

Communication 101

Do you listen to respond... or do you listen to understand?

When you listen to respond:

- Respond with your own feelings or perspective
- Criticize or become defensive
- Make corrections, change the subject, or interrupt

When you listen to understand:

- Sit silently while the other person speaks
- Make eye contact and affirming sounds/heads nods
- Show curiosity by asking questions

Avoiding the 4 Horsemen of communication:

What are the 4 Horsemen:

- **Criticism** - involves attacking your partner's personality or character, rather than focusing on the specific behavior that bothers you
- **Defensiveness** - denying responsibility, making excuses, or meeting one complaint with another
- **Stonewalling** - refusing to respond, completely ignoring the person
- **Contempt** - one step up from criticism; involves tearing down or being insulting toward your partner; open sign of disrespect
 - *Source: The Gottman Method*

Allow room for repair:

- Use humor
- Utilize physical affection
- Say sorry
- Clearly express feelings
- Recognize when your partner is trying to repair

How to fight fairly:

1. Remind yourself that your partner is NOT your enemy (it's not about winning)
 - a. When you fight to win, you block yourself from feeling empathy
2. Take a break when you feel flooded
 - a. If your BPM is over 100, you are considered flooded and may struggle to communicate without feeling defensive
3. Recognize when your attachment wounds are triggered
 - a. Activated attachment wounds can lead to childhood coping skills

Reflective Listening

1. **Reflect** - repeat what you heard your partner say, "I heard you say..."
2. **Validate** - state that you understand why they could be feeling this way
3. **Empathize** - think about a time you felt the same way and relate it to how your partner is feeling
 - a. NOTE: you can empathize while not agreeing
4. **Problem Solve** - ask your partner "what can I do to make this better?"