Lecture: Communication and Marriage

Test Section 3
Marital Communication?
Styles of Companionship

- ______: shared interests and activities
  - Close emotional involvement

- ______: Activities in Presence of Partner (ie. TV, reading, hobbies, sports, dining out)
  - Not much intimacy

- _________: primarily participating in activities outside of the marriage
Styles of Companionship

• Which style is best?
  – Expectations
  – Balance
  • Negotiate a mixture of togetherness and separateness
  • Changes over time
Communication and Conflict

Three aspects of a lasting, intimate relationship (past, present, and future):

- Self disclosure/shared history (past)
- Caring (present)
- Commitment (promise of shared future)
Communication and Conflict

Helpful Hints:

• If you can’t be kind, at least be vague. (Miss Manners)

• The most difficult thing of all is to keep quiet and listen. (Aulus Gellius, Roman writer)

• The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable. (Anonymous)
Communication and Conflict

• ____________________

• _____________________________

• Why do we have such problems in this area?....see Priest and Nun story
Priest and Nun Story: Example of Marital Communication

A priest and nun are on their way back home from a convention when their car breaks down. They are unable to get repairs completed and it appears that they will have to spend the night in a motel.

The only motel in this town has only one room available so they have a minor problem.
Priest: Sister, I don’t think the Lord would have a problem, under the circumstances, if we spent the night together in this room. I’ll sleep on the couch and you take the bed.

Sister: I think that would be okay.

They prepare for bed and each one takes their agreed place in the room. Ten minutes later....

Sister: Father, I’m terribly cold.

Priest: Okay, I’ll get up and get you a blanket from the closet.
Ten minutes later....
Sister: Father, I’m still terribly cold.

Priest: Okay Sister, I’ll get up and get you another blanket.

Ten minutes later...

Sister: Father, I’m still terribly cold. I don’t think the Lord would mind if we acted as man and wife just for this one night.

_______________________________
Communication and Conflict

Message of the priest and nun anecdote...

• There is a relationship between _________________ and _______________.

• Importance of accurate *encoding* (_______) _______ and ________ messages and *decoding* (_____________)
Communication and Conflict

- Nonverbal
  - ____________________
  - __________________

- The words tell us the content of the message, the nonverbals help us contextualize it; they help us understand the nature of the relationship.
  - __________________________________________________________
  - _________________________________________________________

( Gottman & Porterfield, 1981, Kahn, 1970)
Communication and Conflict

Eye contact and touch

When verbal and nonverbal contradict?
- Confusing; usually tune into nonverbal
- Can set up double bind communication

Gender differences in communication patterns in relationships?
- Story at beginning

(Burggraf & Sillars, 1987, Burleson & Denton, 1997)
Communication and Conflict

Simple formula for good communication
- Leveling + active listening = good communication
- Discuss each
- Emphasize effective listening
Supportive Communication

• Soft Start Up – Gentle Approach
• Accepting Influence
• Positive Affect
• Positive Attribution
• You want to be treated?
Supportive Communication

- Soft Start Up – Gentle Approach
- Accepting Influence
- Positive Affect
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- You want to be treated?
Men & Women: Differences?

• Rapport vs. Report

• Response to negative affect
  – Men: Emotionally withdraw
  – Women: Stay engaged
Gender Differences in Marital Communication: Research

- Wives Send Clearer Messages to Husbands

- Wives Often more sensitive and responsive to messages during conversation/conflict
  - Wives more likely to respond to positive and negative
Husbands tend to give more neutral messages (i.e. It doesn’t matter to me.); wives give more positive or negative messages. This can make it harder for wives to encode. (Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2006)
Communication differences in arguments between husbands and wives tend to follow a typical pattern:

- Wives tend to set the emotional tone.
- They escalate or de-escalate the argument.
- Wives tend to use:
  - Emotional appeals and threats more than husbands.
- Husbands tend to use:
  - Reason, seek conciliation, and try and postpone/end an argument.
Aspects of Healthy and Unhealthy Problem Solving

- **Timing**
  - Pick a good time
  - Eliminate all distractions

- **Argument/Discussion**
  - Avoid overgeneralizations
  - Don’t gunnysack
  - Don’t interrupt
  - Avoid stonewalling
Bonding Fights - Guidelines

1. __________with each other.
2. ______________when possible.
3. Avoid __________, __________messages.
4. ________________carefully.
5. __________________on specific issues.
Bonding Fights - Guidelines

6. Ask for a specific ______, but ______________________________

7. Be willing to ________________.

8. Don’t try ____________.

9. Remember to _______________.

10. Be willing to ____________.
Does one partner avoid important issues or withdraw?

Do routine discussions erupt into destructive arguments?

Does your partner turn what you say into something negative?

Does your spouse disregard you or put you down?
"Apparently I have done something to upset you."
Aspects of Healthy and Unhealthy Problem Solving (cont.)

- **Participation**
  - Use ____________________
  - Give partner ____________________
  - Stick to ____________________
  - _______________ & _______________
  - Focus on __________________________
Outside Friendships

• Friends are important and rewarding for most people
• Balance issue when in a committed relationship
• Your friends vs. our friends
• Same-sex vs. cross-sex friends
• Scenarios
Scenarios: You have been married for one year. Consider your responses to the following questions, including what additional information is needed to qualify your answer.

- Relative to your spouse and a co-worker. Is it okay if they:
  - Share an office?
  - Go out to lunch together?
  - Work late together?
  - Go out to dinner together?
  - Go out to breakfast together?
  - Travel together on business trips?
  - On these trips; is it okay if they

Outside Friendships (cont.)
Outside Friendships (cont.)

Scenarios: You have been married for one year. Consider your responses to the following questions, including what additional information is needed to qualify your answer:

- Eat meals together?
  - Drink together at a bar or club?
  - Dance together?
  - Stay in adjoining hotel rooms?
Outside Friendships (cont.)

Relative to their friends that they had before the marriage. If is okay if they:
- Hug each other when they see each other?
- Kiss each other when they see each other?
- Dance with each other at a club or party?
- Play sports together (tennis, golf, etc)?
Outside Friendships (cont.)

- Relative to their friends that they had before the marriage. If it is okay if they:
  - Go out to eat together?
  - Does it matter if you are there or not?
  - Does it matter if they were your friend too?
  - Does it matter if they used to date?
  - Does it matter if were engaged or have had sex with each other?
Outside Friendships (cont.)

- What are the rules for making new cross-sex friends?
  - What activities are permitted?
  - What activities are forbidden?
  - What activities depend (e.g., a kiss on New Years vs in the back of a car somewhere)?

- Regarding couple that you are mutual friends with. What activities are never okay, and what activities are okay when you are there, versus when you are not?
Outside Friendships (cont.)

- Keep business relationships professional
- Never try to hide anything from your spouse and don’t have anything to hide
- Danger of compromising situations
- Get help for marital problems
  - Marital therapy can be viewed as affair-prevention