

# Not Talking? You're Not Happy

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Do you and your spouse talk much? I mean about the stuff that *really* matters. How often do you avoid talking about things because you hope they'll go away or get better on their own?

If you're not talking, you're not happy.

A lot of couples stop addressing issues because it's hard and it hurts, especially if it's about big stuff. Here's the thing, though, yes, it might be painful, but you will have less pain by getting it out in the open rather than letting it drag on for years.

The good news is that communication is a learned skill. You can use these tips to start talking about important matters you've been putting off.

**Get Clear** – Be as concerned about hearing what your partner has to say as you are with getting your point across. Don't leave anything to chance. The last thing you need is for either of you to make assumptions or interpretations about what was said/meant.

**Listen** - This is kind of like getting clear. Listen to your spouse and then rephrase what you think they were trying to say. This demonstrates that you were really listening (which also shows that you care), and gives them the chance to make sure you heard them accurately.

**Be honest about your feelings** – This isn't always easy, but you have to do it. Sometimes partners hide their true feelings because they don't want to hurt their spouse or make things worse; they want to keep the peace even if it means sacrificing their own happiness. Your spouse deserves to know how you really feel, and vice-versa. So, tell them. And encourage them to tell you. Maybe you will like what you hear, maybe you won't, but at least you'll know where you stand and what you're dealing with.

**Notice non-verbal communication** – Just because your spouse isn't talking doesn't mean they're not communicating. Observe their body language, eye contact (or lack thereof), facial expressions, tone of voice and general demeanor.

**Pick the right time to talk** – This is so important. For example, the last thing your spouse wants to do once they've just gotten home from a long day at work is have a serious conversation about the finances! Picking the right time to discuss certain issues can determine how well the conversation goes. It can even shape the outcome.

Effective communication is a learned skill that takes practice, kindness and patience. And it takes a LOT of courage too.

So, if something is on your heart and mind, you need to talk about it with your spouse even if it's difficult because you will never be happy by sticking your head in the sand.

*Until next time, this is Mike Tucker and I want YOU to be mad about marriage!*