

I'm Listening... (Not Really)

When's the last time you talked to someone who only pretended to listen?

Happened to me just the other day while shopping for a tie at **a men's clothing store.**

The salesman kind of brushed me off at first because he was too busy talking to his two other salesman buddies in the store.

When he checked on me ten later, I had to repeat myself three times before he heard me because he kept talking AT me and wouldn't stop interrupting.

Later, while I was standing at the cash register **trying** to pay and get out of there, I had to wait patiently as he told me about his new diet (**he's lost 30 lbs on the "pizza" diet**, as he calls it), where he grew up (Long Island) and his most recent blood work (his A1-C is 5.8, btw).

Although his eyes glazed over whenever I said something, I still tried to be polite despite feeling mildly frustrated.

I kind of felt bad for him because he gave the impression that he was more into himself than into his customers or making the sale, which was too bad because he seemed like a nice guy.

I'M LISTENING...(NOT REALLY)

The same kind of thing happens in marriage.

Our spouse tries to talk to us but our brain is a million miles away. We're present in body but absent in mind.

Sometimes it's because of something as innocent as a worry or concern that is weighing heavily on us.

But at other times, it's because we care more about our needs being met than we care about meeting the needs of our spouse.

Want a better relationship? Listen to your partner.

Listen to better understand their needs. Then start meeting those needs as best you can in a way that matters to them.

For instance, maybe they're bored and wish for a little more excitement but your idea of excitement is Nascar racing, so you take them to the Daytona 500, but their idea of excitement is dressing up and going to the symphony!

Meeting their need(s) isn't enough.

You need to try to meet it in a way that is meaningful to them.

So listen to them.

But don't just listen because you're trying to fulfill your role of the dutiful spouse.

Listen because you care.

And listen even when you don't like what you're hearing.

Listen even when *you don't feel like it*.

Listen to what is NOT being said. Consider their tone of voice and body language. Hold their gaze; listen.

Be respectful and caring.

Be kind and pleasant even when what you're hearing makes you feel...uncomfortable.

Don't take what they say as a personal attack (even if it is). Consider it "feedback" — this makes it less emotional.

Strive to always be kind and gentle.

Keep in mind people want to know they've been heard. And you spouse is "people" - so acknowledge what they've said - let them know, "message received."

Also, thou shalt not diminish them or discount what **they're saying even when you're absolutely convinced they're wrong!**

Thou shalt not defend yourself.

Thou shalt not criticize or judge what they're saying.

Let them speak.

Listen.

Be more into them than into yourself.

Trust me, you'll learn a lot! Namely, you'll learn about their wants and needs.

Be a loving spouse who cares more about your partner than you do about yourself....and let it all begin with listening.

Until next time, this is Mike & The Crew and we want you to be **mad about marriage!**