

ADAPTATION FROM LOVE HABITS BY MARCI BELL, MA, LPC

Checklist 9-2: Ground Rules for Love-Motivated Communication. Personalize this list to suit your individuality. For example, each couple will have specific examples of "loaded language" to identify and avoid if possible.

PARTNER'S ASSIGNMENT	
CHECKLIST 9-2 HAS GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION. DISCUSS EACH ITEM WITH YOUR PARTNER TO DETERMINE WHICH GROUND RULES FIT YOUR PERSONAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> SCHEDULE AND ALLOW 30 TO 60 MINUTES PER COMMUNICATION SESSION.<input type="checkbox"/> BEGIN WITH PRAYER, TOGETHER. ONLY IF BOTH PARTNERS AGREE.<input type="checkbox"/> THE PRIMARY GOAL IS TO COMMUNICATE YOUR THOUGHTS AND YOUR LOVE.<input type="checkbox"/> THE SECONDARY GOAL IS TO RESOLVE ISSUES. REMAIN HOPEFUL FOR A SUITABLE SOLUTION, BUT DON'T EXPECT IMMEDIATE RESOLUTION. MANY ISSUES WON'T BE EASILY RESOLVED, AND IT MAY TAKE MORE THAN ONE DISCUSSION TO FIND THE BEST SOLUTION.<input type="checkbox"/> SET "TIME OUT" RULES. IF YOU WANT TO POSTPONE A DISCUSSION 1) REASSURE SPOUSE OF YOUR CONTINUED LOVE, 2) STATE A TIME WHEN YOU WILL BE WILLING TO RESUME THE DISCUSSION (PREFERABLY WITHIN 24 HOURS).<input type="checkbox"/> MAINTAIN AN ATTITUDE OF LOVE. BE KIND WITH WORDS, BODY LANGUAGE, AND ACTIONS.<input type="checkbox"/> BE OBJECTIVE AND OPEN-MINDED. DON'T ASSUME THAT YOU HAVE ALL OF THE FACTS.<input type="checkbox"/> MAKE EVERY ATTEMPT TO FIND COMPROMISES TO FIT THE NEEDS OF BOTH SPOUSES.<input type="checkbox"/> BE KIND WITH YOUR WORDS, BODY LANGUAGE, AND ACTIONS.<input type="checkbox"/> BE EMPATHETIC AND COMPASSIONATE, MAINTAINING AN ATTITUDE OF LOVE.<input type="checkbox"/> "I" STATEMENTS CONTRIBUTE TO UNDERSTANDING WHEREAS "YOU" STATEMENTS CAN TRIGGER DEFENSIVE RESPONSES. "I FEEL TRIGGERED WHEN THIS HAPPENS" IS AN "I" STATEMENT. "YOU DID THAT WRONG" IS A "YOU" STATEMENT.<input type="checkbox"/> ENCOURAGE, RESPECT, NOTICE, AND BUILD UP YOUR PARTNER AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY.<input type="checkbox"/> DO NOT EXPECT YOUR SPOUSE TO KNOW AND REMEMBER EVERYTHING THAT YOU KNOW AND REMEMBER (AND DON'T PUNISH HIM/HER FOR NOT REMEMBERING OR UNDERSTANDING).<input type="checkbox"/> CLARIFY YOUR PARTNER'S MEANING IN A NON-THREATENING WAY. "ARE YOU SAYING . . ." OR, "IF I'M UNDERSTANDING YOU CORRECTLY, YOU THINK . . ."<input type="checkbox"/> BE OPEN TO COMMUNICATION. BE WILLING TO RESPOND TO YOUR SPOUSE'S ISSUES WHEN IT'S YOUR TURN. HELP YOUR SPOUSE TO GET TO KNOW THE REAL YOU, HOW YOU FEEL/THINK, AND HOW YOU WANT TO BE LOVED.<input type="checkbox"/> AVOID PARENTING, PUNISHING, OR CONTROLLING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS. INCLUDING THREATS TO END THE MARRIAGE.<input type="checkbox"/> AVOID EXPECTATIONS, DEMANDS, AND MIND READING, WHICH HINDER RESOLUTION.<input type="checkbox"/> HAVE GENUINE CONCERN FOR WHAT YOUR SPOUSE IS SAYING AND FEELING.<input type="checkbox"/> EVEN IF YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT IS SAID, BE THANKFUL THAT YOUR SPOUSE TRUSTS YOU ENOUGH TO SHARE INFORMATION WITH YOU.<input type="checkbox"/> PAY MORE ATTENTION TO YOUR "FOLLOWING OF THE GROUND RULES" THAN YOUR PARTNER'S COMPLIANCE. ALLOW YOUR PARTNER THE CHANCE TO CORRECT HIM/HERSELF.<input type="checkbox"/> DO <u>OWN</u> YOUR EMOTIONS—DON'T VENT A FURY OF EMOTION. IT'S OK TO BE ANGRY, ONLY DON'T USE IT AS AN EXCUSE TO BEHAVE BADLY.<input type="checkbox"/> PATIENTLY ALLOW YOUR SPOUSE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND GROW.<input type="checkbox"/> TAKE TURNS FOCUSING ON ONE TOPIC AT A TIME WHILE AVOIDING INTERRUPTIONS. WHEN OTHER ISSUES SURFACE, WRITE THEM DOWN TO DISCUSS THEM NEXT. IT MAY HELP IF ONE PARTNER HOLDS A "BATON" TO SIGNIFY THAT HE/SHE IS THE CURRENT SPEAKER.<input type="checkbox"/> KNOW WHEN TO DISCONTINUE A DISCUSSION. ARGUING SABOTAGES DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS: RESCHEDULE YOUR DISCUSSION ONCE EMOTIONS HAVE CALMED DOWN. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION HABITS DEVELOP WITH PRACTICE AND PATIENCE.<input type="checkbox"/> WHAT OTHER GROUND RULES WOULD YOU LIKE ADDED TO YOUR LIST? YOU MAY WANT TO ADD YOUR SPECIFIC NEEDS TO THIS LIST, SUCH AS WORDS OR BEHAVIORS TO AVOID BECAUSE THEY TRIGGER A NEGATIVE RESPONSE.<input type="checkbox"/> BE AWARE OF TRIGGER ISSUES, BEHAVIORS, AND "LOADED LANGUAGE". IDENTIFY ISSUES, WORDS, AND NON-VERBAL BEHAVIORS THAT TRIGGER NEGATIVE RESPONSES. USE CAUTION WHEN DISCUSSING HOT-BUTTON ISSUES. AVOID LANGUAGE OR BEHAVIORS THAT TRIGGER YOUR PARTNER IF POSSIBLE. STATEMENTS SUCH AS "YOU ALWAYS", "YOU NEVER", AND "YOU SHOULD" ARE EXAMPLES OF LOADED LANGUAGE.<input type="checkbox"/> LIST YOUR LOADED-LANGUAGE WORDS/PHRASES: