

Lesson 7

Expression Skill (Continued)

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

I. 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: *You often feel disrespected when your partner uses a harsh tone of voice when talking to you.*
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.*

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: *When your partner is focused on some task and you interrupt him or her with a question you often feel disrespected because s/he uses an impatient tone of voice when responding.*
Remembering the good: *I admire your ability to achieve total focus when you get involved in a task....*

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: When your partner is focused on some task and you interrupt him or her with a question you often feel disrespected because s/he uses an impatient tone of voice when responding.

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. You are frustrated when your partner uses the bank card for debit purchases or cash withdrawals without posting them in your check book record.

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?

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,*

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- c. Speak from your **own** point of view, rather than what is “right” or “good” or “normal” or “what someone else does.”
 1. Say something like, “**It seems to me**” to show these are your feelings and your point of view.
 2. Use words that show respect, **not judgment**. How do you feel when you are judged or criticized?
- d. Talk about your feelings and all that **is important** to you.
 1. Positive feelings are important for your partner to hear. It is when your partner feels **both** love and pain s/he is most likely to change. Why is it so hard to reveal your feelings?
 2. Tell how the problem makes you feel now and how **the change** you seek would make you feel.
 3. Include feelings from the past **only** if they will help your partner understand you now.
 4. Don't **confuse** thoughts with feelings.
 5. Remember, feelings once **expressed** are free to change. How does knowing your partner's feelings help you to take notice of what s/he is saying?
- e. **Ask** for what you want. What is hard about asking for what you want?
 1. Name the **specific** thing you would like your partner to do.
- f. Avoid **trigger** words. How do you feel when you hear “trigger words”?
 1. **Avoid** words like always or never.
 2. Avoid name calling or descriptions that your partner might see as an **attack**.
- g. Be **specific**.
 1. Talk about what you **see**: specific behaviors, particular events.
 2. Give **examples** to show what you mean.
 3. As your partner gets good at naming the not-quite-stated feelings, desires, concerns, they will naturally be more inclined to **express** more and more.

II. Application

- a. Identify one disagreement that you predictably experience with a person (your spouse or other).
- b. Think of an underlying good in each of your positions.
- c. What happens to your feeling about the disagreement when you attempt to find an underlying good in the other person's position?