

## Aug 6 2021~ How to talk so others will listen (Set 2, Lesson c15)

Although this lesson is written to help couples or roommates communicate better, if we want ANYONE to actually listen to what we say, we should learn to compliment and be specific.

**Phrases & idioms in the article:**      **sth** = something; **sb** = somebody

What gives? = What's wrong? Why is this happening?

point out = reveal; mention; focus on

go on the defensive; get defensive = acting in a way to protect or defend yourself, your ideas/race/team/etc, instead of having an open mind

the bottom line = the main issue; the basic reason

tune sb/sth out = stop listening to sb; stop paying attention to sb/sth (as if you are "tuned" to a different podcast, while wearing headphones)

get to the root of sth = find the main reason/cause for sth

sth crops up = sth begins to develop/grow

tips = suggestions

lift sb up; lift up sb = encourage sb; praise sb

knock sb down = criticize sb; verbally attack sb

compliment = a positive comment that says how you think sth/sb is good, admired, etc., or the act of praising sb with such a comment

keep sth to himself = he doesn't tell anybody sth

can't think straight = can't think clearly about sth/sb (often due to physical or emotional exhaustion)

be there for sb = support sb emotionally or actively do sth to help sb

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You talk to your spouse or roommate all the time, but do you communicate well? Probably not. What gives? People who live together overestimate how well they really understand each other. If they've been together a long time, they're also quicker to point out flaws in each other, which can cause them to feel attacked and go on the defensive. Whether they attack back or leave the room, the bottom line is, they tune the other one out. So instead of getting to the root of important issues, more issues may crop up. The next time you want to talk about something important with your partner (or with a classmate, colleague or others), try the following tips.

**1. Begin with what you appreciate about your partner.** This isn't about lifting them up before you knock them down. Think about why this relationship is valuable to you (for example, why do you love your spouse?). After giving the listener a heart-felt compliment, your discussion is more likely to start with positive feelings or a more solid foundation. This will help you focus on the current problem and help your partner listen less defensively.

**2. Say what you want, not just what you don't want.** For example, telling your partner to stop complaining does not tell him what you want him to do. Are you telling him to always keep his struggles to himself, or are you saying this is not a good time for you to talk? It's better to say something like, "I know you're having a hard time, but I'm so tired right now that I can't think straight. Can we talk about this after I've rested, so that I can really be there for you?"

**3. Be specific.** Saying what you want works best when you are specific. Saying "I want you to show me that you love me" or "I want you to show me more respect" might be too vague. Say something like, "I would feel like you respect me more if you allow me to finish my thought instead of interrupting before I finish talking" or "It would really help me feel more loved if you would give me a hug every night when you come home."

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### Questions:

1. The article said that people go on the defensive when they feel attacked because of their flaws. What are some other reasons people might be defensive in a relationship?
2. In what situations do you sometimes tune somebody/something out? Why?
3. Share one or two ways that we can lift somebody up.
4. Share one example of when somebody lifted you up. How did that person affect you at that time?
5. In what kind of situation do you usually prefer to keep something to yourself? Why?
6. Share one time when somebody was there for you, or one time when you were there for somebody.
7. Besides the article's 3 suggestions, what is another way we can help our friend or spouse want to listen to us more?

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Although this lesson is written to help couples or roommates communicate better, if we want ANYONE to actually listen to what we say, we should learn to compliment and be specific.

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You talk to your spouse or roommate all the time, but few people communicate well. Sadly, we think we really understand each other. If people have been together a long time, they're also quicker to point out flaws in each other. This can cause them to feel attacked and go on the defensive. Defensive people tune the other one out. Over time, many issues crop up, making it harder to talk openly. The next time you want to talk about something important with your partner (or with a classmate, colleague or others), try the following suggestions.

**1. Begin with what you appreciate about your partner.** If you start by lifting them up, you will be less likely to criticize or hurt them. Think about why this relationship is valuable to you. Start with a heart-felt compliment, and your discussion will likely start with positive feelings. This will help you focus on the current problem, and help your partner listen less defensively.

**2. Say what you want, not just what you don't want.** For example, telling your partner to “stop complaining” does not tell him what you want him to do. Are you telling him to always keep his problems to himself, or are you saying he should choose a better time to talk? It's better to say something like, “I know you're having a hard time, but after work I'm so tired that I can't listen well. I want to be there for you, so let's talk in the mornings or on my day off.”

**3. Be specific.** Instead of “Show me you love me,” say something specific like “I could see your love if you give me a hug when you come home from work.” Instead of “Show me more respect,” say something specific like, “I would feel more respect if you allow me to finish my thought instead of interrupting.”

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**Content Questions:** (Please ask the teacher about any unknown terms, pronunciation, etc.)

1. According to the article, do most people communicate well?
2. The author said people often go on the defensive when someone points out their \_\_\_\_\_.
3. If you start by [what ?], you will be less likely to criticize others.
4. You'll probably start with positive feelings if you give the listener a heart-felt \_\_\_\_\_.
5. “I could see your love if you give me a hug” is an example of how to be \_\_\_\_\_.

**Questions:**

1. In what situations do you sometimes tune somebody/something out? Why?
2. Share one or two ways that we can lift somebody up. Can you tell us about a time when someone lifted you up?
3. In what kind of situation do you usually prefer to keep something to yourself? Why?
4. Share one time when somebody was there for you, **or** one time when you were there for somebody.

If you still have time:

Bonus: Besides the article's 3 suggestions, what is another way we can help our friend or spouse want to listen to us more?

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Original title: How to Talk so your Spouse will Listen

These lessons were created or adapted by the staff of International Friendship Ministries, P.O. Box 12504, Columbia SC 29211; ifmusa.org; info@ifmusa.org. IFM is grateful to Kathy Williams for most of the original work. Some lessons were adapted from EFLsuccess.com (with permission). IFM makes these lessons available to our participants, but this does not imply our consent for others to publish these lessons online or in print without permission.

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