

1966

## EC66-535 Do You Understand Each Other?

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EC66-535

# do you understand each other

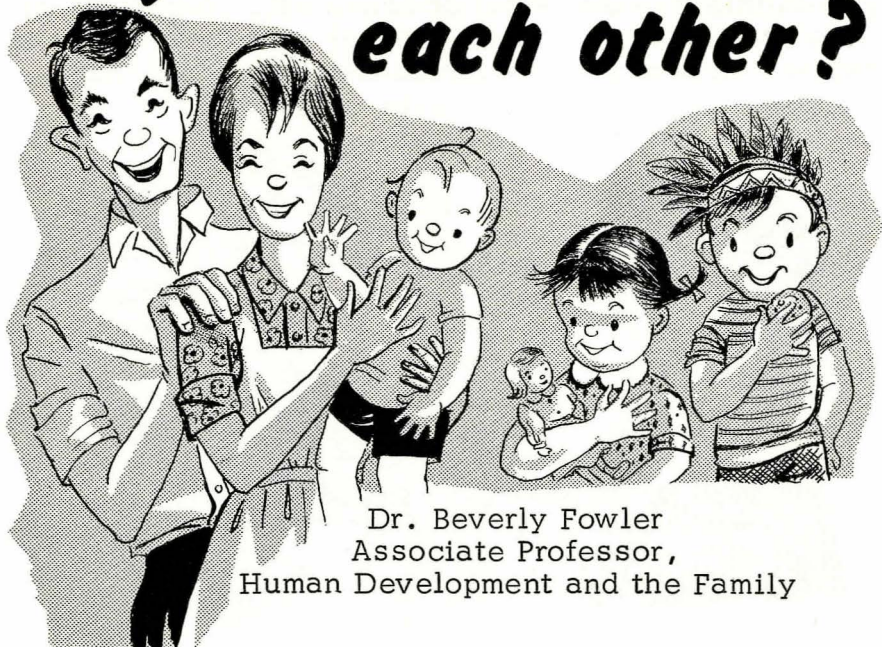
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# do you **UNDERSTAND** each other?



Dr. Beverly Fowler  
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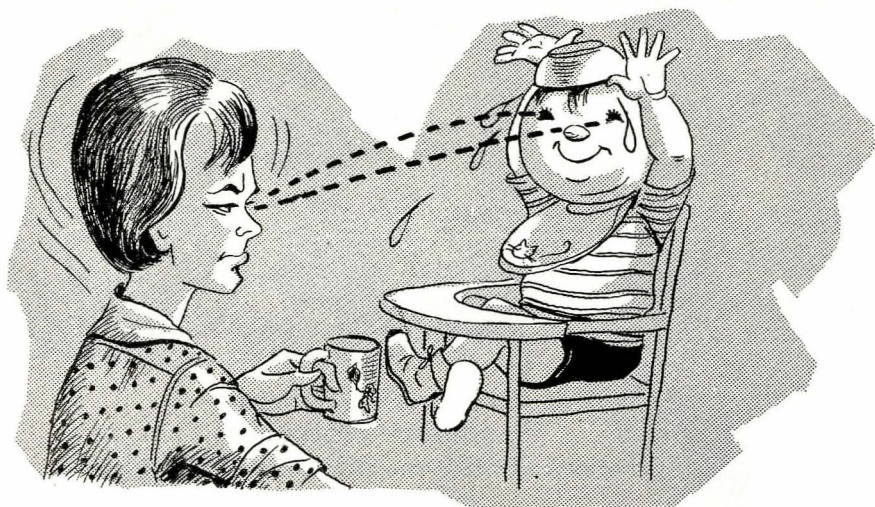
Many times husbands and wives (and children) say and do things which reveal that they actually have little interest, understanding and enjoyment of each other. Our families are the primary source of love and support. We need to learn the best methods for giving and gaining the love and understanding which we all desire.

Research has found that families who indicate the greatest personal satisfactions and happiness in their relationships are those in which family members can communicate with each other.

## What Is Communication?

Communication is the process of transferring thoughts and feelings by verbal and nonverbal means between two or more people. Communication is more than just discussion or talking -- it means revealing your thoughts and feelings to another person. But true communication involves more than that--the other person must hear and understand what you are revealing and, in turn, reveal his thoughts and feelings back to you.

This process is continuous--you and the other person are seeking constantly to reveal and understand the thoughts and feelings of each other. The ways in which you do this may be verbal or nonverbal. You might say what you think or you might reveal your thoughts by an expression or gesture, such as frowning or smiling.



### Why Do We Need Good Communication?

Good communication--communication which helps people understand and accept each other's thoughts and feelings--is essential in any kind of relationship. Couples who can communicate are able to work out problems. This does not mean that no problems will arise but that the couple will find a solution most satisfactory to all. This kind of solution is impossible unless all factors and sides are presented and considered.

Good communication helps the person predict the other's behavior and thus, one can anticipate and prevent problems. For example, a husband may be the kind of person who becomes so keyed up at work that he needs some time to relax when he first arrives at home. If he and his wife have talked about this fact and the possible causes (requirements of job, pressure to succeed, etc.), she is much more apt to arrange such a quiet time for him knowing that her respect for his feelings will gain his respect for hers.





Or perhaps the wife must stay home most of the time with several preschool children. If the couple can discuss her feelings (loneliness, feelings of frustration and boredom) he will be more apt to share his thoughts and activities with her. But how does he know how she feels unless she tells him? He will hear only her complaints and not the reasons for the problem.

Children, too, need the opportunity to communicate satisfactions and dissatisfactions. A child who can tell his mother he wishes she'd play with him is not going to nag and irritate her to gain her attention.

Fewer conflicts occur in husband-wife relationships and parent-child relationships when there is good communication. When you understand each other you already have eliminated the basic cause of a conflict.

### How Do We Learn To Communicate?

Patterns of communication are learned in the family group. Mother begins teaching her baby nonverbal communication by smiling at him or holding him close. She communicates anger or impatience to him by frowning or handling him with movements which give him discomfort. Father may encourage laughing in the baby by throwing him in the air or discourage crying by leaving him when he does cry.

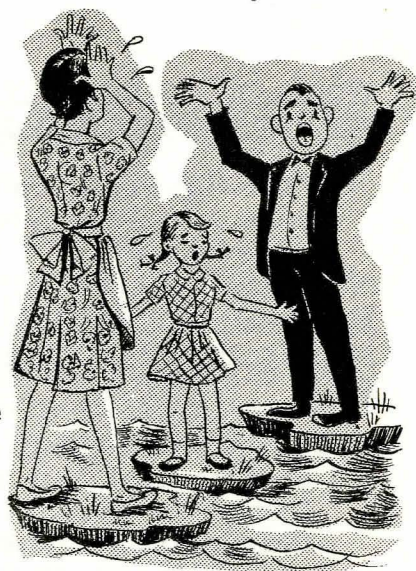


Children learn verbal means of expression through the words which they hear, and which, when used, bring them certain desired responses in others. Although verbal pronunciations and expressions may vary in families, the child tends to learn those which bring him success in his own family.

Adults, then, tend to determine the communication patterns and skills in their children by the reward and punishment which they give the behaviors of their children. For example, the child who gets his own way when he yells and screams will continue to use this method of communication (with some modification) into adulthood. Or, the child who receives a hug as an expression of love will use this method himself.



Although families determine the methods of communication, we must recognize that families vary in the quality of this communication. In some families, thoughts and feelings are very seldom revealed. The relationships in this kind of family are more apt to deteriorate and/or produce children who are themselves inexpert at communication. Thus, unhappy, non-communicative marriages produce children who have unhappy non-communicative marriages and the pattern is perpetuated.



### What Are Some Causes of Poor Communication?

We assume others see the problem as we see it.

All people have had different experiences so no situation looks the same to two people.

We imagine how the other one feels and we respond to the imagined reaction.

Sometimes we don't even wait for the other person to speak or we may not even listen to what he does say.

We fail to look for the reasons for the other person's behavior.

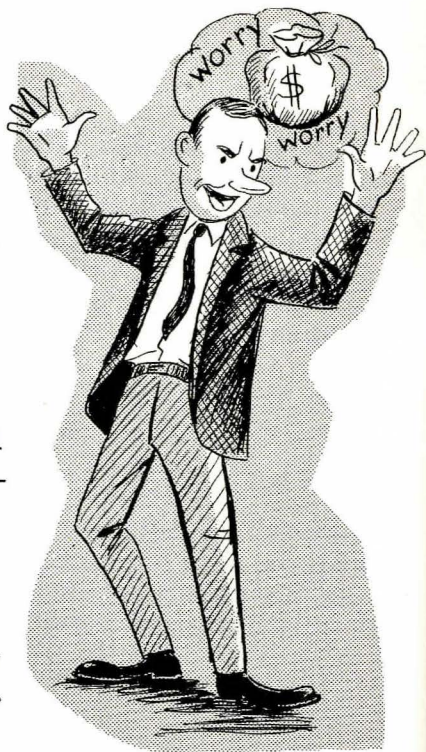
Words don't always reveal the reasons for behavior. "I said you couldn't buy any more clothes," may not reveal selfishness as much as deep worry about finances.

Words and gestures don't have the same meanings to people.

"Knowing you is an experience," could be interpreted in several ways.

Individuals are taught to repress or hide emotions--especially men.

While women long for expressions of love and affection in the marriage relationship, they train their boys to hide such feelings.



We deliberately block communication to hurt the other person.

Individuals discover that there is no more effective (?) way to hurt someone than to hide their inner selves. This method only hurts the one in the 'ivory tower'--and the relationship.

We tend to be self-centered.

We dwell on our own thoughts and feelings until they assume such magnitude that all others seem unimportant.

We're so afraid that we'll find that the other person has a side too--and we might have to change our point of view.



In most cases, there is no right or wrong side--just two sides which must be understood and compromised.

We're afraid of being hurt.

For example, we're afraid that if we admit that we want some affection that the other person will use this knowledge to hurt us. Yet he must know this need to satisfy it.

We don't know enough about all the reasons which might be causing a particular kind of behavior.

A display of temper could stem from a feeling of being unloved or inadequate, a desire to seem important, a means of obtaining one's way, or many other reasons.

We don't take time or allow time for communication.

One must have time to listen, interpret, clarify and respond. A husband will not share his thoughts and feelings with a wife who allows him only a few minutes between activities.

How Can We Improve Communication?

1. Recognize the great need in all people for communication.
2. Create an atmosphere conducive to communication.
3. Allow opportunities for communication for yourself and others.



4. Search for motives of behaviors so you can respond to them.
5. Train yourself to clarify your interpretations of the other person's thoughts and feelings until you are sure you understand each other.
6. Learn to express your own thoughts and feelings.
7. Make communication with you worthwhile to others.
8. Practice, practice, practice.



## Check List On COMMUNICATION

Mentally check yourself on these items.

YES      NO

1. My husband and I often talk into the small hours of the night.
2. I can tell my husband anything.
3. My children wish to share their ideas with me.
4. I know my husband's greatest worry.
5. I have seen my husband cry.
6. I would rather tell my problems to my husband than anyone.
7. My children can tell me when they're angry with me.
8. I find it easier not to tell anyone about my worries.
9. People come to me with their problems.
10. The children and I are as close as most parents and children.
11. My husband and I often express our love to each other.
12. I believe my husband and I understand each other better than most couples.

Question 8 should be answered no and the others should be answered yes if communication is good in your family. These items are to help you start thinking about communication and do not serve as a complete or accurate measure of your communication.