

By Lisa Goodwin, LCSW

# Build Strong Communication with Your Partner

Creating a stable home life in which you and your partner can communicate respectfully and successfully is a key component of both your own well-being and that of your children. When parents model a healthy relationship at home, children learn how to successfully communicate with peers and future romantic partners. By strengthening communication, parents can more easily navigate life challenges through a united approach. Here are some helpful tips to improve your relationship with your partner through effective communication.

• **Address any concerns promptly:** If your partner has upset you, address the situation in a reasonable amount of time. Don't allow feelings of frustration or hurt to build up over time.

• **Prepare to articulate your concerns:** Think about what you want to share before beginning a conversation. Remember that your partner can't read your mind; you must verbalize your feelings and needs.

• **Consider your environment and timing:** Choose a space where you both feel comfortable. Remove distractions, such as television and phones. Be sure your partner is ready to hear what you have to say.

• **Avoid finger-pointing and blame:** When explaining concerns to your partner, share your feelings using "I" statements. As an example: "I feel angry when you dismiss my feelings about your family."

• **Listen carefully:** When your partner is speaking, focus on their words instead of the next thing you would like to say. Ask questions if you don't understand their point of view.

• **Don't interrupt:** Even if it's hard, give your partner space to share with you by not interjecting when they are speaking. Giving them time to share their feelings will help make them feel more heard.

• **Stop and reflect on how you are feeling in the moment:** If you feel too upset or angry when you're speaking with your

partner, put the conversation on hold so that you can collect your emotions and reflect. Come back to it when you feel more at ease and able to continue in a productive manner.

• **Focus on one topic at a time:** Avoid raising multiple topics in a single conversation, as this can create resentment or hurt feelings. Focusing on only one topic allows each partner to express their feelings and move toward resolution or compromise.

• **Keep talking and prepare to compromise:** Ongoing communication is the only way to make progress. Relationships require compromise and patience. Try to meet your partner halfway and validate their feelings. Don't dismiss or minimize their perspective.

*Lisa Goodwin, LCSW, is clinical director of the Masonic Center for Youth and Families in Covina, a nonprofit organization that offers therapeutic services for children, adolescents, young adults, and their families. Learn more at [www.mcyaf.org](http://www.mcyaf.org).*

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