

Lesson 5

Expression Skill

Mystery #2: How can I get her/him to cooperate?

I. Introduction

- a. The expression skill is **vital** to a healthy relationship because it reveals the true self to the other. Full expression on important matters includes: Thoughts, feelings, concerns and desires.
- b. The expression skill is not merely saying what you **think**, but includes thinking about what you are going to say and considering the person to whom you are speaking and what they mean to you before you say things to them.
- c. It is most essential when raising a subject for expression that you take a moment by **FRAMING** any issue in the context of the positive.
- d. When you frame the issue in the **positive** by thinking about who it is that you are speaking to and why they are important to you the tone of your voice changes.
- e. When one looks for the **good** in the behavior/motivation or intentions of another, the sting of dealing with issues and concerns is diminished and is less likely to stimulate a defensive or attacking response.
- f. As a result, the positive regard you have for your partner will overshadow the negative you feel because of the issue. This will **alter** your own body language and make you sound conciliatory.
- g. In addition, taking a moment to consider the good and valuable and expressing it will reduce the likelihood of getting **resistance** from your partner as s/he is reminded that you value him/her.
- h. For the one listening to an issue, if you know that you have the positive regard of the person who is presenting you with an issue it is quite likely that you will **want to** cooperate in correcting the problem.

II. The Expression Skill is Supported by Scripture

- a. The goal of the expression skill is to fully express yourself honestly in a way that **maximizes** the likelihood that your partner will respond to you with cooperation. *Prov 13:3 Careful words make for a careful life; careless talk may ruin everything. The Msg*
- b. The expression skill helps to increase the likelihood of a successful resolution to issues because it is planned in advance and done in a **thoughtful** manner. *Prov 11:17 When you're kind to others, you help yourself; when you're cruel to others, you hurt yourself. Prov 12:18 Rash language cuts and maims, but there is healing in the words of the wise.*
- c. One of the side effects of using the expression skill is that one will increase one's own **self respect** because you know that you have spoken in a Christ honoring way. *1 Cor 13:5 (Love) doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,*
- d. Using the expression skill **models** the way one wishes to be spoken to. *Eph 4:15 God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love — like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do.*
- e. The expression skill is shaped by the realization that the person being spoken to is loved and positively regarded, and therefore, **deserves** to be spoken to with dignity and respect. *Col 4:6 Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out.*
- f. Using the expression skill builds **intimacy** because it enables one to speak without judgment or harsh criticism and these self-righteous attitudes make intimacy impossible. *James 3:2,5,9-10 James 3:5-6 We get it wrong nearly every time we open our mouths. If you could find someone whose speech was perfectly true, you'd have a perfect person, in perfect control of life. A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything — or destroy it! It only takes a spark, remember, to set off a forest fire. A careless or wrongly placed word out of your mouth can do that. By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell. The tongue runs wild, a wanton killer With our tongues we bless God our Father; with the same tongues we curse the very men and women he made in his image. Curses and blessings out of the same mouth!*

III. The Ingredients That Make This Skill Work

- a. **Think** before you speak.
 1. Put the right picture in the **Frame**. Most often when an issue arises, that is all we see...THE ISSUE. Scripture tells us that wounds, offenses, insults and injuries will happen in this life but these issues are not THE PICTURE. *Matt 18:7 Doom to the world for giving these God-believing children a hard time! Hard times are inevitable, but you don't have to make it worse — and it's doomsday to you if you do.*
For example: *The amount of love expressed is not felt equally on both sides, and resentment starts on one side.*
Why is this issue important?
What could happen over time if it is not addressed?
 2. Putting the “right picture” in the frame means that before you speak you consider the positives that make the issue important. When speaking to another about issues always start by remembering the **good**. *Phil 4:8 Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious — the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.*

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3. These may be your positive feelings about your partner, your shared history, your shared values and the fact that you are joint heirs together of the grace of this life. When you are **upset**, these feelings may elude you.
For example the issue: *The amount of love expressed is not felt equally on both sides, and resentment starts on one side.*
Remembering the good: *We have been married for 10 years and we have so many shared memories that have added so much value to my life....*
4. **Censor** words that will create hurt or anger. By thinking through what you are going to say you are able to avoid making a bigger mess that would be created if you said certain things. Don't say those things.
Using the example of: The amount of love expressed is not felt equally on both sides, and resentment starts on one side.
What are some possible words that are sure to create hurt or anger?
5. If it is a serious matter, take time to **write down** your thoughts and feelings about the issue and how you will address it with your partner.

Exercise: A common relationship problem

1. The partners' interests being very different, one partner gives up his or her own interests.

Ask:

Why is this issue important?

What could happen over time if it is not addressed?

What are some possible positives that make this an important problem?

Write out a statement that you could use that states the positives to introduce this in a serious dialogue about the problem

- b. **Start** by remembering what's good.
 1. Conversations that don't go well tend to start with a **complaint**. Look for the good beneath the problem and start there.
 2. This requires that you consider the **big picture** and how this issue is merely a bump on a life long journey with this person.
 3. Talking about problems in the context of what is good makes them an entirely **different** matter to both the speaker and the hearer. Assume the good intentions of the doer and not evil intentions and see what happens. *1 Cor 13 (Love) Always looks for the best,*

IV. Application

Exercise:

1. You want your partner to record ATM and debit transactions on the day they occur. Identify the good.
2. You want your partner to stop driving above the speed law through residential neighborhoods. Identify the good.