and then express it, you are saying what matters to you and letting your partner really know you.

All of these strategies can help you start working as a team and knocking down some bricks, and push back the jaws of the trap you're in.



Because I've been through hell and back, I don't flinch when couples come to me with communication breakdowns, the crisis of an affair, eruptive fighting, or the paralysis of loneliness inside their relationship.

I bring a tailored approach that brings you communication breakthroughs, and the follow-up support to build on your momentum.

I want to hear about your relationship. Call me today to schedule a free 15-minute consultation. By the end of our conversation, you'll know the best next steps for you.

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