

5 CRUCIAL
MARRIAGE-SAVING TIPS

HOW TO
COMMUNICATE
SO YOUR
HUSBAND
CAN HEAR YOU

TINA HAISMAN

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About the Author

Tina Haisman is a Certified Life Coach, Speaker and Podcaster.

As a child of divorce and a woman who has experienced a marriage crisis of her own, Tina is passionate about teaching women about how to create more happiness in life and marriage.

She does this by helping moms focus on taking care of themselves and connecting with God so they can show up in the world as the women they want to be.

Tina has been married for 29 years and has a 21-year-old son and an 18-year-old daughter.



Introduction

After 14 years of marriage, my husband suddenly announced that he did not know if he wanted to be married to me anymore.

This came as a complete surprise to me. If you would have asked me about it back then, I would have bragged about it. But what I didn't know was that he was very unhappy.

So, we worked with a Christian counselor to look back at what went wrong. Then we worked with a life coach to look forward and create a new marriage that we could both be happy in.

Through this experience, I learned so much about communication that I felt called to share my wisdom with other women.

And so, my intention with this book is to give you 5 of my most powerful, marriage-saving communication tips so that you can be sure that you have a genuine connection in your marriage.

These tips are going to start with a foundation for positive and productive communication in your marriage and progress to how to have difficult conversations.

Let's dive in!

Show Your Appreciation

According to research by Shaunti Feldhan, men have a deep need to feel appreciated for what they do.

In fact, 72% of all men say hearing “Thank you,” “Deeply Pleases” them.

Notice that this says “Deeply Pleases.” That means it is a significant emotion. It touches them deeply.

In fact, a woman's saying "Thank you" to her man is the emotional equivalent of his saying "I love you" to her.

Think for a moment about how good it feels to hear “I love you” from your husband. That’s how good it feels for him to hear “Thank you” from you.

Unfortunately, according to Shaunti’s research, only 1 in 4 men feels actively appreciated by his family.

And 44% feel unappreciated.

I don’t believe 44% of women don’t appreciate their husbands. I think we’re just not communicating it.

So, this is a great opportunity to improve the communication in our marriage!

Because when our husband is filled up with words of affirmation and appreciation, his ears will be more fully open to hearing what we are trying to say.

I recommend looking for things to tell him you appreciate him daily. Some examples of things you can say are:

“You are such a great dad.”

“Thank you for going to work for our family.”

“I love how you handled that meltdown...”

“Thank you for taking out the trash today.”

Yes! It is beneficial to thank them for the things we EXPECT them to do.

I'd like to share with you how well this worked for one of my clients.

She came to me because the communication in her marriage was filled with fighting.

She felt very disconnected from her husband. And the fighting was so often that her husband said he would leave her if things didn't change.

This scared my client, so we got to work on better communication. The kind of communication that creates connection.

The first step in that was to show appreciation more often.

Her husband ate it up. He loved it. And as a result, he started doing more and more kind gestures for her. No kidding!

One day, she was so excited about his kindness she sent me an email. I'd like to share it with you:

“Things are getting better day by day, we do have occasional setbacks, but I think that we both are feeling A LOT more comfortable with communicating. I am seeing a change in him as well. Today, when I got home from work, there was a box on the floor. My husband asked me if I saw it, and I said yes, “Is it something for your truck.” He said, “No! It’s new brakes for your car!””

I know this might seem like a goofy story to share because who would be excited about brakes? But it's not the brakes themselves she was excited about.

It was the act of kindness her husband did by ordering them for her. You see, it was on her “to-do” list to order the brakes, then he was going to install them.

But he wanted to make her happy and take something off her plate, so he did it for her. And you can see by the big deal he made of it that he was proud of it.

My client said he never would have done that without the efforts she was making to show him appreciation. She's probably right.

Expressing appreciation to our husbands keeps the doors of communication open and fosters a deep and loving connection in our relationship.

Express Desires, Not Complaints!

If you were ever a fly on the wall in my home early in my marriage, you would have heard my husband say to me, “I can never please you.” “I can never make you happy.” I knew that wasn’t true, so I didn’t think much of it.

I have come to learn that little phrase tells a big story about how our man is feeling. It tells us that he is giving up because all he hears from us are complaints and criticism.

Here’s why. Often, when a woman wants her husband to do something, she unconsciously phrases it negatively.

For example, if she is trying to get everyone ready to leave the house to go somewhere, she might say, “Hurry up! I don’t want to be late.”

While to a woman, this is harmless, just a statement of fact. To a man, this is seen as a command, demand or complaint, and he might respond negatively.

If we take the advice to communicate desires, not complaints, we might say, “I would love to make it to church on time so I can pray before the service starts.”

Then, your husband would see it as an opportunity to make you happy. Do you see the difference?

The first way is seen by a man as a complaint or a demand. But the second way is just expressing what you want. It's much more positive.

The secret to expressing our needs is telling our husbands what we do want, not what we don't want.

Use phrases like "I would love," or "I would appreciate," or even "I need help."

These phrases give your husband the opportunity to make you happy.

I would like to illustrate with a story I think we can all relate to.

My client didn't feel her husband was helping her enough. She felt like she was having to do everything by herself. Working. Cooking. Cleaning. Giving the kids baths and doing the bedtime routine at night.

Her husband never offered to help. He just sat on the couch watching TV. My client was growing very resentful because she thought he should offer to help. He should have known she needed help.

One night she made it clear that she was upset by banging the dishes as she was washing them and putting them away and making passive-aggressive comments about how nice it would be to be relaxing on the couch after work.

Her husband responded to one of her negative comments in a very telling way.

He said, “Maybe if you weren’t so negative, someone would want to help you.” As you can imagine, this angered my client, and they had a big argument after that.

When she brought this problem to me, I was able to show her a better way to get the help she needed. A simple way. And that was just to ask for help. To tell him what she wanted.

For example, the night she was wishing he would get off the couch and help get the kids ready for bed, she could have said, “Honey, I would love to get the kids to bed by 8:00 so I can sit on the couch and relax with you. Can you help me?”

Phrased this way, my client gives her husband the opportunity to make her happy! And she’s saving herself from experiencing feelings of frustration and resentment!

Isn’t this a much nicer communication cycle than the one that started with complaining?

Once she started expressing her desires, her husband got up off the couch and helped her out. In fact, it got to a point where she didn’t even have to ask. He just started helping out.

The takeaway here is that when we communicate our desires or what we need, we are opening up communication and connection and giving our husbands the opportunity to make us happy. So, instead of complaining when your husband does not help you, try asking for what you want!

Communicate Side-by-Side

Did you know that men tend to communicate best shoulder-to-shoulder instead of face-to-face and that men feel bonding happening when they are sharing an activity side-by-side.

This is a huge difference between men and women.

Think about what happens when we meet up with a girlfriend. We sit across from each other and talk, right? We are positioned face to face, and we make eye contact. That eye contact is vital for us to feel emotional bonding happening.

But what do men do when they get together? They do an activity. They go to a ballgame. Or they go fishing. Or golfing. They do something side by side because this is how they are most comfortable, and this is how they feel emotional bonding happening.

It's also helpful to know that men say face-to-face communication with their wives feels very intense - especially when we are unhappy with them. They notice our looks of disappointment and frustration, and they take them to heart.

So, one super-effective way to improve communication in your

marriage is to have conversations with your husband while doing something side-by-side. Like taking a walk. Or driving in the car (as long as the topic is not too intense). Or lying in bed at night.

According to an article in *Psychology Today* by Linda Wasmer Andrews, experts have discovered that when you're walking with someone, the forward momentum is not only physical but also psychological, meaning walking could help provide you with forward momentum in solving whatever challenge you might be talking about.

The author also pointed out that walking has been proven to increase emotional bonding. This means it can help you and your husband feel more emotionally connected, which could increase the sense of cooperation in your marriage. Such an exciting fact -- especially when you are trying to resolve conflict!

A third encouraging point made in the article is that when you and your husband walk side-by-side, it is as if you are a team facing the world together. Isn't this exactly what we want in our marriage?

I would like to share a personal story to show you how well this works.

Many years ago now, I sent my husband and my son shopping for my son's 8th-grade graduation suit.

When they came back, they were so excited to show me the suit. My son tried it on and came to see me in my office. I took one look at him and said, "He looks like he is wearing his father's suit."

I didn't think the comment was mean. I wasn't trying to be mean. I was just stating what I saw. The suit was clearly too big all around.

My brain was picturing my son walking down the aisle at his graduation in a suit that was falling off of him.

It was a practical comment in my mind, but it hurt my husband's feelings. He felt like he tried to help me out and take a job off my plate, but I wasn't grateful or satisfied. It wasn't good enough.

He walked off in a huff, and after cooling off myself, I wanted to resolve the issue. So, I invited him on a walk and said, "OK. Tell me what is bothering you."

As we walked side-by-side, he explained how he felt as I listened to understand. We were able to resolve the issue productively and peacefully.

In fact, I should warn you. I think this tactic worked a little too well because after that conversation, he said, "While we're talking, there is one more thing that has been bothering me." Then, he shared one more minor complaint, which we quickly resolved.

It might sound crazy, but I was so grateful he expressed the second problem because it proved to me that the doors of communication were open. That's exactly what we want!

You can use this tip to communicate side-by-side to improve both your general conversations and those more difficult ones. I am confident it will help you and your husband communicate better.

Master Tough Conversations

While none of us enjoy having disagreements with our spouses, they are an inevitable part of marriage. The key is not that disagreements occur but how we handle them.

That is why I am going to give you a template for how to have a difficult conversation. This template will allow you to successfully navigate disagreements in a way that prevents emotional outbursts and arguments.

I have 5 Steps for you.

Step 1: Give up the need to be right.

Often, when we are engaged in a disagreement with someone, our human nature drives us with a need to be right. But if you give up your need to be right, you will immediately remove the need for defense and defensiveness in your conversations.

Step 2: Ask your spouse to tell you his side of the story.

Then listen to understand him without interrupting him and without the intention of defending yourself. This is a step where you are just gathering information. After you have truly heard and understood him, then you can tell him your side of the story.

Step 3: Identify the facts in the story and agree on them.

This is helpful because facts are common ground you both can agree on. There is no opinion or drama involved in them. The facts are always true. Imagine a video camera is recording your life, providing irrefutable evidence of the facts.

Step 4: Express what the facts of the situation mean to you.

Do this step in only one single sentence. This is crucial because it's often where couples get stuck—focusing on their hurt feelings and personal narratives. By limiting ourselves to one sentence, we avoid a fight and turn it into a productive conversation instead.

Step 5: Come up with a solution

Stop talking about the problem and find a solution you can both agree to. The goal is to reach an agreement that satisfies both of you and prevents similar issues from arising in the future. The key is to work together to find a mutually beneficial solution, ensuring both partners feel heard and respected.

Let's take a look at a real-life example where your husband said he would be home for dinner at 6 p.m., but he didn't come home until 7 p.m.

Step 1: Give up the need to be right.

Recognize that insisting on being right about the situation will only lead to defensiveness. Approach the conversation with an open mind, focusing on understanding rather than being right.

Step 2: Ask your spouse to tell you his side of the story.

You: "Can you tell me what happened today that caused you to come home at 7 p.m. instead of 6 p.m.?"

Step 3: Identify the facts in the story and agree on them.

Husband: "I had a last-minute meeting at work with my boss that I couldn't avoid, and it ended later than expected."

You: "So the fact is, you had an unexpected meeting at work which caused you to be late."

Husband: "Yes."

Step 4: Express what the facts of the situation mean to you.

You: "When you come home later than expected, it makes me feel like our plans are not a priority."

Step 5: Come up with a solution.

You: "In the future, could you please call or text me if you're going to be late? That way, I can adjust our plans accordingly and we can avoid misunderstandings."

Husband: "Yes, I can agree to that. I will do my best."

Viola!

Now, you have successfully navigated a conflict without escalating it into a fight, and you have a solution that will help prevent this problem in the future! Isn't this a much more peaceful approach?

Following this template for a difficult conversation is going to help you keep your emotions in check and have more productive conversations. It also helps you solve those recurring problems that keep coming up in your marriage.

Rethink “Don't Go to Bed Angry”

So, let's say you tried really hard to have that difficult conversation using the template I shared in the last chapter, and it went south.

Maybe one or both of you got angry and started yelling, and now you're in a huge fight.

What do you do then? Should you stay up all night and duke it out?

Many people think they should because popular culture constantly repeats that advice, and we think the bible tells us that, too.

It comes from Ephesians 4:26, which says, “Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.”

This verse makes it seem like we should stay up and duke our disagreement out until the issue is resolved.

But I don't think that's what it means for us to do.

Because taking a break from an argument when both spouses are

being irrational and upset can be one of the healthiest choices we make. In fact, I think the bible supports this.

Psalm 4:4 (NLT) says, “Don’t sin by letting anger gain control over you. Think about it overnight and remain silent.”

Did you ever know that was in the bible?

Isn’t this freeing? Sometimes, things seem so much worse in the heat of the moment. We say things we will later regret that we can not take back.

Taking a break allows us to refresh our minds and calm our hearts so we can have a more productive discussion.

The first thing I recommend you do is to have a conversation with your husband soon and let him know that you learned something new and want to stop fights before they get out of hand. Tell him that you love him and your relationship, and you don't want to damage it by fighting.

Then, the next time a discussion starts getting heated, here’s how you can successfully take a break:

1. Notice emotions are high, and tempers are flaring.
2. Stop talking and remind your husband that you agreed to take a break from conversations when they get heated.
3. Set a time to come back to the conversation. This is really important for two reasons -- it ensures the issue does not get swept under the rug, and it lets your husband know that it will get resolved.
4. Go calm down so you can come back to the conversation.
5. Be sure to revisit the issue at the agreed-upon time.

One of my clients had to work particularly hard on this one. She was married to a lawyer who loved to argue, always had to have the last say, and could not let things go.

My client had to resort to going into the bedroom and closing the door to get away from him when he was angry.

But that only partially worked because then he would start sending her angry texts and emails. He just couldn't let it go.

Making matters worse, my client responded to those texts and emails. She didn't know she had a choice and that waiting to talk to him until they were both calm would actually be healthier for their marriage.

Once I taught her about the benefits of taking a break from an angry conversation, my client shared what she learned with her husband and told him that from now on, she would not continue to engage in angry conversations.

Then she reassured him that she would commit to finishing the conversation when both of them were calm, but not before. And that she would no longer respond to angry texts or emails.

It hasn't been easy, but setting this healthy boundary has created more peace for her and him, too. If my client can do this with her lawyer husband, I am confident all of the rest of us can, too!

This tip of taking a break from an argument will help you do less damage to your marriage and create a better, healthier environment for all of your communication.

Empower Your Marriage

After reading this book, I hope you feel inspired and hopeful that you can improve the communication in your marriage and set a good example for your children.

The steps in this book are very practical, and I hope that you will refer back to it often.

I know that putting these tips into practice may be easier said than done. That is why I offer one-on-one coaching to women to help them with their unique, specific set of circumstances.

If you are interested in personalized help, please visit my website www.tinahaisman.com to schedule a complimentary consultation.

In the meantime, I would like to leave you with this inspirational quote about marriage:

A great marriage is not when the perfect couple comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences.

--Dave Meurer