

Getting to Happily

8 Week Relationship MakeOver

Step 1: Record your thoughts about communication in your relationship.

We communicate pretty well, most of the time. Sometimes we make assumptions about what the other person is doing, or fail to communicate what our plan is for the day.

Respond to the questions:

What do I think about my communication?

It's pretty direct and to the point, I can be diplomatic when necessary.

I let things stay in my mind for a while before I say anything. I'm very careful with my words and don't say intentionally hurtful things out of anger. However, my tone can be a little dismissive and impatient.

I don't always do the best job of listening, because I'm thinking about what I would like to say in response.

What do I think about my partner's communication?

Sometimes he talks off the top of his head, and what he's saying doesn't make sense, or I can't follow the sequence of events.

He has a commanding voice and is very engaging and expressive.

Sometimes he holds in what he wants to say for a long time.

He doesn't always listen, but interrupts to get his point across.

He asks too many questions.

Complete the following sentences:

Because I think these thoughts, when it comes to communicating with my partner, I...

think things over a lot before saying anything, rush through what I'm saying and want him to get the point and understand really quickly. I also get defensive when he asks me questions and sometimes assume he has an ulterior motive in asking.

Because I think these thoughts, when my partner is speaking to me, I...

can sometimes be impatient, push him to get to the point more quickly, assume that he is not listening or that he is thinking things that he doesn't share with me.

One thing I know I could do today to improve our communication is...

Demonstrate more patience and understanding when my partner is speaking to me.

Step 2. Visualize your ideal communication. Consider any or all of the following questions:

What would you talk about on a daily basis?

What would you regularly say to each other?

How would you feel when talking to your partner?

How would you talk about issues in your relationship?

How would you handle arguments and disagreements? What would be the ultimate outcomes?

How would better communication make a difference in your relationship?

What we did throughout the day, we would express appreciation and say I love you more. When talking I would feel as if I'm being heard, acceptance, interest and value in what I am saying. We would talk about issues in our relationship with a focus on finding a solution and not necessarily rehashing who said what, but really trying to move forward to a better place. We would handle disagreements with a focus on first listening and understanding each other, then sharing our perspectives. The ultimate outcomes would be that we feel good about the process even if one person had to compromise more than the other. Better communication would help us to both be more vulnerable and authentic with each other, not being afraid to share the deepest parts of ourselves.

Step 3. Record your communication type and style. What really stood out to you as accurate? What did you learn?

I am primarily an assertive communicator, but can sometimes be passive. I found several things to be accurate – I make good eye contact, ask for needs to be met, and understand they may not, and I'm conscious of trying to achieve my goals without hurting others.

I'm also pretty linear and direct in my communication. I focus on trying to be understood and to show a progression of thinking and ideas. It's difficult for me to follow someone who is more circular in their conversation, as I'm always trying to make the connection to the point at hand.

I'm also very much a doer and don't always like to talk about things, I just like to get them done as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Step 4. What do you suspect is your partner's communication type and style? In what ways can the ways each of you communicate enhance your relationship?

My husband is probably a mix of assertive and passive-aggressive. He can sometimes be circular in his communication and like to tell stories as a way of making a point, or to provide more context to the situation. He is also very much a thinker and likes to gather a lot of information before making a decision. These different styles can help us both – I may nudge him to take action, and he may encourage me to slow down and think things through a bit more. Because we can also be assertive, we are able to advocate for what we need in a way both of us can understand.