

How can I better understand my significant other?

Many couples go through periods of time where they have trouble understanding their partner's motivations or actions. While you can love someone without truly understanding them, love is not always enough. It takes dedication and effort to work through differences and make the relationship last.

So what can you do to better understand the person you are in a relationship with? The answer can be summed up with one word: communicate.

The odds are you would not be in a relationship with your partner if the two of you had never been able to talk to each other openly and honestly. Often, the key to "understanding" why there are communication problems is being able to identify what has changed in your relationship, or in each of your individual lives, thus making communication more difficult or infrequent.

Communication in the beginning of a relationship is usually easy because your partner does not know anything about you. You have decades-worth of stories to share. But as relationships progress there is less recounting the past and more focus on the present and future. Many people have difficulty talking with anybody, including their partner, about their current feelings or their dreams and aspirations for the future. Some people think others may find their dreams strange; other people may just tend to be private. Many successful couples create an environment where thoughts, feelings and ideas can be shared without being judged.

Here are some ideas you can use to create a more open and honest environment for sharing with your partner:

- Listen to what your partner is saying to you.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand something.
- Repeat back to your partner what you believe they are saying to you.
- Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements. For example, instead of saying "You don't compliment me enough" try saying "I wish you would compliment me more because I feel good about myself when you do."
- Do not be rude or talk down to your partner.
- Do not try to win an argument. Arguments are not won; they are means through which understandings and compromises are made.
- Do not make general statements. Be specific about the concerns you have.
- You have to be willing to compromise to solve many problems.
- Take a "time out" if the conversation starts to turn into an argument.
- Utilize a therapist, social worker or marriage counselor if communication problems persist. Seeing an impartial professional helps many couples deal with their communication problems.

Resources

- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): www.nimh.nih.gov
- National Healthy Marriage Resource Center: www.twoofus.org
- Office on Women's Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: www.womenshealth.gov

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-506-5374

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: MontanaEAP

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