

How to Listen so Your Spouse Feels Heard

by Jada Hudson, M.S., LCPC, CADC

Have you experienced conflict with your spouse recently? What if you had the power to diffuse the situation immediately by how you responded? Your body language and word choice can either build tension or diffuse drama. Try these simple listening skills to improve communication and stop conflict:

- **Be curious.** What does your spouse mean? What is his primary motivation here? This is the person you love! Genuinely try to understand.
- **Mind your body.** Is your body language communicating openness or hardness? If you are crossing your arms, shaking your head, or turning away, you may be perpetuating the tension. Instead, nod your head, lean slightly forward, and try to keep your arms and legs uncrossed.
- **Only listen.** As she speaks, set aside your personal thoughts and feelings. Don't interrupt. Don't plan your response. Just listen to understand.
- **Watch for feelings.** What does his body language say about how he feels? Did he mention any emotions when he was speaking? Try to put yourself in his shoes and feel that feeling with him.
- **Reflect back.** After your spouse has finished speaking, repeat, in your own words, what she just said. Focus on her main point, and summarize what she said. Use this reflection to clarify what she really means and to communicate that you heard her.
- **Respond right away.** One of the strongest drama diffusers is immediate action. Maybe your spouse needs help. Help! Maybe your spouse feels hurt by something you have been doing. Stop! And apologize! Maybe your spouse needs more time with you. Clear something off your schedule!

As you work to understand and communicate that understanding to your spouse, it will become more natural. So, keep practicing. Keep reflecting. Keep responding.



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